



Key Issue:
**Recruiting Special Education Teachers
for Rural Schools**

2006



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Scenario: Desperately Seeking Rural Special Education Teachers

Note: This section is a reprint of “Fed’s Teacher Rules Strain Rural Areas,” by Mark Shaffer, which appeared in The Arizona Republic on May 24, 2006.

When Arnold Stonebrink showed up to teach one recent day at Payson High School and found a pink slip in his mailbox, he was aghast, to put it mildly.

After all, he had turned around the girls volleyball team, taking it to the state tournament this past season. Students in Payson and where he previously taught in the Pine Strawberry School District raved about what they learned in his English special-education classes. Parents doted on him.

But Stonebrink isn’t certified as a highly qualified instructor of special education. And under the 2001 No Child Left Behind mandate, that’s a requirement of full-time teachers if they are to remain in the classroom beyond this school year.

Highly qualified teachers must have a certain number of college credits in their subject area or have passed a test. Veteran teachers have to prove they are highly qualified through a combination of years of experience, college course background and professional development.

Stonebrink, 44, has none of those. He’s been taking courses toward obtaining his certificate, but like scores of teachers in Arizona and nationwide, he won’t have it in time for the start of school in the fall. So, as the school year winds down, he, like many others, is starting summer vacation not knowing whether he’ll be teaching when classes resume.

The certification requirements are putting a crimp in Arizona’s rural school districts, where small budgets often turn teachers into jacks-of-all-trades and make it nearly impossible to become highly skilled for all the teaching demands placed upon them. Competition with urban districts, which often offer substantial bonuses to highly coveted, certified special-education and science teachers, has led to a shortage of teachers for those subjects.

The problem is especially acute in the state’s mountain cities, where skyrocketing housing prices have made anyone earning a teacher’s salary an endangered species, and on the state’s Indian reservations, where special-education students routinely make up more than 20 percent of the school population.

“We’re in a real crisis situation, and a lot of schools wouldn’t be able to open their doors next fall if they couldn’t make emergency hires,” said Bill Stuart, executive director of the Arizona Rural Schools Association. “We’ve been recruiting teachers in half a dozen states, and out of 250 applications we only have three who want to teach math and seven who have shown any interest in special education.”

Stuart said the situation is so dire that, as one state legislator told him, “if a special-ed teaching applicant can fog a beer glass, we should be interested in them.”

A recent change in No Child Left Behind regulations allows rural school districts to make emergency hires for the next two years as long as a “good-faith effort” is made by the school district to comply with the law. In an emergency hire, temporary teachers are awarded a contract only for the current school year.

Jan Amator, the state’s deputy associate superintendent of education for highly qualified professionals, said those revised guidelines by the U.S. Department of Education have tried to account for problems in the rural school districts, which make up about one-third of all school districts in the nation.

Amator also said it’s not known how much of a good-faith effort rural districts have made to ensure that all of their teachers are highly qualified in the subjects they teach.

“We don’t have any accurate data. We’re working on a computer program to see what the situation is out there,” Amator said.

According to state statistics, 6 percent of public school teachers don’t meet the highly qualified requirements. Stuart said he thinks the majority of those are outside the Valley and Tucson, where he said there are hundreds of emergency hires.

Payson school officials say they are trying hard to meet federal guidelines and are regulars at job fairs. But prospective teachers aren’t beating down the door to teach special-education and science courses in an area where the median cost of a house has more than doubled to more than \$315,000 during the past three years.

And the ones who are there are struggling to obtain their certification, which can require up to two semesters of college classes. Most rural districts do not have the resources to reimburse teachers who seek certification.

“It would be nice if they could guarantee us a job while we worked on our certification,” said Stonebrink, one of five Payson High special-education teachers who will be let go when classes end. “There’s a lot of course work, time and money involved to get the certification, in addition to having it to do online rather than in person when you live out (here) like this.”

Even in the Flagstaff Unified School District, which has traditionally been one of the most desirable places to teach in the state, applications for special-education and science and math jobs have slowed to a trickle, Superintendent Kevin Brown said. The district used to get more than 100 applications per job.

Payson High has to fill two positions in math, two in physics, one in biology and one in architecture. Principal Roy Sandoval said last month that he had received one application for the special-education positions and two applications for biology teachers. That means that some of the teachers given their pink slips may be brought back next school year as emergency hires, Sandoval said.

Stonebrink's teaching position was filled, but he may be brought in to coach volleyball. And the district is considering him for a teaching job at the junior high.

"The typical thing we are running into with new teachers is like a couple just out of college we hired from Nebraska last year. They are making combined just less than \$65,000 a year and the only housing they could qualify for was a trailer outside of town," Sandoval said. "On top of that, he missed making highly qualified by one point on his exam."

The teacher will take the test again and if he doesn't get his certification, he probably will be brought back as an emergency hire.

Kristi Ford, a mother of three Payson students and a former school district governing board member, said she is content with the quality of education her children are receiving and that No Child Left Behind is "killing rural education."

"Teaching is all about masterful people who know their field, and we have a lot of those people here," Ford said. "But all the paperwork and demands are running those people out of the field. We've seen that here with some of our best teachers, and it's very upsetting to the children."

