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Special Educators' Perceptions of Paperwork Demands and Job Efficacy: A Qualitative Study

Deborah K. Imhoff
Dominican University of California

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Special Educators' Perceptions of Paperwork Demands and Job Efficacy: A Qualitative Study

Deborah K. Imhoff

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Abstract

This study examines the growing evidence that paperwork burdens associated with the jobs of special education teachers are contributing to high attrition rates among these educators. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact that paperwork demands have on special educators' decisions to remain in this profession. In examining the literature for the primary reasons of difficulty in retaining special education teachers, several themes emerged: increasing paperwork burdens and administrative tasks as a result of budget cuts and increased class sizes in both special and general education classes, NCLB legal requirements and accountability policies, and time constraints. In-depth interviews were conducted with nine education specialists in two different elementary special education settings: the resource specialist program and the special day class program. The education specialists were from two different school districts in northern California. The analysis revealed striking similarities between the themes of the findings and the themes that emerged in the review of the previous literature. The findings illustrate the enormous pressures special educators are experiencing with paperwork demands, time allotment per instructional and non-instructional paperwork as well as teaching and serving students, and the effects of burnout that occur in both new and experienced special education teachers. The findings provide evidence that today's special educators face unprecedented work conditions and expectations that affect personal and professional job efficacy.

Introduction

For over 20 years, there has been a chronic shortage of special education teachers nationwide compounded by high, annual, attrition rates. Research shows that for teachers leaving this field, either to teach in a general education setting or to explore a new career, one of the main reasons for leaving is the burden of paperwork associated with the job in addition to teaching students with special needs. This study examines the perceptions of current special educators regarding paperwork and administrative tasks associated with their jobs to determine if the current environment supports previous findings. Additionally, the aim of this study is to investigate the impact of demands that the current educational environment is having on special education teachers.

Background and Need

Research shows that there is a long-term history of teacher shortages in the field of special education in the United States since the late 1980s. As the demand for fully qualified special educators increases annually, this nation continues to witness significant attrition rates among special educators in elementary and secondary school settings.

According to the U.S. Department of Education report, "Teacher Shortage Area Nationwide," there has been a shortage of special education teachers (K-12) in California every year since 1993 (U.S. Department of Education, April, 2012). Nationwide, the U.S. Department of Education states, "The national shortage of highly qualified special education teachers is 11.2%. In other words approximately 45, 514 of those serving as special education teachers do not meet required standards. . . This shortage has persisted for decades" (8). Furthermore, projections of demands for special educators indicate that there will be an increase of 17% from

the present time to 2018 which represents a rate that is greater than what is predicted for all other occupations (Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor, 2009).

Since 1987, studies show that there has been an increasing shortage of fully certified, special education teachers in comparison with general education teachers (Tourkin, Pugh, Fondelier, Parmer, Cole, Jackson, 2004). Their study found the following:

- (a) the shortage of fully certified SETs (Special Education Teachers) increased from 7.4% in 1993-1994 to 12.2% in 2001-2002s (2%-4% greater than the shortage of fully certified GETs (General Education Teachers); (b) the number of additional, fully certified SETs needed almost doubled from 25,000 in 1993-1994 to 49,000 in 2001-2002; (c) the shortage of fully certified teachers was exacerbated by entering teachers (only 44.4% of entering SETs were fully certified); and (d) only 53.1% of first-time, entering SETs with extensive teacher preparation were fully certified. (Tourkin, et al., 2004, p. 303)

In addition to the increasing shortage of special educators, there is the problem of a high annual rate of attrition. According to recent research, attrition rates of special education and general education teachers in public schools are comparable. Approximately 10% of both special educators and general educators leave their positions every year (Kaiser, 2011, National Center for Education Statistics, p. 3).

There are differing reasons for the high attrition rates among special educators versus general educators. Research indicates that a significant number of special educators nationwide leave their field within 5 years to seek teaching positions in general education. During the first four years of full-time teaching, “24% leave teaching employment, 31% switch to General Ed

teaching positions, the total of which equals a staggering 55% of Special Education Teachers leaving their original teaching positions within the first four years of employment” (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2005, p. 47).

The costs associated with teacher attrition are staggering. “The NCTAF (The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future) 2007 report estimates teacher attrition costs of over \$7 billion each year in America’s public schools” (Flynt & Morton, 2009, p. 2). The financial impact combined with the academic impact that attrition imposes is taking a toll on the education that children are receiving today. “Low income and low achieving schools experience high teacher turnover rates. Oftentimes teachers hired to replace those who have left are young, inexperienced, and may not be the most effective with high-need students” (Flynt & Morton, 2009, p. 2).

Chief among the reasons for special educators leaving the field is the demand of paperwork associated with the job (Ahearn, 2011, p. 7). Among the research on paperwork burdens, three main themes of paperwork overload emerge, including:

- paperwork related to Individual Education Plan reports, Behavior Support Plans, Assessments, Progress Reports
- administrative forms issued after the 2004 reauthorization;
- current paperwork and administrative reports related to job requirements, physician requests, specialist requests, district requests.

Statement of Problem

There is growing evidence that paperwork burdens associated with the jobs of special education teachers is contributing to high attrition rates among these educators. There is a need to understand how the current demands associated with administrative tasks, legal accountability

and reform, and paperwork associated with documentation, instruction, and testing are impacting special educators' perceptions and abilities of job performance and job efficacy.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact that paperwork demands have on special educators' decisions to remain in this profession. Due to the exodus of teachers leaving the special education field, either in search of a teaching position in general education or to switch to a different career, it is important to explore the impact that current demands place on special education teachers. This study examines the amount of time special educators spend on specific paperwork areas other than curriculum, teaching, and lesson planning, such as Individual Education Plans (IEPs), Behavior Support Plans (BSPs), administrative work, student assessments for IEPs, Student Study Teams (SSTs), and preparation of legal documents associated with school, district, county, and state requirements.

Research Question(s) and/or Hypotheses

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. Is the paperwork load increasing for special educators, and if so, what is the cause, according to the teachers?
2. What are the effects of paperwork and administrative duties on job efficacy among special education teachers?
3. How are increased class sizes, budget cuts, and diverse disabilities of special needs populations within the classroom affecting the amount of paperwork for special educators?

Theoretical Rationale

Empirical evidence demonstrates the correlation between quantitative overload and scores on individual burnout in the field. Studies show that there are significant increases in staff-child ratios in day-care centers and preschools as well as increased class sizes in both general education and special education classrooms from kindergarten through high school. These increased teacher-to-student ratios are associated with high levels of burnout experienced by competent teachers and are considered to be one reason teachers are seeking alternative employment (Cunningham, 1982, p. 219).

Teachers in the field of special education are confronted with multiple responsibilities in addition to teaching children with disabilities. Many teachers enter this field with a calling to work closely with children with special needs in order to support and encourage these students along their rigorous journey in learning. Parents' highest concerns for their children involve finding a teacher who inspires and enjoys working with their child. A major issue for special educators is the use of efficient time management in balancing effective instruction with demands for paperwork completion.

Adding to the stress levels of special educators are the issues of bureaucratic-driven legal requirements. Data shows that special educators have difficulty fulfilling the required paperwork and related administrative duties in addition to teaching a large class of special education students (Carlson et al, 2003, p. 17).

Due to the current changes in district, county, and state education laws, the increase in special education and general education class sizes, full inclusion of special education students in general education classes, and districts reclaiming severely disabled students from county programs, increased paperwork requirements and legal documents demanded of special

education teachers have risen to new heights. Based on the increasing demands for documentation in multiple areas, it is important to study the impact these demands have on retention of special education teachers.

Review of the Literature

The literature reviewed here examines the roles that paperwork and administrative tasks place on special education teachers with regard to teacher retention. The history of teacher shortages in special education along with rising attrition rates continues to create untenable and costly problems for school districts nationwide (Brownell, Hirsch, & Seo, 2004.) In addition to the shortage of fully qualified special education teachers, school districts are experiencing difficulties retaining their special education teachers for longer than five years. “The Council for Exceptional Children’s “Bright Futures for Exceptional Learners” (2000) reports that approximately 40% of the special education teachers entering the field leave special education before their fifth year of teaching” (Whitaker, 2003, p. 113). Overwhelming paperwork burdens associated with increasing class sizes, full inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream classes, and the pressure from administrative tasks are investigated in this literature review as being among the primary reasons for special education teacher burnout.

Review of the Previous Research

Special education has undergone significant growth and changes since 1975 when learning disabilities first became part of educational law in the United States. “. . .The number of students identified as having a learning disability has grown by almost 250%, from approximately 800,000 students to almost 3,000,000 students” (Pierangelo & Guiliani, 2006, p. 15).

Research today demonstrates that the peak of the population of students with disabilities in the United States occurred “. . . in 2004-05 with 6.72 million youngsters comprising 13.8 percent of the national student body. . . Since then, the number and proportion of students with disabilities has decreased steadily, falling to 13.1 percent of the national student body by 2009-

10, or 6.48 million students” (Scull & Winkler, 2011, p. 12). The most current data on the ratio of special education teachers to students with disabilities, nationwide, states that “there are sixty-three (special education teachers) per thousand (students with disabilities) – or 405,000 teachers overall – by 2008-09” (Scull & Winkler, 2011, p. 12). This ratio is the equivalent of one special education teacher per sixteen students with disabilities.

Studies reveal a significant and ongoing problem with teacher shortages in special education while attrition rates continue to rise among special educators.

Our findings show that the shortage of fully certified SET's (Special Education Teachers) has been chronic, increasing, and serious. Following a gradual decline in the percentage shortage of SET's from 1987-1988 to 1993-1994, the shortage gradually increased from 7.4% in 1993-1994 to 12.2% in 2001-2002, and ranged from 2% to 4% greater than for GET's (General Education Teachers). As the teaching force in special education grew during the 8-year period, the number of additional fully certified SET's needed to replace the partially certified SET's almost doubled from 25,000 to 49,000. (Boe & Cook, 2006, pp. 455-456)

Retaining highly qualified, special educators who have entered the field is a constant problem. Studies indicate that many states are reporting higher attrition rates for special education teachers than for general education teachers (Katsiyannis, Zhang, and Conroy, 2003). “Up to 9.3 percent of special education teachers leave the field at the end of their first year of teaching and 7.4 percent move to general education annually” (Boe, Cook, Sunderland, 2005, p. 38).

McLeskey, in his Foreward of Billingsley's study, “Cultivating and Keeping Committed Special Educators: What Principals and District Leaders Can Do,” states,

Within four years of beginning to teach, over one-half of all special education teachers either leave the profession altogether or transfer to general education. . .Perhaps the most alarming statistic regarding special education attrition is the transfer rate to general education. Special educators are ten times more likely to transfer to general education as general educators are to transfer to special education (Billingsley, 2005, p. xvii).

The combination of increased responsibilities and resulting paperwork for special educators along with continued budget cuts, decrease in paraprofessional assistance, and increasing class sizes creates the perfect storm for special educators to experience stress overload and early burnout within the first few years of employment.

The well-known education correspondent for PBS News Hour and producer of several education documentaries, John Merrow, examined national attempts to fill the shortage of qualified teachers, including major recruitment and incentive efforts by various states. He concluded that enhanced teacher recruitment is not the answer: "We're misdiagnosing the problem as 'recruitment' when it's really retention. Simply put, we train teachers poorly and then treat them badly – and so they leave in droves" (Merrow, 1999, p. 1).

In examining the literature regarding primary causes for difficulties in retaining special education teachers, several themes emerged: increasing paperwork burdens and administrative tasks due to budget cuts and increased class sizes in both special and general education classes, NCLB legal requirements and accountability policies, and time constraints. These factors, in addition to other pressing concerns of job efficacy, consistently point to special education teachers experiencing early burnout in their careers.

Impacts of Budget Cuts and Increased Class Sizes. Due to the long-term effects and severe budget cuts of the recession beginning in 2007, California special education teachers in both resource and special day class settings as well as general education teachers in mainstream settings are facing radical changes in classroom populations. There are increased class sizes (up to 33 students per class, 13% of which are mild-moderate, special education students), increased caseloads of students with IEPs, Behavior Support Plans, and 504 Plans (federally mandated plans that define modifications and accommodations for students with disabilities allowing them to perform at the same level as their peers), and substantial paperwork demands associated with these increases. With California's projected fiscal year 2013 budget shortfall totaling \$8.4 billion dollars, and the federal Budget Control Act of 2011, "special education would be among the many federal programs hit with an 8 to 9 percent cut – a reduction of about \$1 billion in special education aid" (Weider, 2012, "State Special Education Rate Vary Widely", para. 17). According to Weider, research indicates that state and local sources are responsible for paying up to 90 percent of the actual cost of special education (Weider, 2012, para. 15).

In [REDACTED] County, California, the past two years have shown dramatic budget cuts in education. According to Benefield (2010), research shows that in [REDACTED] County, over half of the school districts eliminated classroom days from the upcoming school year in addition to dropping staff development days.

Public school enrollment dropped by nearly 4 percent. . . [REDACTED] has experienced the most precipitous fall, dropping from a peak of 8,300 students in 1999 to 5,791 in 2011. The district has closed three elementary campuses and a middle school since 2002. . . In [REDACTED], deep budget cuts and rapidly declining enrollment has pushed kindergarten through sixth-grade class

sizes up to an average of 30 students. The teacher corps fell from 323 full-time positions in 2005-06 to 266 in 2009-10 – one of the most dramatic drops in ██████ County (Benefield, 2011, “Reshaping ██████ schools”, para. 14).

This is valuable information to consider because the research being done for this qualitative study involves special educators working in ██████ County schools.

Increased Paperwork Tasks. With the reduction in the workforce, increase in class sizes for both special and general education classrooms, and associated paperwork burdens for special educators, it is important to investigate the impact and the delineation of paperwork tasks special education teachers must process. Billingsley (2011) acknowledges that beginning special education teachers have difficulty with the myriad of new challenges emanating from school sites, districts, and statewide laws.

For example, in a survey of SETs (Special Education Teachers) in several states, White and Mason (2006) found that many new teachers needed assistance with paperwork and IEPs (84%); referral, placement, and evaluation (75%); materials (70%); behavior management (60%); getting acclimated to the school (66%); instructional strategies (58%); assessments (54%); collaboration with general educators (54%); parent-family conferences (48%); and learning/using the curriculum (46%) (Billingsley, 2011, p. 22).

Wilmshurst and Brue in their study, “What Special Education Teachers are Saying About Their Profession,” concur with the current findings about paperwork demands.

Frustration with paperwork and non-teaching responsibilities was high on the list of reasons (for special education teachers leaving their profession). The special education teachers who responded to the TCER survey indicated that they spent an average of 57.9 hours a month (approximately 1.4 weeks per month) engaged in non-teaching activities (for example, planning, paperwork, meetings, and committees) (Wilmshurst & Brue, 2006, para. 3).

Despite the evidence of teacher shortages and high attrition rates among special educators, there are researchers who challenge the existing data regarding special education teachers leaving the field. Boe, Cook, and Sunderland presented their research on “Turnover of Special Education Teachers: New Research on the Extent and Impact of Exit Attrition, Transfer to General Education, and School Transfer” to the Breakout Session at the 2005 OSEP project Directors Conference in Washington, D.C. Their findings indicate that:

1. Teacher attrition is not higher than that of other occupations, and it may be lower than rates in other occupations;
2. Only 43,000 out of 170,000 teachers who leave their jobs annually do so to escape from teaching;
3. Of the 18,500 special education teachers who leave teaching annually, only 6,800 seek to escape. These teachers ought to leave because they are unqualified or not well suited to the teaching field.
4. Personal reasons for leaving the teaching profession hold as much weight as the reason for escaping teaching when teachers exit the profession (Boe, E. E., Cook, L. H., & Sunderland, R. J., 2005, pp. 15, 27, 40).

Accordingly, Billingsley, in her presentation at Virginia Tech, College of Education, in 2006, states, “. . . Personal factors account for about 1/3 of leaving decision” (Billingsley, 2006, “Summary of Special Education Turnover Findings”, para. 3). After a decade of research, Billingsley emphasizes that many factors contribute to special educators’ decisions to leave the field, including work environment factors (role demands, case loads, salaries, school climate, administrative support), younger and less experienced special educators are more likely to leave than older, more experienced counterparts, unqualified teachers are more likely to leave than highly-qualified teachers, special education teachers with higher test scores are more likely to leave, and finally, teachers’ personal reasons influence decisions to leave. Futernick in his article, "A Possible Dream: Retaining California’s Special Education Teachers,” corroborates Billingsley’s work by stating that special education teachers leave the profession due to “bureaucratic impediments, lack of support from the district office, IEPs and related paperwork, low staff morale, lack of resources, and inadequate support for special education students” (Futernick, 2007, p. 2). Kaff in her study, “Multitasking is Multitaxing: Why Special Educators Are Leaving The Field,” states, “Results showed that for all special educators the most important determinant of intent to stay in teaching was workplace conditions” (Kaff, 2004, p. 11).

It is clear from the research that special educators face a variety of challenges associated with their jobs, especially in the areas of non-instructional and instructional paperwork and related duties. There is no single answer or solution to the stressful problems that special educators face in their profession. Most researchers seem to concur that the issues of increased paperwork, increased responsibilities, lack of support in the workplace, and time constraints all contribute to teachers exiting the special education profession.

NCLB Legal Requirements and Accountability Policies. Much of the paperwork involved in special education relates to IDEA and NCLB requirements. The IEP is just one example of the expanding nature of required reporting and accountability. In Kaff's study, "Multitasking is Multitasking: Why Special Educators Are Leaving The Field," she states,

Fifty-two of the respondents reported that they were responsible for an overwhelming amount of paperwork. One said, "Our paperwork demands are a bureaucrat's worst nightmare." Many of the concerns over paperwork were with the increasingly complex and lengthy nature of the IEP and the demand for increased accountability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Another respondent stated, "When I started teaching, IEPs were at most two pages in length, the IEP I completed yesterday was a total of 14 pages. I would like to eliminate or at least streamline the IEP. That task alone eats up much of the time I would previously have devoted to teaching my students (Kaff, 2004, p. 12).

Luekens, Lyter, Fox, and Chandler in their 2004 report on teacher attrition confirm the stress that special educators feel with the burdens of legal paperwork.

As the research indicates, continued iterations of promulgated legal requirements related to licensure and required paperwork are viewed as a burden to special education teachers. . Implementing legally required changes from laws such as NCLB and IDEA may be challenging because almost a quarter of special education teachers reported dissatisfaction with changes in their job responsibilities in the 2000-01 Teacher Follow-Up Survey (Luekens et al., 2004, p. 3).