Mike Clark, principal of Pine Strawberry School northwest of Payson, said that quality-of-life considerations have allowed him to retain a teaching staff that is all highly qualified, despite paying beginning teachers \$26,000 a year. But he wonders how long that will continue.

"Between the housing inflation here and the salaries they are paying in the Valley, I think we've just been very lucky," Clark said. "I can envision the special-ed teachers forming a consortium and bidding out their teachers in the future. Our school board just approved a special stipend for \$2,000 annually for special-ed teachers and \$1,000 for math and science (teachers) trying to get ahead of the game."

Gary Spiker, superintendent of the Ash Fork Unified School District 50 miles west of Flagstaff, said his schools had to do something far more radical than that to get highly qualified teachers on staff.

"We upped our beginning salary to one of the highest in the state at \$36,000 and also give them a \$6,000 stipend to live within the district. It really affects the overall financial picture, but there's nothing else you can do if you are going to meet the guidelines," Spiker said.

The average Arizona teacher makes just less than \$42,000, which is \$5,000 less than the national average and 28th in the nation for the 2004–05 school year, according to the National Education Association.

Most schools on the isolated, sprawling Navajo Reservation just hope to have a complete teaching staff.

Emma Yazzie, principal of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Leupp Boarding School, said it has been a struggle filling the teaching spots with the No Child Left Behind requirements.

Yazzi said she had to wait until the day school began last August to hire a special-education teacher. She also said she had to do emergency certification on two applicants who had failed proficiency tests just to staff two science classes.

“We have to go through all this red tape to even make a normal hire at a BIA school and now this on top of that. It doesn’t make my life easy,” Yazzie said.

From “Fed’s Teacher Rules Strain Rural Areas,” by Mark Shaffer, published May 24, 2006, in *The Arizona Republic*, available online at www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/news/articles/0524ruralschools0524.html. Copyright © 2006 azcentral.com. Reprinted for online use with permission from *The Arizona Republic*.

Benefits

Combining multiple recruitment and incentive strategies for special education teachers with rural-focused preparation and supportive policies will help rural schools reach the following goals:

- **Compete with nonrural districts in the increasing demand for special education teachers in the United States.** According to the Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER) Center (n.d.), “the Bureau of Labor Statistics expects employment of special education teachers to increase faster than the average for all other occupations through 2008, when demand for nearly 550,000 special educators is projected. That is about 40 percent more than were needed in 1997–98 for instruction of students aged 3–21.” An aging workforce, mandated class size reductions, and the increased and sometimes overidentification of children with special needs will make it all the more difficult for rural schools and districts to compete for special educators. A better prepared, rural-focused professional workforce will make this task less daunting.
- **Attract a more diverse and culturally competent special education workforce.** Although it is not necessary to match teachers and pupils by race or culture, it is necessary for teachers to have cultural competence. The PACER Center (n.d.) reports that “in one national survey, special educators listed ‘accommodating culturally and linguistically diverse students’ learning needs’ as an area in which they felt least skillful.” Recruiting and training a more diverse, “homegrown” special education workforce that reflects the cultural composition of the local place will help to address this issue. Although some elements of cultural competence can be taught, accurate empathy—that is, a true understanding of and sensitivity to students’ diverse needs—requires filtering through shared, lived experiences.
- **Provide better diagnosis and reduce the overidentification of children of color and poverty.** Children of color and poverty are several times more likely to be identified as special-needs children than their white, more affluent counterparts. Although some of the reasons for this effect might be environmental (e.g., lead poisoning from substandard housing), some of it stems from cultural misunderstandings. In addition, the economics of having a child labeled “special needs” is a better alternative for some families than reliance upon less-than-subsistence-level incomes.

In one Appalachian coal mining community, for example, administrators in a community forum facilitated by the Rural School and Community Trust reported that 50 percent of kids entering the ninth grade in one high school were special-needs students. The administrators attributed this result to parents’ instructing their children not to pass “the test” to ensure that they would receive “the check.” The demand that this kind of overidentification places on schools and special education personnel can be overwhelming, particularly in light of the growing number of children who actually do have special needs.

- **Retain the special education teachers they already have on board.** Special education teachers leave their teaching assignments at higher rates than other educators. They often feel stressed, overworked, and isolated from their peers. Yet a highly skilled special education teacher with the time and resources to do his or her job can help to change a school's culture and contribute to the well-being of the professional community.
- **Identify resources and build community partnerships to help reduce the burden on special education personnel.** Well-trained special education teachers know and understand the value of connecting with resources in the community. Building partnerships with community-based service providers can reduce the strain on special education personnel and help to provide better services for children with special needs.

Tips

When developing strategies to recruit special education teachers, rural schools and districts should remember to do the following:

- Partner with the community to offer a flexible package of incentives, especially in nonamenity rural schools.
- Use distance telecommunications technologies to reach and train preservice and practicing special education teachers in rural areas. However, the technology cannot be relied upon as a proxy for quality staffing and adequate resources.
- Remember that licensure reciprocity is necessary to allow teachers to move from state to state. However, this strategy has limited promise for alleviating shortages in low socioeconomic rural communities where they are needed most.

Strategy 1: Balance Supply and Demand While Maintaining Quality

Nationwide, 98 percent of school districts report a shortage of special education teachers, with the greatest shortages in poor urban and rural schools. Although the demand for special education services continues to grow, projections show that the approximately 700 colleges and universities preparing special educators are not keeping pace and that they must increase the number of new graduates (McLesky, Tyler, & Flippin, 2003).

Resource 1: *Recruiting and Retaining High-Quality Teachers*

Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education. (2002). *Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers* (SPeNSE Summary Sheet). Retrieved July 10, 2006, from <http://ferdig.coe.ufl.edu/spense/policymaker5.doc>

Researchers examined the extent to which reciprocity across states, alternative certification programs, and salary matter in recruiting and retaining special education teachers. They concluded that “reciprocity does not appear to be a significant problem among teachers already employed” (p. 2), that “alternative programs may assume an increasingly important role in the future and may prove to be a particularly important source for hard-to-find teachers” (p. 2), and that “salary did not predict special education teachers’ intent to stay or a district’s overall teacher quality.” The researchers also indicated that “improved recruitment practices will not increase the overall supply of teachers, but they may help match prospective applicants with jobs for which they are qualified” (p. 2), thus increasing the likelihood that the teachers will remain. Recommendations include creating programs to encourage experienced teachers to remain beyond retirement as part-time or mentor teachers; promoting less traditional methods of recruitment, such as the use of websites or professional recruiters; and examining state and local policies affecting the paperwork burden to see if some requirements can be reduced to make the tasks of special education teachers more manageable.

Resource 2: Center on Personnel Needs in Special Education (SPeNSE)

Center on Personnel Needs in Special Education, University of Florida

Website: <http://www.coe.ufl.edu/copsse/research-focus-areas/supply-demand.php>

During the 2000–01 school year, approximately 47,500 special education positions were filled by uncertified personnel, a 23 percent increase over the previous year. More than 800,000 students with disabilities were taught by personnel who were not fully certified. The Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education at the University of Florida has completed a number of studies on the supply and demand for special education teachers in multiple areas. The study presents recommendations for schools, districts, and states about what can be done to create and sustain an adequate personnel supply; how best to prepare personnel; and what licensure structures best facilitate recruiting and retaining qualified professionals.

Strategy 2: Build Targeted University-School Partnerships to Grow Your Own

Insufficient supply is only partly the cause of current shortages of special education teachers. Shortages also occur because of difficulties in attracting qualified personnel to schools and districts where they are needed most. Pay incentives are sometimes used to attract and keep teachers in high-need schools and districts, but many educators have limited mobility because of family or other responsibilities. An increasingly popular strategy is to target paraprofessionals who want to become special education teachers as well as youth and adults with roots in the community.

Resource 3: Paraprofessional Preparation for Extraordinary Teaching (PPET) Program in Virginia

Paraprofessional Preparation for Extraordinary Teaching (PPET), Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia

Website: <http://education.odu.edu/cseep/home/programs/ppet.shtml>

This program provides coursework meeting licensure requirements in special education with endorsement in learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, or mental retardation for eligible school-based personnel. Participants must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution be employed as a paraprofessional, teacher aide, substitute teacher, or other nonlicensed personnel in Virginia.

Resource 4: California Paraprofessional Teacher Training Program (PTTP)

California Paraprofessional Teacher Training Program (PTTP)

Website: <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/para/>

California's Paraprofessional Teacher Training Program is a state-funded career ladder program for paraprofessionals ultimately leading to a teaching credential. Participants may be undergraduates, or they may already have a bachelor's degree but have not completed any teacher preparation coursework. They receive assistance with college or university tuition, fees, and books as well as other support services to increase success in the program. Undergraduate participants who earn a bachelor's degree may remain in the PTTP and enroll in a teacher preparation program, or they may enroll in a Pre-intern or Intern Program.

Resource 5: Alaska Rural Educator Preparation Partnership (REPP)

Rural Educator Preparation Partnership (REPP), University of Alaska–Fairbanks

Website: <http://www.uaf.edu/catalog/current/services/serv27.html>

Alaska's one-year Rural Educator Preparation Partnership was initiated to help Alaska natives and other long-time rural residents obtain teaching certificates. The educators work with the local school district, community, and university while earning their credentials. About 60 percent of those enrolled are Alaska natives.

Strategy 3: Revamp Teacher Preparation Programs

Research has shown that better preparation increases new-teacher retention. Special education preparation programs should continue to align their efforts with the proven, research-based standards and make extra effort to contextualize preparation for the unique challenges and opportunities of rural settings.

Substrategy 3.1: Align Preparation Programs With Professional Standards

Teacher education programs have been called upon to produce high-quality teachers with more field-based experience and stronger content knowledge. Three major national bodies have developed standards for special educator preparation and are working to align their efforts with those of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

Resource 6: *Standards for All Beginning Special Education Teachers of Early Childhood Students*

Council for Exceptional Children. (n.d.). *Standards for all beginning special education teachers of early childhood students*. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from <http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/ProfessionalStandards/EthicsPracticeStandards/SpecialEdTeachers/default.htm>

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has developed these performance-based standards for the preparation and licensure of beginning special educators. These knowledge and skill standards are organized into 10 areas that correlate with principles of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium and parallel the CEC guidelines that have been used by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. To achieve greater national coordination, CEC is advocating that states align licensure requirements with its standards.