In their study of 40 currently tenured and formerly tenured special education teachers, Nance and Calabrese affirm the pressures special education teachers experience due to continual changes in state requirements.

Current tenured (CT) special education teachers report feeling overwhelmed by the workload they have related to new state assessment requirements. One CT shared, "The state assessments are just killing me because I can't teach everything I want to teach." Another CT "explained how time requirements impacted their teaching, "I have turned into a paperwork machine." And yet another CT admitted, "I'm tired of waking up at 2:00 a.m. and worrying about state assessments . . . This job, or any job, is not worth losing good health (Nance and Calabrese, 2009, p. 436).

Other factors in their study include the time it takes to complete all the administrative tasks which interfere with student instructional time. A teacher participant in the study said, "The increased paperwork, trying to keep on top of best practice in the field, and the ever changing technology in the field are time consuming. I find I usually work at least 10 hours a day" (Nance and Calabrese, 2009, p. 437).

Time Constraints Lead to Lower Efficacy and Burnout.

Not only does the immediate and consistent amount of paperwork overwhelm special educators, but over time, the excessive burdens and pressures of paperwork overload take a toll on the efficacy of the job for the special education teacher. In a study by Billingsley (2003), she states that the difficulties special education teachers experience in their jobs, such as prolonged or excessive work problems due to stress, decreased job satisfaction, and a reduced professional commitment are negative affective reactions teachers have toward their work situations. "The combination of multiple, interacting work-related problems (e.g., too many students, too much

paperwork, too little support, and the lack of needed resources) clearly weakens the teacher's ability to be effective and therefore reduces their opportunities for the positive, intrinsic rewards that are important to teachers" (Billingsley, 2003, p. 26).

Research indicates that new, special education teachers are not prepared for the onslaught of job commitments that far outweigh the commitments of new, general education teachers. In Kaff's study (2004), "Multitasking is Multitaxing: Why Special Educators Are Leaving the Field," she reports that the most frequently mentioned reasons given by special educators for leaving the profession involve time commitments and money. Kaff suggested that districts should offer additional compensation for special education teachers who work beyond the regular school day. She also feels that more clerical assistance and support, equity to building space, and curriculum resources be made available to these educators.

SPeNSE (Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education) conducted a Paperwork Substudy in 2003 in which 1,333 special education teachers were selected to answer questions about time spent on specific administrative duties and paperwork. Results confirmed the numbers of hours special education teachers spend on paperwork and associated tasks.

The typical special education teacher spends 5 hours a week on administrative duties and paperwork. . . (Teachers) said they spend an average of 2 hours a week on each IEP. . . 1.5 hours attending each IEP meeting, 4 hours per month printing or copying special education forms, 2 hours per month scheduling IEP meetings, 1 hour per month mailing notices to parents, and 4 hours per month tracking paperwork from other teachers that is required for the IEP process or other aspects of special education (SPeNSE, 2002, p. 5).

The data and research that cover this topic of time management with regard to paperwork requirements and demands vary widely among researchers. While the data from the SPeNSE

Paperwork Substudy delineates the time spent on weekly administrative duties and paperwork by a typical special educator, Nance and Calabrese (2009) in their study report the ways in which current paperwork demands affect the special educators. It is important to note that Nance and Calabrese seem to infer that the high levels of stress associated with ongoing demands can lead to teacher burnout.

Current and former tenured special education teachers believe that legally-required changes affected them in practice. . . Others shared how increasing requirements increased the amount of their workloads, including longer IEP meetings and more forms to complete. . . The amount of paperwork, high levels of stress, and seemingly constant state of change, created a culture of frustration. . . The deep levels of frustration, in many instances, led to a growing sense of alienation – a separation of the worker from his/her work (Nance, Calabrese, 2009, p. 436).

With the information and evidence from these various sources about the impact of increasing paperwork demands on special educators, it is important to acknowledge the signs associated with job burnout. Cordes and Dougherty in their study, “A Review and an Integration of Research on Job Burnout (1993)”, define the concept of burnout as being a three part model conceptualized by Maslach and colleagues. These three components are comprised of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or dehumanization, and diminished personal accomplishment. They claim that these three components are present in those people who experience a decline in feelings of competency with their job performance which can lead to decreased success and fewer interactions with others. “Burnout is a distinctive aspect of stress in that it has been defined and Dougherty, 1993, p. 622).

Summary of Major Themes

The major themes in the review of previous research address the ongoing problems of teacher shortage and teacher retention in the field of special education. Primary among the many reasons for problems with retention of highly qualified teachers in this field is the amount of paperwork and associated administrative tasks that special educators face in addition to the duties and responsibilities of teaching. Other themes that directly affect special educators' perceptions of job efficacy and self-worth, and which are related to paperwork, are pressures to meet deadlines and time constraints, legal responsibilities involving IDEA and NCLB, legal requirements related to licensure, budget cuts, increasing class sizes, and lack of administrative support and resources.

For new teachers entering the field of special education, there is consensus among the research that these educators are not fully prepared to handle the job commitments and responsibilities that must be effectively managed on a daily basis. Some researchers feel that role overload associated with paperwork burdens and administrative tasks which interfere with instructional time significantly contribute to special education teachers' decisions to leave the field.

How Present Study Will Extend Literature

In light of current demands and even more paperwork in recent years, it is vital to investigate the current statistics of even a small population of special educators to examine if the amount of time they require for paperwork and administrative tasks parallels the findings of ten years ago and if these indicators reflect the pattern of job burnout. The intent of this study is to delve further into the areas of how special educators spend their time, the specific areas that demand the most attention with regard to paperwork, what special educators consider as

reasonable caseloads, and the ways in which special educators might restructure their roles to become more efficient and eminently more satisfied teachers.

Methodology

The main focus of this study is to analyze the current effects of paperwork and administrative duties among elementary school special education teachers. The stressors of paperwork demands are directly associated with increased class sizes, increased caseloads, budget cuts, and the diverse population of students with disabilities.

The researcher created interview questions designed to elicit responses that clarified the current expectations and duties associated with paperwork that special educators experience in their jobs, including planning and preparation of instruction and associated classroom responsibilities. The questions were later analyzed for the content of the interviews, particularly key themes and common attitudes across interviews while comparing the results to previous research.

Sample and Site

Two school districts in Northern California were chosen for this study. In both districts and in both the RSP and the SDC settings, students have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that follow them throughout their school career until they graduate from high school. The RSP teacher and/or the SDC teacher are the case managers for their students and are responsible for providing specialized instruction and pertinent goals that help students to access the curriculum and achieve their highest potential. The IEPs are reviewed annually by an IEP team comprised of both administrative personnel, teachers, specialists, and parents to review the annual goals, progress made, and to write a new IEP that addresses the student's abilities and objectives. Every three years, there is a Triennial IEP that includes a full battery of assessments given by the special education teacher, the school psychologist, and other specialists involved, such as

Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and Adaptive Physical Education Therapists, to determine the student's progress and changes in performance and behavior.

The school districts sampled in this study were chosen because of accessibility to the participants. Several of the special educators in the first district have aided the researcher in the past during student teaching and special education teaching assignments. Furthermore, they have expressed an interest in participating in this study. In the second district, the special education teacher expressed interest in participating in this study and was instrumental in offering support to the researcher during student teaching. The researcher chose this educator to obtain a perspective from a first-year, special educator in an SDC setting.

Both school districts are located in rural counties in Northern California, and both school districts are in Program Improvement. Program Improvement is defined as:

The ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) requires all states to implement statewide accountability systems based on challenging state standards in reading and mathematics, annual testing for all students in grades three through eight, and annual statewide progress objectives ensuring that all groups of students reach proficiency within 12 years. Assessment results are disaggregated by socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency to ensure that no group is left behind. LEAs and schools that fail to make AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) toward statewide proficiency goals are subject to improvement and corrective action measures (California Department of Education, Program Improvement, April 21, 2011).

In California, PI is the formal designation for Title I-funded schools and LEAs (Local Education Areas) that fail to make AYP for two consecutive years (California Department of Education, Program Improvement, April 21, 2011).

In today's special day classrooms, individual students present with multiple disabilities which affect the learning environment according to the diversity of disabilities present, various behavior issues, differentiated curriculum, and frequent assessments – all of which involve extensive planning, preparation, and paperwork. Resource specialist teachers in the first district have a cap on the amount of students on their caseloads, that of twenty-eight students. Special day class teachers have a recommended maximum of thirteen students per class, but the actual number of students in SDC classes ranges from fourteen to eighteen students per class. Furthermore, paraprofessionals who assist special education teachers in the district have experienced severe cutbacks in their hours in recent years while enduring increases in payments for benefits.

The type of sampling chosen for this study is a purposive sampling of individuals selected who are special education teachers in elementary schools. The nine participants selected for this study include three RSP (Resource Specialist Program) teachers, two of whom have had over fifteen years experience in this position. Two of the participants are former SDC (Special Day Class) teachers (currently a resource teacher and a kindergarten teacher) who each had over nineteen years experience teaching special day classes. One participant is a current SDC teacher who has over twenty-six years experience teaching in a special day class. The remaining four SDC teachers have had less than five years experience teaching in a special day class setting.

The school district for the first eight participants serves approximately 6,000 students residing in one smaller city (population of 7,265) and one medium-sized city (population of 40,971) within this district. There are six elementary schools, one middle school, one high school, one alternative school, and one continuation school in this district. The enrollment for elementary schools is approximately 3,058. Approximately 18.2% of the student population are

English language learners, 39.7% of students receive free/reduced price meals. There are 762 students in this district who receive special education services, 400 of whom are in elementary schools.