Resource 7: *Model Standards for Licensing General and Special Education Teachers of Students With Disabilities*

Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium. (2001). *Model standards for licensing general and special education teachers of students with disabilities: A resource for state dialogue*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from <http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/SpedStds.pdf>

The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) promotes standards-based reform through the use of model standards and assessments for beginning teachers. These model standards were developed for licensing general educators and special educators for teaching students with disabilities.

Resource 8: *Exceptional Needs Standards for Teachers of Students Aged Birth–21*

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. (2001). *Exceptional needs standards for teachers of students aged birth–21*. Arlington, VA: Author. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from <http://www.nbpts.org/index.cfm?t=downloader.cfm&id=86>

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has established standards for what accomplished special educators should know and be able to do. The standards offer a basis for distinguishing between minimum qualifications (often characterized by state licensure) and full qualifications. Some higher education institutions have used the standards as a framework for teacher preparation program reform.

Substrategy 3.2: Use Technology to Reach Diverse and Hard-to-Reach Potential Special Educators

Rural schools and districts often are located at distances and amid geographic conditions that make travel to university-based programs difficult for potential students. Distance learning technologies can help reach people in rural and remote areas and in places where no institution of higher education is providing preparation in particular specialties.

Resource 9: Utah Distance Learning Special Education Program

Contact: University of Utah Department of Special Education, 1705 East Campus Center Drive, Room 221, Salt Lake City, UT 84112-9252; 801-581-8442

Supporting information:

Sebastian, J. (n.d.). Preparing graduate rural special educators at a distance: The University of Utah model. *Teacher Education Special Education Journal*. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from http://www.tese.org/tese.asp?FileName=utah&Section=program_descriptions

Utah's Distance Teacher Education program prepares rural teachers in mild/moderate disabilities and moderate/severe disabilities. The program is delivered by means of multiple distance telecommunications technologies to eight sites in the four rural regions of the state, where cohorts of 10 to 12 students gather to participate. Teacher trainees are recruited from rural school districts and prepared at the local site. Master special educators from rural communities are identified and trained to provide local support and program facilitation. Telecommunications technology is used in the delivery of instruction and provides interaction with campus faculty and other rural students. A distance education coordinator within the university's education department oversees activities and personnel involved in program delivery. This publication gives a complete description of the program, the specific technologies it uses, how faculty members and field supervisors are trained and critical issues raised by the model.

Substrategy 3.3: Establish Special Education Professional Development Schools

Resource 10: Visual Impairment Training Program at North Carolina Central University

Visual Impairment Training Program, North Carolina Central University

Website: <http://www.nccu-vitp.net/>

The Visual Impairment Training Program at North Carolina Central University was established through a professional development school relationship with the Governor Morehead School for the Blind. Through the partnership, faculty members spend half time at the School for the Blind, where they train prospective special education teachers in a clinical setting, conduct staff development activities for current teachers, and provide direct services to students. The combination of services and activities in which faculty members engage makes this a cost-effective approach to training special educators in low-incidence special-needs areas.

Strategy 4: Simplify the Licensure Process and Make Requirements Reflect Real Needs of Schools and Districts

The teacher licensing process is complex and often prohibitively costly for potential educators who did not complete a traditional teacher-preparation program. The process can take two to three years. Many would-be educators cannot afford to take that time away from work or to work for substitute teacher pay while they complete the process.

Resource 11: *Teachers for Special Education: Supply, Demand, Quality*

Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights. (n.d.). *Teachers for special education: Supply, demand, quality*. Minneapolis, MN: Author. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from <http://www.pacer.org/legislation/idea/tse.htm>

Most states use a combination of special education licensure categories: categorical, pertaining to each disability; cross-categorical, pertaining to a range of disabilities (such as mild disabilities in several categories); or noncategorical, a generic license to teach students with any disabilities in specific age or grade ranges. Licenses may be categorical in hearing impairments, visual impairments, and severe cognitive disabilities, for example, but cross-categorical or noncategorical in other disabilities. These differences influence the supply of qualified teachers. This publication recommends broader special education licensure categories; a coordinated national policy infrastructure; and other strategies for recruiting, retaining, and fully qualifying special educators.

Resource 12: California Internship Teacher Preparation Programs

California Internship Teacher Preparation Programs

Website: http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/intern/about_intern.html

California's internship programs allow prospective teachers to complete their teacher preparation coursework concurrent with their first year or two in a paid teaching position. The program provides teacher preparation coursework and an organized system of support from college and district faculty. Participants become the teacher of record, earn a full teacher salary and complete benefit package, and receive credit on the salary schedule for all coursework taken during the two-year program. More than 20,000 teachers have received credentials through internship programs.

Strategy 5: Stem Turnover

Each year, more than 13 percent of special educators leave the profession or transfer to general education; every four years, half of all special education teachers have departed (McLeskey, Tyler, & Flippin, 2003, p. 27). Although such transfers support the inclusion of students with disabilities in general classrooms, they create shortages in the special education workforce. The rate of transfer from general to special education is much lower than the reverse.