In this district, there are six resource specialist teachers who work with students with disabilities who are mainstreamed into general education classes. These students are usually pulled out from their mainstream class and receive instruction in a designated RSP classroom situated on the same campus. Special education services include intensive intervention in English-language arts and mathematics as well as including supplemental instruction in science and social studies. Students who attend RSP classes are designated as having mild to moderate disabilities. The maximum caseload allowed for RSP teachers is twenty-eight students per teacher. Each RSP teacher is provided with an assistant for four and one-half hours per day, five days a week.

In special day classes, also situated on the school campuses, students with mild/moderate and moderate/severe disabilities are instructed in a separate classroom setting that allows the students to be in a smaller class size, to receive modifications and accommodations to the core curriculum, and to receive specialized instruction in small groups or one-on-one with the teacher or the teacher's assistant that will help them to meet their goals on their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). In this district, there are six SDC teachers. The SDC class sizes in the elementary settings in this district range from fourteen to eighteen students per class. Each SDC teacher is provided with a fulltime assistant who works seven and one-half hours, five days a week.

In the second school district for Participant #109, there are approximately 1,939 students residing in one city within the district. There are three elementary schools, one middle school, two high schools, one K-12 school, one alternative school, one continuation school, and two

community day schools. The enrollment for elementary schools is approximately 1,000 students. Demographic data does not indicate that there are English language learners in this district, yet the student population is comprised of 24.1% Hispanic or Latino children. Approximately 66% of the student population is White, and 6.3% of the student population is American Indian or Alaska Native. 71% of the students receive free/reduced price meals. There are 220 students in this district who receive special education services, 104 of whom are in elementary schools. There are four RSP teachers serving the elementary schools in this district with caseloads not to exceed twenty-two students. There are two SDC teachers in the elementary schools in this district, and their class sizes range from six to thirteen students.

Table 1 shows specific characteristics of the participants chosen for this study.

Table 1

Name	Title/Grade(s)	Years in this Position	Previous Teaching Experience	Yrs. In District
#101	RSP Tchr K-6	15	K, 2, 5, 6, Gen. Ed., 5 yrs.	15
#102	RSP Tchr, K-6	20	Presch, K, Gen. Ed., 10 yrs.	30
#103	RSP Tchr, K-6	4	SDC/20 yrs.	18
#104	Gen. Ed., Tchr/KG	5	SDC/19 yrs. Gen. Ed., 1st, 8 yrs.	32
#105	SDC Tchr, K-1	26	Gen. Ed., 1st, 1 yr.	27
#106	SDC Tchr, 4, 5, 6	3	Kindergarten, 3rd, 5th, 5 yrs. Gen. Ed.	8
#107	SDC Tchr, 4,5,6	3	None	3
#108	SDC Tchr, 4, 5, 6	4	None	4
#109	SDC Tchr, 3, 4, 5	1	None	1

The result is a strong representative sample of nine special education teachers, representing half of the resource specialist teachers in the district and over 60% of the SDC teachers in the same district, all of whom work at elementary school sites. For the three RSP teachers, the researcher chose two participants, each of whom has been an education specialist with fifteen to twenty years experience. The third RSP participant had been an elementary SDC teacher for twenty years before switching to RSP as a preferred field. For the six SDC teachers, the researcher planned to have three of the teachers with over five years experience teaching special day classes. One of the teachers taught elementary SDC classes for nineteen years before switching to General Ed/Kindergarten as a preferred field. The other SDC teacher has been teaching SDC elementary classes for over twenty years. Of the remaining four SDC teachers, only one had previous teaching experience in a general education setting for grades Kindergarten, 3rd, and 5th for a total of five years. She switched to an SDC setting from the general education setting due to being laid off annually in the general education job position. She has three years experience teaching special day classes in the elementary school setting. The three other SDC teachers have been teaching in their SDC classes for 4 or fewer years. One teacher has been in this field for four years, one teacher has three years experience, and one teacher is completing her first year of teaching in an SDC setting. The reason for choosing this group of participants was to obtain perceptions of those people who had been in the field for an extended period of time, in the capacities of RSP and SDC positions, and who had experienced changes in required paperwork and administrative duties over time. Furthermore, obtaining perspectives of special educators who were relatively new to teaching SDC classes would

provide information as to how they perceived handling paperwork demands and administrative tasks that even seasoned professionals struggle with.

Access and Permissions

Permission was obtained from each of the participants in both school districts to participate in this study. Each participant was given an informed consent form which had been approved by the university's institutional research review board. The form indicated that (1) the study concerned perceptions of special educators about handling required paperwork and administrative duties, not associated with instruction and planning, with regard to job efficacy, burnout, and possible job change, (2) the participants were not required to participate, and, (3) if they did participate, they could withdraw from the interview at any time without consequence. Additionally, the form indicated that each participant would have the opportunity to be debriefed with the results of the study when completed. All participants signed the form and participated fully in the interviews.

Data Gathering Strategies

The researcher compiled a list of all special educators in the districts selected. The nine participants were chosen based on several factors that address the research questions from a variety of perspectives. It was decided that a minimum of nine participants be interviewed according to specific characteristics and experiences of each person in order to obtain diverse perceptions. The researcher also chose this group to minimize proximity and maximize accessibility to each participant.

After the interview, participants were given two questionnaires. The first questionnaire was comprised of six, background questions relating to their current and former experiences in education and the length of time they worked in the district. The second questionnaire involved

documenting the amount of time per month that they spend on various kinds of paperwork unrelated to instructional time as well as the number of hours they spent on paperwork directly related to instructional time. The participants were also given stamped, self-addressed envelopes in which to mail their completed questionnaires back to the researcher. As a result, the participants had time to think carefully about their answers before mailing their completed forms back to the researcher. Giving the participants the questionnaires at the end of the interviews also prevented the participants from being influenced in advance as to the nature of the interview. The questionnaires are listed in Appendix A and in Appendix B.

Each participant met with the researcher for an in-depth interview that lasted approximately forty-five minutes. The one-to-one interviews were conducted in person at a location that was mutually agreed upon by the participant and the researcher. The interviews were recorded using a cassette recorder and were later transcribed by the researcher. Great care was taken to maintain the confidentiality of the participants by assigning numbers in place of their names. Computer files for each participant were stored on external storage devices (referred to as a 'jump' drives) that, along with all hard copies of associated paperwork, were stored in a locked file cabinet at the researcher's residence.

The questions were designed by the researcher with the intent of revealing the amount of time special educators spend on paperwork and administrative tasks with regard to additional job requirements of teaching, planning, preparing, and how the demands of the job affect teachers' perceptions of job efficacy, burnout, and job retention. The interview questions are available in Appendix C.

Data Analysis Approach

The interview transcriptions were reviewed, and the information was analyzed qualitatively in order to detect common themes. To accomplish this, the researcher typed up the interviews, assigned numbers to key themes, and ordered the participants' responses in a table according to common themes. Themes were matched with those themes found in the literature review. New themes that emerged from the interviews were also documented in table format.

Ethical Standards

This study adheres to Ethical Standards in Human Subjects Research of the American Psychological Association (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 2009). Additionally, the project was reviewed and approved by the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board.

Findings

Upon conducting and transcribing the interviews, as well as reviewing the data from the questionnaires, it is possible to describe the site and the individuals studied in greater detail. Participants provided information that directly addressed the research questions as well as other questions relating to paperwork, such as documenting the number of hours spent on specific tasks and stating the number of hours spent on non-instructional paperwork versus instructional time and paperwork. Through analysis of the interview data and the data from the questionnaires, it is possible to answer the research questions posed by this study as well as review the total amount of time spent on paperwork tasks faced by special educators.

Description of Site, Individuals, Data

Due to the nearby location and availability of participants, the researcher chose to interview eight of nine participants who worked in the same district. In this manner, the a wider perspective was obtained from various participants according to the number of years they had been teaching and in their respective capacities as educators, either as solely special educators or as having both special and general education teaching backgrounds. The final participant was chosen from another district because of her status as a first year special educator in an elementary school setting. This study was able to obtain valuable data of first year impressions and challenges regarding paperwork demands from this participant.

All nine special educators interviewed were currently employed in elementary schools in their districts. Five of the participants had fifteen or more years of teaching in their district, either in the capacity of a general education or special education teacher. The other four teachers had nine or fewer years of teaching in their district, of which only one teacher had both general

education and special education teaching experiences. The remaining three teachers had special education teaching experiences without general education teaching experience.

The researcher interviewed the participants one week after the ending of the school year in order to allow the participants ample time for the interviews as well as time to answer the two questionnaires given to them at the end of the interview process. To obtain optimal conditions for the interviews, it was important for the teachers to have a rest break after the end of school was necessary before conducting the interviews. The researcher met the participants at locations of their choice, at their convenience, and conducted the interview with the participant. The average time spent on the interviews was forty-five minutes. After the interview, the participants were handed the two questionnaires to fill out at home. The participants then mailed the completed questionnaires back to the researcher. In order for the participants to carefully think about the amount of time they spent on specific tasks each month, the participants were asked to complete the questionnaires at their convenience rather than at the end of the interview.