Substrategy 5.1: Focus on New Teacher Induction

New special educators leave the field at a higher rate than new teachers as a whole. A growing number of districts and states are providing induction programs for beginning special education teachers in an effort to reduce attrition.

Resource 13: *Growing and Improving the Special Education Workforce*

Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education. (2005). *Growing and improving the special education workforce: A focus on beginning teachers can help* (Special Education Workforce Watch). Gainesville, FL: Author. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from <http://www.coe.ufl.edu/copsse/docs/PB-22/1/PB-22.pdf>

Researchers point to attrition as a major cause of the shortage in special education personnel and suggest focusing on beginning teacher induction as a partial remedy. The report highlights three statewide induction programs: Connecticut's Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program, California's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program, and the Santa Cruz's New Teacher Project. BTSA reports a retention rate of 96 percent for first-year teachers who complete the program, while the New Teacher Project reports a beginning teacher retention rate of 88 percent

Resource 14: Connecticut's Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program

Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) Program for beginning teachers in Connecticut

Website: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2607&Q=319186&sdePNavCtr=|#45440>

Connecticut's Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program has received national acclaim, including the Education Commission of the States' award for Outstanding Innovation in Education. This website provides resources for teachers, mentors, and district personnel; policy documents; links to Connecticut State Department of Education standards and guidelines for teaching, learning, and leadership; and information on educator preparation and certification.

Resource 15: Santa Cruz / Silicon Valley New Teacher Project

Santa Cruz/Silicon Valley New Teacher Project

Website: http://www.newteachercenter.org/ti_scsvntp.php

The Santa Cruz / Silicon Valley New Teacher Project has developed a successful, fully-integrated and interactive model of new teacher support. New teachers have weekly on-site contact with an advisor, who is an exemplary veteran teacher released full-time to observe, coach and support the new teacher; assist with planning; design classroom management strategies; demonstrate lessons; provide curriculum resources; and facilitate communication with the principal. Support is guided by a cycle of formative assessment around each teacher's district goals or individual learning plan. Monthly seminars help to build a support network and ongoing professional dialogue among beginning teachers; these seminars also assist teachers with meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Release time allows new teachers to observe veteran teachers, plan curriculum, attend professional development trainings, and assess their progress.

Resource 16: California's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Induction Program

Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Induction Program

Website: http://www.btsa.ca.gov/BTSA_basics.html

California's statewide Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program was established in 1992 based on the results of a four-year pilot project. Cosponsored by the State Department of Education and the Commission on Teaching Credentialing, it is designed to support teachers in their first two years of teaching. BTSA induction programs vary in organizational design and may include a single district, consortia of districts, or large county office of education-based consortia. Each program works in collaboration with one or more college or university partner. Schools and districts may apply for state funds to supplement their local efforts, provided that programs meet specific guidelines.

Resource 17: Mentoring Induction Principles and Guidelines

White, M. , & Mason, C. (2003). *Mentoring induction principles and guidelines*. Washington, DC: Council for Exceptional Children. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/ProfessionalStandards/mip_g_manual_11pt.pdf

The Council for Exceptional Children has developed principles and guidelines for mentoring novice special educators. The guide lists critical elements of a successful special education teacher mentoring program. It includes a program evaluation checklist that also can be used to design or review existing mentoring programs and plans.

Substrategy 5.2: Reduce Attrition Among Experienced Teachers

Teachers who leave the profession cite limited opportunity for growth, insufficient materials and resources, student behavior, and lack of parental support among their reasons for leaving. Special educators cite, in addition, unclear and sometimes conflicting responsibilities; noninstructional assignments that reduce time on task; isolation from colleagues; excessive pupil loads; stress, overwork, and burnout.

Resource 18: SPeNSE Paperwork Substudy

Carlson, E., Chen, L., Schroll, K., & Klen, S. (2003). *Final report of the paperwork study*. Gainesville, FL: Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from <http://ferdig.coe.ufl.edu/spense/Finalpaperworkreport3-24-031.pdf>

Of special education teachers who were planning to leave the profession, 76 percent said paperwork interfered with their ability to do their jobs. Researchers recommend the following: assigning other school personnel or adjusting the teaching responsibilities of special educator to complete initial and triennial evaluations; crediting special education teachers for the time needed for case management when defining job responsibilities; allowing teachers to select from lists of annual goals when writing individualized education programs (IEPs); reexamining the IEP review process; limiting administrative duties and paperwork to three or four hours a week unless teaching responsibilities are reduced proportionately; and ensuring that teachers have access to reliable technology to manage paperwork responsibilities. (Note: In rural communities where assigning some paperwork tasks to other personnel might not be an option, partnering with available community-based resources might be a viable option.)

Strategy 6: Use Creative and Targeted Recruitment Strategies

Job fairs and other traditional recruitment methods have not evened the playing field for nonamenity and other hard-to-staff rural schools. More creative and targeted strategies must be applied.

Resource 19: *Supporting New Teachers: The View From the Principal's Office*

Peter Harris Research Group. (2004). *Supporting new teachers: The view from the principal's office*. Belmont, MA: Recruiting New Teachers.