Individuals. The researcher interviewed nine participants in total. Eight of the participants were from one school district, and one participant was from another school district. The quality and depth of the participants' responses provided valuable, detailed information which corroborated much of the previous research in the literature review. To this end, the personal interviews and the written questionnaires allowed these educators to fully and candidly describe their experiences, their concerns, and their dedication to teaching in the field of special education.

Participant #101 is a resource specialist teacher in a K-6 elementary school with an enrollment of 530 students. She has been in this position as resource specialist for fifteen years, and she has been teaching in the district for fifteen years. Her background also includes teaching

in a general education position for grades K, 2, 5, and 6. She chose to switch from teaching in a general education setting to a special education setting because one of her own children was diagnosed with dysgraphia. Through helping him in school and researching ways in which to provide him with extra support, she became more interested in helping other children who had mild to moderate disabilities in school. She felt she had the advantage of relating to other parents who were experiencing similar situations as she did with her son, and she wanted to work with families to support them as they learned to support their child. This participant works four days a week (at 80%), and her caseload is twenty-four students. She has a part time assistant.

Participant #102 is a resource specialist teacher in a K-6 elementary school comprised of 750 students. She has been in this position of resource specialist for twenty years, and she has taught in this district for nineteen years. Her previous teaching experiences include being in a general education setting as a kindergarten teacher and a preschool teacher for ten years. She became involved in special education because she discovered that she enjoyed working with students who had disabilities, and she felt she had a special gift for relating to them. She also preferred to work with small groups of students in a pull-out situation rather than teach a whole class of special education students. She has a caseload of thirty-two students, and her assistant is part time.

Participant #103 is currently a resource specialist teacher in a K-6 elementary school with an enrollment of 530 students. She has been in this position for four years, and she has taught in this district for eighteen years. Previous to this position, she was a special day class teacher for 14 years. Her reason for switching to resource specialist from special day class teacher involved the changes taking place in SDC classrooms with more behavioral issues, more severe

disabilities to address, and increased class sizes. She much prefers the resource setting to the special day class setting. Her caseload is twenty-eight students, and she has a part time assistant.

Participant #104 is currently a kindergarten teacher in a general education setting in a K-6 elementary school comprised of 750 students. She has been teaching in this capacity for five years, and she has been teaching in the district for thirty-two years. Her previous teaching experiences include being a resource specialist teacher for two years and being a special day class teacher for nineteen years. She spent three years working on convincing the district to allow her to switch from teaching as a special day class teacher to a general education teacher before she was allowed to change positions. Her reasons for leaving special education include exhaustion, classroom behaviors, class sizes, paperwork, and lack of support. This participant had a broad perspective of teaching in special education for a long period of time as well as being able to discuss the changes that have occurred in special education in the past twenty years. She has thirty-one students in her class with no assistant.

Participant #105 is a special day class teacher of grades K-1 in an elementary school comprised of 530 students from grades K-6. She has taught in this capacity for twenty-seven years in this school district. Her previous teaching experiences include a brief time of teaching grades K-1 in a general education setting. She states that she has no desire to return to a general education setting and that her background has always included working with children with special needs. Having initially worked as a paraprofessional in a resource setting, she felt that her calling was helping children with special needs. She has thirteen students in her class, and she has two full time assistants.

Participant #106 is a special day class teacher of grades 4, 5, and 6, in an elementary school with a population of 460 from grades K-6. She has taught in this position for three years,

and she has taught in the district for nine years. Her previous teaching experience was in a general education setting, teaching kindergarten, grade 3, and grade 5 for a period of five years. She switched to a special education setting for several reasons. She has a grown son who has autism, and she felt she had a great deal to offer students who were also on the spectrum as well as being able to communicate well with parents and families whose children had disabilities. Another reason for switching to special education from general education is that she received pink slips at the end of every year, resulting in her not knowing if she would have a job in the coming school year. Special education offered more stability and continuity with regard to job security. She has seventeen students in her class with a full time assistant and a behavioral assistant.

Participant #107 is a special day class teacher for grades 4, 5, and 6, in an elementary school with a population of 530 students from grades K-6.. She has taught in this position and in the district for three years. Her previous experience with education was as a student teacher in special education and as an Anova (a provider of educational, behavioral, and therapy services for children and adults with disabilities in Northern California) 1:1 aide for a student with special needs. This is her first teaching job after completing her teacher credential program. What is interesting about this participant is that she began teaching with a class of nine students at three grade levels. The following year, she had fifteen students at three grade levels, and her current caseload is eighteen students. She has had many challenges with behavioral problems in her classroom, and her full time assistant is difficult for her to work with. In spite of these challenges, this participant loves working with her students. She has three one-on-one behavioral assistants in the classroom.

Participant #108 is a special day class teacher for grades 4, 5, and 6 at an elementary school with a population of 454 students from grades K-6. She has taught in this position in the district for four years. She has not had previous teaching experience, but she has had extensive job experiences working in sports marketing and for Federal Express. She earned her teaching credential in special education because she felt she had a special calling to work with children with disabilities. She has seventeen students in her special day class, a full time assistant, and two Anova assistants.

Participant #109 is a special day class teacher for grades 3, 4, and 5 in an elementary school with a population of 350 students from grades K-5. This is her first year of teaching and her first year in her district. Her previous experience in education was working as a substitute teacher in a general education setting for four months. Previously, she had a long term job as a manager of a shipping company before it closed down. Her class is one that has recently been created at a local elementary school due to the number of students with moderate-to-severe disabilities. There are thirteen students in her class and three full time assistants.

Data. Participants were first asked a series of questions during the interview designed to elicit responses relevant to the three research questions. The research questions involved perceptions of paperwork demands, possible causes of increased paperwork, the effects of paperwork and administrative duties on job efficacy, and the effects of increased class sizes, budget cuts, and diversity of disabilities in the classrooms with regard to paperwork demands for special educators. The key themes that emerged during the interviews are time allocation for specific paperwork tasks, time constraints, reduced support from administration and paraprofessionals, larger caseloads, larger class sizes, lack of resources, isolation/lack of

communication and collaboration among special educators in the district, and role overload as a result of non-instructional paperwork combined with teaching and instructional paperwork.

The following tables include quotations from the participants that are representative of responses to the research questions. The quotations listed reveal the range of special educators' perceptions gleaned from the interviews, offering insights into the complexities of managing non-instructional paperwork with teaching and instructional duties and required documentation.

The responses in Table 2 provide definitive answers to the first research question about the possibility of an increase in paperwork in special education. Teachers described the increase in paperwork demands as "significant", "substantial", and "all-consuming". Reasons given by these educators for the paperwork overload include the length of and the continual changes to the IEP, an increase in lawsuits from parents, increased documentation for accountability purposes, increase in assessments and reports, and an increase in class sizes and caseloads. Time constraints also impact paperwork demands as teachers report experiencing the pressures of completing paperwork within given deadlines.

Table 2

<p>1. Is the paperwork load increasing for special educators, and if so, what is the cause?</p>	<p>"I noticed a significant increase in paperwork when they had the Paperwork Reduction Act . . . When I first started, IEPs were much shorter . . . three to four pages, handwritten . . . I see more changes now, too. I see kids coming in as speech and language impaired, and then going to OHI (being classified as Other Health Impairment) because they're ADHD (identified as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), and changes like those kinds of things need to be documented. You're documenting all the time. Two days before school was out, I got an eight page document from Social Services that needed to be filled out by several specialists. It's ridiculous. Because I spend time on paperwork, I spend less time with each student" (Participant #101).</p>
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“We’re so sue-driven in the United States of America, and particularly in California, we’re such a sue-based mentality that the paperwork will continue to grow and be an issue because somebody does something on an IEP that’s incorrect, and they’re sued. So that adds a whole other dimension to the paperwork that wasn’t there before. That will always be the case” (Participant #102).

“I think that in the twenty-four years I’ve been in the field of special education, the paperwork has substantially increased. I mean, we were doing ten page IEPs, and now it’s probably doubled. It wasn’t as tedious as it is nowadays. A lot more paperwork. There are definitely continual changes in the paperwork, and what you need to complete for each piece has been impacted. They just keep adding more and more to the IEP, more pages . . . I think it’s for accountability purposes. I think some of it has come out of cases of parents suing . . . we have to cover our bases to make sure that it’s in writing because if it’s not written down, it didn’t happen. There’s an increase in the paperwork for the teachers because they have to keep track of everything because of lawsuits (Participant #103).

“[Paperwork] was getting to be all-consuming which was a real impetus for me to leave . . . in general ed, you have a set curriculum, and the tests are correlated with the curriculum. With special ed, you have testing, goals, IEPs, progress reports . . . It was a marathon” (Participant #104).

“It’s definitely more work. It does take time just because of all the legalities that go along with it . . . the biggest impact, I think, is the numbers that are under our caseload. I don’t think that’s fair, and it does impact the students because we’re not then able to provide them with the time and the quality of time that they need to be working with us . . . I have eighteen students” (Participant #106).

“Only been at this one year . . . coordinating IEPs, phone calls, emails, and meetings took me four hours every afternoon after school . . . I did all of my

	<p>paperwork after school and on the weekends, never during school . . . I have five Behavior Support Plans in my class which also created more paperwork consulting with the school psychologist. And making up individual assessments for over one hundred little tests . . . I couldn't work at night when I got home. I was toast" (Participant #109).</p>
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The responses in Table 3 to the second research question about the effects of paperwork and administrative duties on job efficacy reveal that teachers are experiencing difficulty with the overload of responsibilities relating to non-instructional and instructional paperwork. Several of the participants state that interference with instruction frequently occurs due to the stress and pressure to meet deadlines of forms and legal documents as well as conferring with specialists during class time, documenting behaviors of students in the classroom, and attending meetings on IEPs and initial referrals. Questions of job efficacy arise as some teachers question their own abilities to effectively serve students while others express discouragement about their positions due to isolation, lack of collaboration, and exhaustion.

Table 3

<p>2. What are the effects of paperwork and administrative duties on job efficacy among special education teachers?</p>	<p>"When I had this eight page Social Services report to fill out with only two days left at the end of school, it was huge. I called over to the District Office because they usually handle these things, and they said they're just overwhelmed right now, and the case manager has to do it (me). It is nuts!"(Participant #101).</p> <p>"As a resource specialist teacher, the more time I'm spending on paperwork, the less time I'm spending with students. The sad part is that it probably takes up one whole day a week out of a five-day week, going to IEP meetings, doing paperwork, writing IEPs. You get a tremendous amount of IEPs to write at one time because you have a lot of referrals. That means you have to cancel instructional minutes with students;</p>
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	<p>otherwise, you won't be able to get the work done, and then it gets to a point where you feel like you're just writing about what you're doing rather than actually doing it. . . I don't think it's a good thing to have twenty-eight students on your caseload and be responsible for every new initial referral that comes in on your caseload to be tested that may not even get in your caseload, may just be someone that you test. Of the twenty students I tested this year only eight went on my caseload" (Participant #102).</p> <p>"I love what I'm doing now (as a resource teacher), and I think with resource we do have more leeway built in to be able to get more of the paperwork done than in other positions. We don't have kids all day with behavioral or emotional problems" (Participant #103).</p> <p>"Could I just have someone else do the paperwork? (Laughs) It would be so nice if I could just focus on the teaching. And if I had someone type my IEPs for me, they would come and talk to me, and I would say, 'Okay, this is what I need. These are the types of goals I see for this student.' That would be nice" (Participant #106).</p> <p>"Paperwork is hard, and I let a lot of it go. My main assistant can't do any paperwork because it comes back all wrong, and then I have to redo it. I wind up doing all of it . . . I have eighteen kids in my class, and their behaviors start impacting everything else. So, we can't get done what we're supposed to because we're writing behavior plans and following up on that, which is even more paperwork. We're taking notes on their behavior every day . . . We have specialists and therapists coming into our classes all the time, needing to meet with us over paperwork, and you've got to stop whatever you're doing to meet with them . . . There are just too many kids, too much paperwork, not enough time. What's the point? Are you really making a difference? I like working with kids with special needs, but I don't know if being a teacher is the best way of doing that. There's always more paperwork to do than can be done, and it never all gets done. There's always more that can be done" (Participant #107).</p>
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	<p>“Of all these things [that impact job performance], I think – and I’m glad this is anonymous – that what goes out the window when I have so many students, all this paperwork, and all these demands, is the behavior support plan. When you look at somebody’s IEP, how often do you look at it? Or you get a new kid in, how much time do you spend going over it? Okay, this is what you’re supposed to do for this kid. Well, sorry, he’s coming into my classroom, this is my general classroom behavior support, and that’s what’s going to happen. I’m sorry, I can’t individualize when I have eighteen kids, you need to have a timer on your desk, and I need to monitor it. And for every two minutes you’re on task, I’m going to come over and give you a star. Please don’t write that in an IEP because that’s just not going to happen” (Participant #108).</p> <p>“Having students with a diversity of special needs entails all kinds of goals on their IEPs, behavior support plans, consultations, and constant consultations with the school psychologist. I have moderate-to-severe kids. This takes place during school hours, during my prep time, and after school. I mean, the psychologist sometimes leaves my office at six o’clock at night, and I haven’t even started to prep. It just got depressing. I’m working seventy hours a week, it’s very isolating, and I don’t have PLC meetings or collaborating with other special ed teachers like teachers in gen ed do. You never have time to go to lunch, brunch, or prep because you’re always conferring with someone. I am definitely leaving this job after this year because I have no time for a life. My quality of life is really low. All I do is get through the day and then do about three or four hours of paperwork and then go home and go to bed and do it again. It’s awful. I don’t have time for any socializing with friends or anything” (Participant #109).</p>
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The responses in Table 4 to the third research question about the impact of increased class sizes, budget cuts, and diverse disabilities on paperwork loads disclose that teachers are

experiencing frustration, overwhelm, and burnout due to the decrease in paraprofessional support, the increase in caseloads and class sizes, and the inability to address the diversity of needs of all the students. Teachers report that the diversity of disabilities of the students they serve in conjunction with the numbers of students in the classroom or on their caseloads creates a situation that is untenable. Behavioral problems within the classroom are stated as being a major cause of paperwork due to documenting students' activities for their Behavior Support Plans. Communication with teachers, specialists, and administrators about behavioral problems also impacts the amount of paperwork of special education teachers.

Table 4

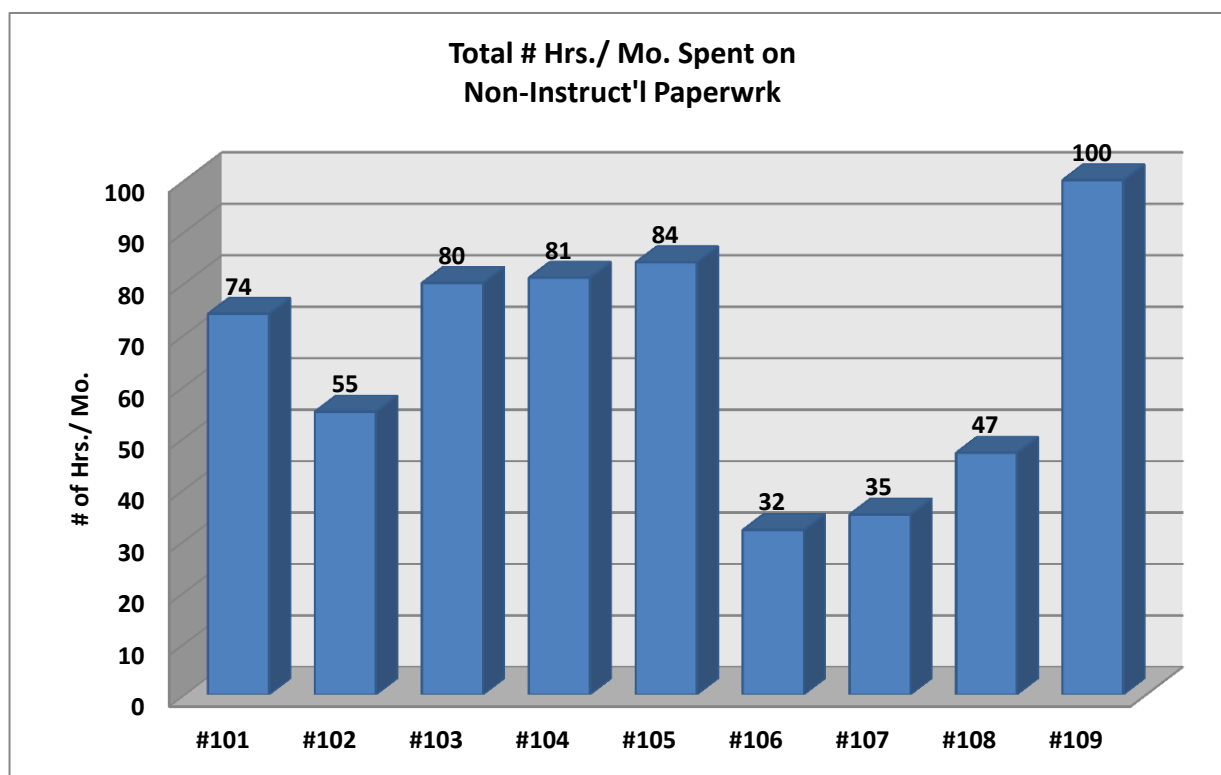
<p>1. How are increased class sizes, budget cuts, and diverse disabilities of special needs populations within the classroom affecting the amount of paperwork for special educators?</p>	<p>“My assistant can handle little intervention groups so well and do other things like that. A lot of the paperwork could be handled by my assistant, with my supervision, but budget cuts have cut her hours in half and have cut her benefits, too. Let the assistants work a full day, and give them a living wage, at least.</p> <p>Paperwork is definitely affected by ranges of special needs within a classroom. If a kid has a language disability and is ADHD and has a learning disability, then yeah, it's going to be more paperwork. You're documenting all the time, and you have to keep track of it.</p> <p>If they want to increase the amount of time, of contact that I have with kids, then you've got to reduce the paperwork. If you don't care how much time my teaching credential is actually used for teaching, then fine, I'll keep doing the paperwork. But, you know, I think that there's better ways to use my time” (Participant #101).</p> <p>“I would have stayed on two more years (before retiring) except for the amount of time I spent testing students and writing paperwork on new students, many of whom never came into my program. To spend all my time going to meetings and testing kids was not my intention. My intention was to work with special needs students and to teach them” (Participant #102).</p>
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	<p>“It would definitely help everybody to have their assistants there full time. They cut, they cut them, when they cut them several years back, it did really impact our program . . . If we had them there, we would be able to do even more in instructional time with kids to help them more in the classroom. With kids who have behavioral goals, we have to take data on their behavior, and that means I have to take data on their behaviors because my assistant only works part time. I have to make up data sheets and keep track of them whenever I’m in and out of the classroom. I’m running all day long, nonstop. Whether I’m assessing kids, teaching kids, doing paperwork, going to meetings – it’s all nonstop. I spend a lot of time on the paperwork that is involved in scheduling (individuals, groups) and in communicating with the teachers” (Participant #103).</p> <p>“That’s the whole problem with all the paperwork, and what we’re doing in these classes is that we have such a mixed array of disabilities that we can’t service everyone’s needs. There’s not enough time in the day to address their specific needs. When you have a mixture of disabilities in one classroom such as emotionally disturbed, where it’s very challenging to your ADHD kids and your autism kids, they feed off of each other, and it is insanity. We should lower our numbers and provide more of a balanced setting, The learning disabled kids don’t get the time they need or the support from us because we’re dealing with behavior issues a lot of the time” (Participant #106).</p> <p>“To me, anything over twelve (students in a special day class) is too much. It’s like putting rats into a little cage. These kids are already frustrated, and we just cram more and more kids in. Their behaviors start impacting everything else, and we wind up spending time writing up behavior plans and taking notes on their behavior every day. You get away from helping the other 16 kids to deal with the behaviors. I have seriously thought about leaving this job because of too many kids. There is a lot of time spent on filling out paperwork on what they do each day” (Participant #107).</p>
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Coinciding with the amount and the variety of paperwork demands that special educators are responsible for are the amounts of time required by special education teachers to meet deadlines in each of these areas. Data reported on the “Questionnaire for Special Educators Regarding Time Spent on Paperwork Associated with Job” (Appendix B) from these participants provides a clearer understanding for the associated pressures and stress they experience.