Some 83 percent of rural principals report being responsible for both recruiting and hiring teachers, compared to 47 percent of nonrural principals. Responsibility for teacher recruitment and hiring is more common among principals in schools with predominately white students (74 percent) than schools with principals of schools with predominately African-American (50 percent) or Latino students (46 percent). About 88 percent of rural principals are white. Rural principals cite colleges in their area and teacher candidate lists from school districts or the state as the most useful resources for recruiting new teachers.

Resource 20: Recruitment Products From the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education

Recruitment products from the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education
Website: <http://www.special-ed-careers.org/catalog2002.html#recruit>

Order or download a free Recruitment Kit for recruiting young people to special education professions. The kit includes recruitment brochures, a financial aid brochure, and a 17- by 22-inch recruitment poster. Also available are five 30-second television public service announcements focused on mid-career changers, rural, urban, and attributes of special educators (in English and Spanish). A 90-second media clip is available. Other publications describe the profession in detail.

Resource 21: International Special Education Teachers From USA Employment

USA Employment

Website: <http://www.usaemployment.org/>

USA Employment offers school districts free services to find highly qualified, experienced, and certified international teachers in critical shortage areas, including special education. Candidates must have a master's and least a bachelor's degree in education, with an undergraduate degree in the core subject area, five years of experience, language proficiency, and teaching credentials. USA Employment screens candidates for content knowledge; evaluates credentials through an arrangement with Global Credential Evaluators; arranges telephone, video, or webcam interviews; and pays the cost of an administrator to travel for an in-country interview (if hiring 10 or more teachers). Schools can request resumes of qualified candidates. Regional recruitment consortia are encouraged. Teacher candidates pay for this service, which includes obtaining J-1 Cultural Exchange Visas and, once placed in an American school, continued help with housing, social security numbers, driver's license, loans, and acclimation to the local community.

Strategy 7: Increase Diversity in the Special Education Teaching Workforce

The percentage of students of color in public schools is increasing while the percentage of teachers of color is decreasing. Some researchers believe that increasing diversity and cultural competence in the teaching workforce will increase the achievement of students of color and reduce their overidentification in special education programs.

Resource 22: *Assessment of Diversity in America's Teaching Workforce*

National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force. (2004). *Assessment of diversity in America's teaching force: A call to action*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from <http://www.communityteachers.org/documents/DiversityReport.pdf>

Although 40 percent of public school students were nonwhite in 2001–02, less than 10 percent of the teaching force was nonwhite. Despite No Child Left Behind's emphasis on teacher quality, little attention has been given to the critical factors of cultural competence and diversity in the teacher workforce. This report examines the relationship among education achievement, education opportunity, educator diversity, and teaching quality; reviews the impact of culturally responsive pedagogy on children; and examines the demographic disparities between the student and teaching populations. The report calls for special federal, state, and local government action to increase diversity in the teaching workforce.

Resource 23: *Diversifying the Special Education Workforce*

Tyler, N., Yzquierdo, Z., Lopez-Reyna, N., & Flippin, S. (2004) *Diversifying the special education workforce*. Gainesville, FL: Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from <http://www.coe.ufl.edu/copsse/docs/RS-3/1/RS-3.pdf>

In 2004, only 14 percent of special education teachers were from culturally and linguistically diverse groups, compared to 38 percent of special education students. African-American males made up 0.4 percent of elementary and 2.3 percent of secondary special education teachers. Forty percent of schools nationwide had no teachers with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The authors suggest targeted recruitment strategies, including incentives, improved working conditions, better administrative support, and new teacher support. They also suggest the use of alternative certification programs, which have been especially successful in attracting prospective teachers from diverse backgrounds.

Resource 24: Recruitment Strategies From New Jersey City University's Preservice Preparation Programs

The Alliance Project. (2000). *New Jersey City University: Recruiting and retaining diverse groups of students in special education preservice programs*. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from <http://www.alliance2k.org/products/1002.pdf>

This report describes student recruitment practices for the Department of Special Education at New Jersey City University. These practices were developed through four federally funded projects to increase recruitment and retention of students of color in special education preservice programs. Researchers found that many students of color never considered special education as a career, their personal experiences led to negative views of special education, they were unaware of the Department of Special Education at New Jersey City University, and they sought professions that offered better salaries.

The department made changes in its recruitment strategies, including communicating with admissions personnel about the students that should be recruited; organizing and maintaining a database on students from underrepresented groups; involving current students as recruiters; “selling” special education as a career; and producing a recruitment video targeting high school students. Retention strategies and infrastructure improvements also were made. From 1994 to 1999, African-American special education majors increased from 6 percent to 15 percent and Hispanic special education majors increased from 2 percent to 13 percent. Attrition is about 10 percent per year, compared to 50 percent for the university as a whole.

Resource 25: *Enlarging the Pool*

National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education. (2003). *Enlarging the pool: How higher education partnerships are recruiting and supporting future special educators from underrepresented groups*. Arlington, VA: Author. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from <http://www.special-ed-careers.org/pdf/enlargingthepool.pdf>

The need for special education teachers—especially from diverse cultures—continues to grow. This report recommends the establishment of university-school partnerships that combine good practice with local plans to solve local shortages. It presents a number of characteristics of good partnerships, successful recruitment strategies, a variety of support strategies for underrepresented students in preparation programs, and examples of programs that have used these strategies successfully.

Resource 26: Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)

Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education
Website: <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html>

OSEP funds grants to higher education institutions for the purpose of increasing the numbers of qualified special education teachers, paraeducators, and related services personnel. This longstanding program is extremely important in preventing even greater shortages of personnel and improving their qualifications. Graduates who receive scholarships through these projects must provide special education or related services to students with disabilities for a period of two years for every year they received assistance or repay the stipend.

Strategy 8: Bundle Incentives to Improve the Benefits and Conditions of Teaching and Learning

States and districts have offered an array of incentives to attract teachers in high-needs areas to schools that need them. However, no single incentive—including increased pay—has proven successful on a large scale.

Resource 27: *Recruiting and Retaining Teachers for Hard-to-Staff Schools* (Which Recommends Flexible Incentive Packages)

Berry, B., & Hirsch, E. (2005). *Recruiting and retaining teachers for hard-to-staff schools* (Issue Brief). Washington, DC: NGA Center for Best Practices. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0510recruitingteachers.pdf>

The authors suggest that policymakers should consider bundling incentives to improve the benefits and conditions of teaching in rural and other hard-to-staff settings. Noting that the incentives that attract new, young teachers are different from those that would attract a veteran teacher, they suggest that districts offer a “flexible package of financial incentives” (p. 1) and that those incentives be designed to meet different local needs.

Resource 28: Quality-of-Life Issues and Stipends at Pine Strawberry School in Arizona

Contact: Pine Strawberry School, 3868 N. Pine Creek Dr., Pine, AZ 85544

Mike Clark, principal of Pine Strawberry School has marketed quality-of-life issues to recruit and retain a highly qualified teaching staff, despite paying beginning teachers \$26,000 a year. Unsure how long that strategy will be effective, his school board recently approved a \$2,000 annual stipend for special education teachers. The average Arizona teacher made just under \$42,000 for the 2004–05 school year.

Resource 29: Stipends and Increased Salaries for Beginning Teachers at Ash Fork (Arizona) Unified School District

Contact: Ash Fork Joint Unified School District, Ash Fork, Arizona

Source: Shaffer, M. (2006, May 24). Feds’ teacher rules strain rural areas. *The Arizona Republic*. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/news/articles/0524ruralschools0524.html>

Ash Fork (Arizona) Joint Unified School District recently increased its beginning teacher salary to \$36,000, among the highest in Arizona. New teachers also get a \$6,000 stipend to live within the district. Noting the impact such incentives have on the district’s overall financial picture, Superintendent Gary Spiker believes districts have no choice if they are going to meet No Child Left Behind guidelines.

Resource 30: Benefits Offered by Wellpinit School District in Spokane, Washington

Contact: Wellpinit School District, Spokane Indian Reservation, Spokane, Washington

The Wellpinit School District in Spokane, Washington, advertises for staff with offerings of subsidized housing, laptop computers, eight computers, a copier for each classroom, a full-time teaching assistant, staff meetings of 30 minutes or less, and class sizes averaging 17 students. If teachers eat with students, they also get free breakfast and lunch. The two-building district serves approximately 400 K–12 students on the Spokane Indian Reservation in Washington.

Strategy 9: Develop and Implement a Coordinated State Recruitment Effort

Many states are using an assortment of technologies and strategies to launch statewide special educator recruitment campaigns.

Resource 31: TEACH California

TEACH California

Website: <http://www.teachcalifornia.org>

Administered by the Special Education Division of California's Department of Education, this website provides answers for individuals of diverse educational backgrounds who are considering a teaching career. It features video interviews of teachers who work in various settings and sample lesson plans intended to give a sense of the teachers' lives. Teacher credentialing requirements and processes are explained, and prospective teachers can complete their own plan to become credentialed. The website also includes a fully searchable database of teacher recruitment and preparation programs and extensive financial aid information.

Resource 32: Become One: Recruiting Special Educators in Virginia

Become One: Recruiting Special Educators in Virginia

Website: <http://teachvirginia.org/become.cfm>

As part of the TeachVirginia campaign, the Become One initiative aims to recruit special education teachers for Virginia's public schools. It includes radio and television announcements, a toll-free information number, and a website. The website includes information on special education personnel preparation programs, direct links to Virginia's higher education special education programs, and tuition assistance and financial aid resource links. The initiative is sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education, Teachers-Teachers.com, and the National Clearinghouse for Professionals in Special Education.

Resource 33: Become a Special Educator in Tennessee (BASE-TN) Teaching Program

Become a Special Educator in Tennessee (BASE-TN) Teaching Program, Tennessee Department of Special Education

Website: <http://www.state.tn.us/education/base-tn/>

The Become a Special Educator in Tennessee (BASE-TN) teaching program provides limited financial assistance to qualified individuals seeking initial licensure or endorsements in special education. Participants commit to teach students with disabilities ages birth to 21 for two years for each academic year of support. The BASE-TN website lists participating colleges and universities with contact information for each, terms of program participation, and applications processes and forms.