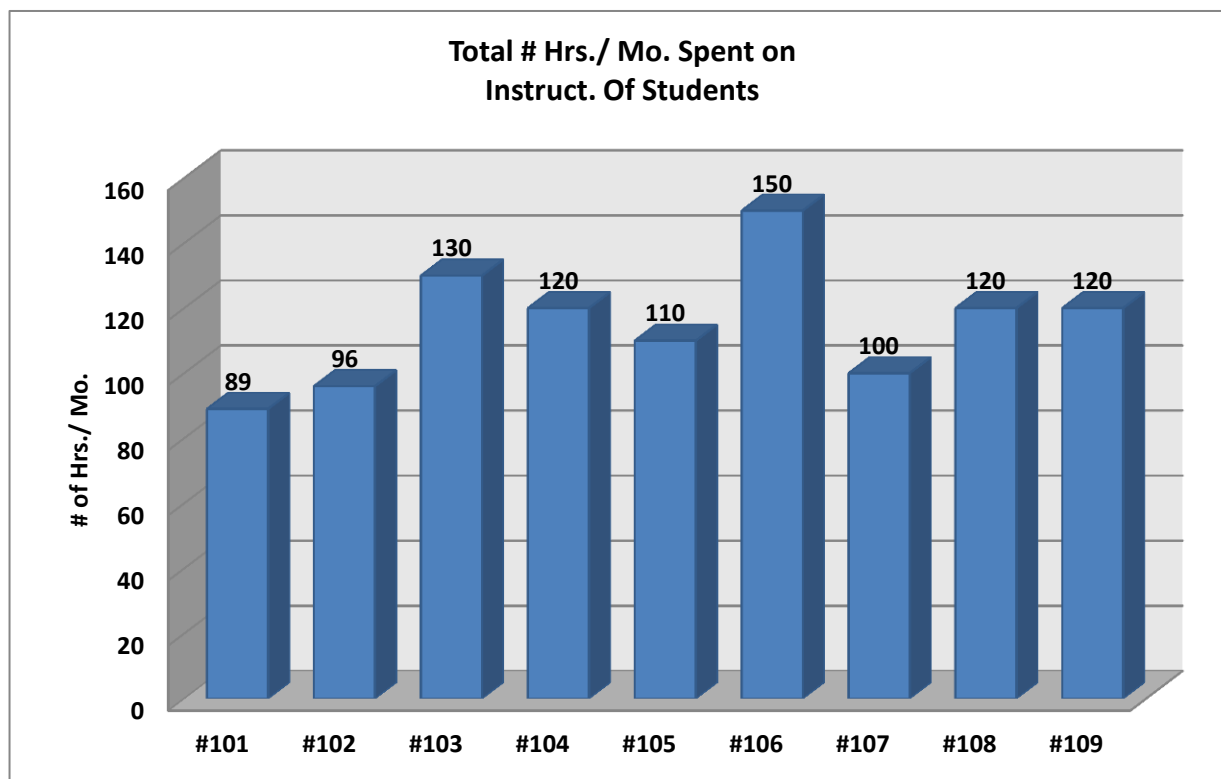
The following tables show the numbers of hours all participants spent on non-instructional and instructional paperwork tasks as well as the combined averages of all participant hours in each paperwork area. The data gathered for these charts was obtained from the “Questionnaire for Special Educators Regarding Time Spent on Paperwork Associated with Job” (Appendix B). Responses from individual participants to each question on the questionnaire can be found on the charts in Appendix E.

Table 5



This table shows the total number of hours per month each participant spent on non-instructional paperwork. Non-instructional paperwork includes SSTs (Student Study Team Meetings), initial IEPs, meetings with teachers, administrators, and parents, annual and triennial IEP preparation and meetings, BSP (Behavior Support Plan) preparation and meetings, meetings with other specialists, assessments, administrative work (copying, filing, progress reports), and documents for school district, county, state, report cards, referrals, and any additional paperwork other than instructional paperwork. This data illustrates the time special educators spend on work that is above and beyond the instructional day and its associated paperwork.

Table 6



The data from this table shows the total number of hours per month special education teachers spent on instruction and instructional paperwork for their students each month. These hours include time spent on actual instruction as well as paperwork associated with instruction, such as preparation and planning of lessons, units, instructional materials, working with assistants/supervision, grading, field trips, and outdoor education (programs that involve students spending 3-5 days camping in a specific wildlife refuge).

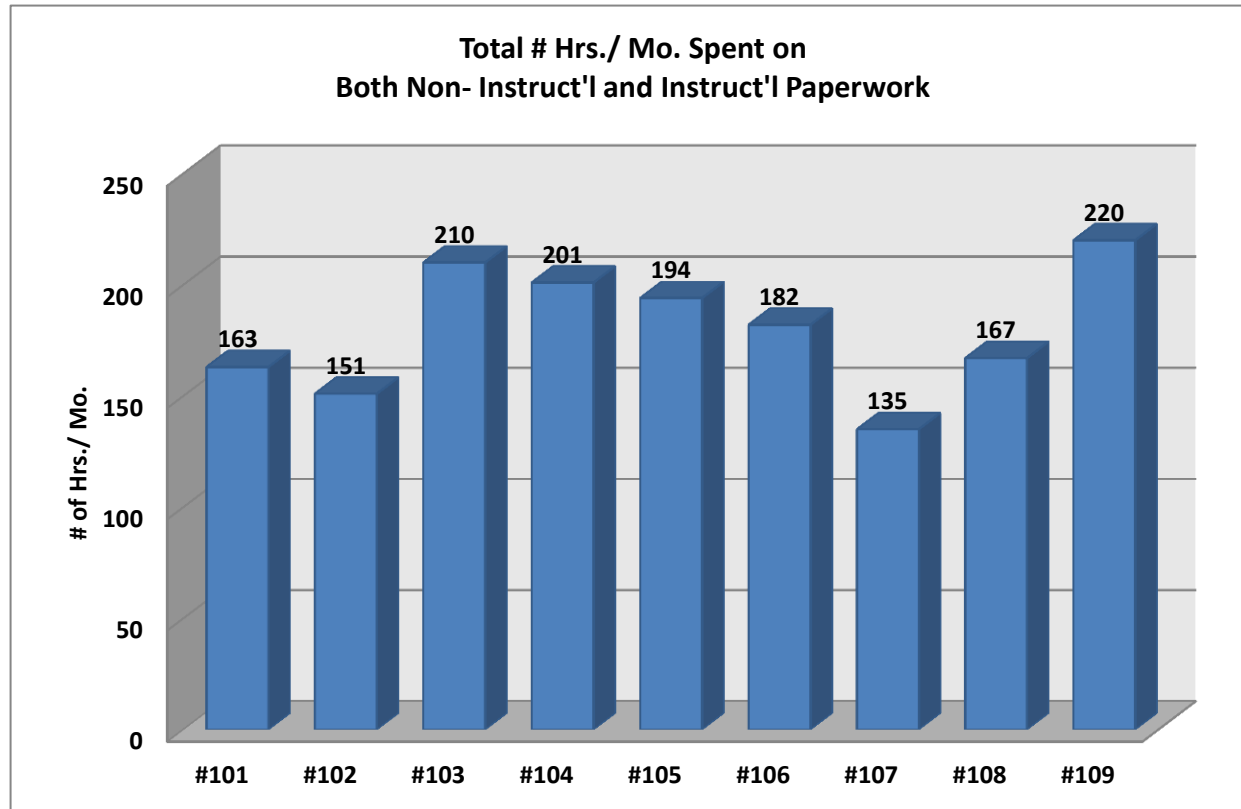
Table 7

Table 7 illustrates the total, combined number of hours each month these teachers spent on both non-instructional and instructional paperwork. Contracts for these special educators pay them for one hundred forty hours per month (the equivalent of five, seven-hour work days per week).