Strategy 10: Use Available National Resources

There are a plethora of national resources intended to help states, districts, and schools recruit and retain special education teachers. Resources range from financial aid to media materials and direct technical assistance to state teams.

Resource 34: National Center for Special Education Personnel and Related Service Providers

National Center for Special Education Personnel and Related Service Providers, at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)

Websites: <http://www.nasdse.org/projects.cfm?pageprojectid=11> and <http://www.personnelcenter.org/>

NASDSE's Personnel Center works to build national and state capacity to recruit, train, and retain diverse, highly qualified special educators. The center has developed a national recruitment campaign targeting individuals from middle school through mid-career changers. Each year, it selects up to five states for services, including statewide comprehensive planning for recruitment, preparation, and retention of special education-related careers. Center staff also facilitate personnel data planning meetings and personnel development taskforce meetings that include higher education, local school districts, parent and professional groups, and state department of education staff. Target states also receive 20 free district memberships to Teachers-Teachers.com, diversity recruitment training for local school boards, and \$10,000 grants for statewide media recruitment campaigns using brochures, a recruitment video, public service announcements, and assistance from public relations professionals.

Resource 35: Center for Teacher Quality

Center for Teacher Quality (CTQ), at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)

Website: <http://www.nasdse.org/projects.cfm?pageprojectid=18>

The NASDSE Center for Teacher Quality is funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. Center staff members work with state teams, including state directors of teacher licensing/program approval, state directors of special education, and deans of schools of education. The goal is to improve the preparation, licensing, and professional development of both general and special education teachers of students with disabilities.

Resource 36: Federal Loan Forgiveness Through the Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.) *Enactment of the Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005: Loan issues*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved July 10, 2006, from <http://www.ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/attachments/GEN-06-02A.pdf>

President George W. Bush signed the Higher Education Reconciliation Act (HERA) of 2005 on February 8, 2006. The act makes permanent certain teacher loan forgiveness provisions included in the Taxpayer-Teacher Protection Act of 2004. The HERA authorizes up to \$17,500 in student loan forgiveness for certain highly qualified full-time elementary and secondary school special education teachers whose primary responsibility is to provide special education to children with disabilities (as those terms are defined in Section 602 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). To qualify, a special education teacher must be teaching children with disabilities that correspond to the teacher's special education training and must have demonstrated knowledge and teaching skills in the content areas of the elementary or secondary school curriculum in which he or she is teaching.

Real Life Example: Partnerships at Molly Starks Elementary School Serve Students With Special Needs

If you are a child born poor and with special needs, chances are the odds are stacked against you. But if you are born poor and with special needs in Bennington, Vermont, you have a better chance than most of breaking out of the cycle of poverty and dependency. That is because you will likely attend the Molly Starks Elementary School.

Molly Starks School is a full-service school. That means it places equal value on the academic and human development of children. With strained local finances, the school uses Title I and other federal funds and a host of community partnerships to ensure that every child's needs are detected early and met.

A comprehensive health and wellness program provides early detection and preventive services. Most striking in this area is the little dentist office tucked down a short hallway of the school, complete with a child-sized dental chair. Michael Brady, a retired dentist, has regular hours, and the kids of Molly Stark go as easily to the dentist as to gym or music class. Brady sees all Medicaid-eligible children—children who might rarely see a dentist's chair were it not down the hall at school. A clinical social worker and a family outreach worker provide a range of services, including play therapy, general mental health, and living support for families. A breakfast program, healthy snacks cart, an annual health fair and a sixth-grade wellness convention add to the range of services available.

Partnerships with the Vermont Agency of Human Services and Medicaid provide an on-site clinical psychologist and an on-site pediatrician. Children with no primary-care doctor receive wellness physicals and inoculations at no cost.

Early education and all-day kindergarten programs service all area children 3 to 5 years old and provide developmental screening and consultations for children from birth to 5 years. Title I and special education services are carefully coordinated to avoid duplication and maximize resources.

Parent/teacher/student goal-setting conferences are individually scheduled at the beginning of the school year to establish written goals for each student. Goals are both academic and social, and strategies are discussed to reach the goals. These goals are monitored as the year begins and revisited in February at a midyear conference.

Molly Starks School could in no way support the special education staff required to offer all the services that are available to children with special needs. From an initial meeting with the police detective, a pediatrician, and a psychologist, partnerships to strengthen students and families have grown.

As Principal Jurg Jenzer stated, "At Molly Starks, we will do whatever it takes to support children. Agencies in and of themselves do not make the difference; people do, and we work in collaboration with people to provide supports to the children."

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Additional Resources

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Organizations

American Association for Employment in Education, 3040 Riverside Drive, Suite 125, Columbus, OH 43211. Website: <http://www.aeee.org>

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1307 New York Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20005-4701. <http://www.aacte.org>

American Federation of Teachers, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001. Website: <http://www.aft.org>

East Carolina University Rural Education Institute, 209 East 3rd Street, Building 165, College of Education, Greenville, NC 27858

National Association of State Directors of Special Education Inc., 1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 320, Alexandria, VA 22314. Website: <http://www.nasdse.org>

National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, 1225 Providence Road, PMB #116, Whitinsville, MA 01588

National Research Center for Rural Education Support, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Website: <http://www.nrcres.org>