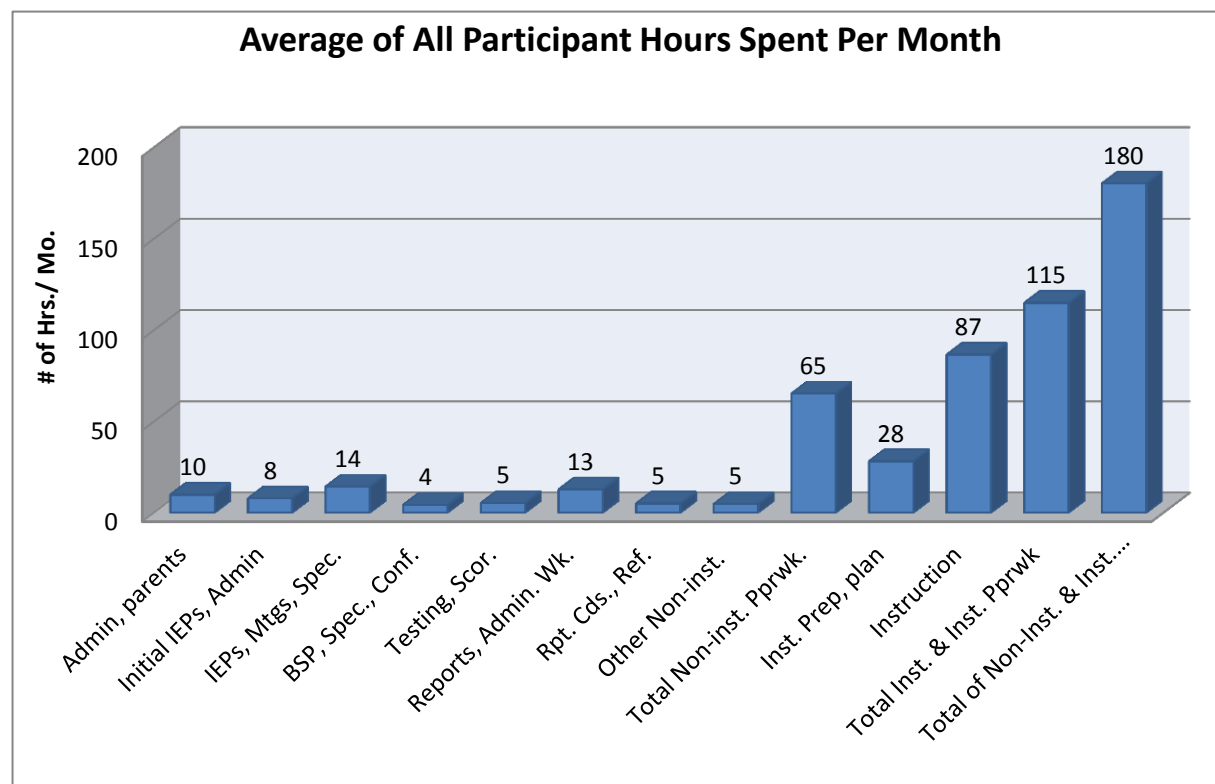
Table 8

Table 8 represents the average number of hours per month spent by all participants for each paperwork area listed on the questionnaire. The combination of sixty-five non-instructional, paperwork hours combined with one hundred fifteen teaching and instructional paperwork hours equals a total of one hundred eighty hours per month, on average, that special education teachers spent on paperwork.

Analysis of Themes

Reviewing the data from the interviews and the questionnaires provides information relevant to the research questions posed by this study. Various themes emerged as each research question was answered. Responses to the first research question about increases in paperwork

include the themes of the length and constant changes to the IEP, profuse documentation of behaviors of students, scheduling, initial referrals, class sizes, and testing.

Increase of Paperwork Load and Possible Causes.

The first research question inquires about the paperwork load for special educators and if it is increasing. If the response is affirmative, what is the cause, according to the perspectives of the participants. The responses that emerged in the interviews showed that six of the nine participants answered, "Yes" regarding an increase in paperwork, one participant answered "No", and two participants answered, "I don't know." All six participants who answered in the affirmative had eight or more years experience in the teaching field, either in general or special education. The other three participants who answered in the negative or were unsure in their responses had four or fewer years teaching experience in the special education field with no additional teaching experience. Reasons given by the participants for the increase in paperwork include the length of and changes to the IEP, required documentation of students regarding behavior, performance, and scheduling, and initial referrals and testing.

Length and changes to the IEP. Consensus among the participants who have been special educators for fifteen or more years shows that there have been significant changes in the IEP document over the years which included increases in the amount of paperwork and in legal accountability for teachers. According to several participants, fifteen years ago the IEP consisted of three to four handwritten pages on NCR paper, which was a "carbonless paper", a multiple-part paper form that did not use carbon paper developed by NCR Corporation. This IEP was comprised of simplified goals only in reading, writing, and math. Today, the average length of a blank, online, web-based, IEP document is sixteen pages, depending upon the student and his/her specific needs. A completed IEP can easily be twenty-one pages or more. Goals include

academics as well as other areas such as speech and language, occupational therapy, and behavior. "There's a lot more paperwork than when I first started. The IEP was maybe two or three pages . . . When I first started, we'd write them and we wouldn't assess them until the next meeting, literally" (Participant #102, p. 8).

In addition to the length and complexity of the IEP format, participants state that the continual changes, additions, and updates to the IEP have added to the burden of paperwork and accountability stress. Furthermore, with the changes and new additions, there is little to no training given to special educators in this district regarding filling in the new forms. As a result, errors occur requiring amendments to be signed and filed. Participants state that lack of support and communication from district personnel produces added frustration and stress for special educators who already feel isolated in their jobs.

Participant #103's comments on the additions to the IEP are reflective of the perceptions of the majority of participants interviewed on this topic. "A lot more paperwork so, they have definitely [made] continual changes in the paperwork and what you need to complete for each piece has been impacted . . . they just keep adding more and more to the IEP, more pages, more . . . I think it's for accountability purposes. I think it's because they want to make sure that everything's included on the IEP. I think some of it has come out of cases of parents suing and they want to make sure everything is on the IEP that needs to be on there so a parent can't say, 'Well, they never told me' or 'This didn't happen.' And we're liable for it" (Participant #103, p. 7).

Participant #106 voices valid concerns and frustration about the lack of training when updates and additions are made to the IEP. Her comments point out a serious flaw in the communication between administration at the district level and special educators in the field.

“One of the frustrating things is how many different forms and the updates [there are on the IEP], you know, and then there’s no training when we do get a new form. So we’re kind of figuring out, ‘Okay, are we filling this out right?’ And then you get a note saying, ‘Oh, you did not do this right,’ or whatever, and it’s an amendment nightmare because that’s more paperwork . . . The key is training us. When there’s a change, seriously, pull us into a meeting, let us know what’s going on” (Participant #106, p. 13). It would appear that the checks and balances end of the system at the district level does catch errors made by teachers on the IEPs so that corrections can be made; however, proper training and regular review of the IEP might be more expeditious as teachers write the IEPs on their students.

Data from the “Average of All Participant Hours Spent Per Month” graph shows that the average number of hours per month these special educators spend on initial and regular IEPs is twenty-two hours, the equivalent of three work days per month.

Documentation of students regarding behavior, performance, and scheduling. Special educators report that a considerable amount of time is spent on daily documentation of communications with other teachers, specialists, parents, students, and outside specialists, such as physicians, agencies, and psychiatrists. Several participants commented that paperwork previously handled by personnel at the district office is now being sent directly to case managers to handle, such as sending out IEP notices for meetings and Social Services documents.

“You’re documenting all the time. Two days before school was out, I got an eight page document from Social Services that needed to be filled out by me and several specialists. It’s ridiculous. Because I spend time on paperwork, I spend less time with each student” (Participant #101).

Behavior goals and Behavior Support Plans require documentation on a daily basis in order to track the student's progress on his/her goals. For teachers with three or more students on behavior support plans in one class, this is a very difficult task to accomplish in addition to teaching, doing assessments, attending meetings, and preparing IEPs. Sometimes, an assistant will be able to help in the note taking, but in many instances, it is the teacher who winds up taking all the notes and completing documentation for each individual student. Educators seem to feel pressured to keep copious notes on students due to the threat of liability and due process.

"Their behaviors start impacting everything else. That makes all of our attention go to their behaviors . . . And so, we can't get what we're supposed to get done. In a sense, [this] makes more paperwork because then we're writing behavior plans. We're following up on that . . . We're taking notes on their behavior every day . . . there is a lot of time spent on filling out what they did that day " (Participant #107, p. 54).

"For all my students that have behavioral goals as well as academic goals but don't have an assistant in the classroom, I have to make up data sheets and keep track of it whenever they're in my group or in the classroom . . . It's nonstop. I have to keep track, keep notes . . . They've talked about reducing the amount of paperwork and said that was going to happen, but in the end that wasn't what happened. Instead it increased the amount of paperwork. And my guess is it was because of lawsuits . . . Because when there are lawsuits and there's no substantial evidence, it makes it hard to prove. So they've increased it. The data, the IEPs, and all the data that they can ask for has increased. The accountability factor has increased. So, there's an increase in the paperwork for the teachers because they have to keep track of everything so that you have a paper trail" (Participant #103).

Keeping track of and constantly adapting student schedules are time-consuming challenges for both RSP and SDC teachers. Special education students have schedules that must accommodate not only their academic subjects and classes but also specialists who serve a variety of needs such as speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, and adaptive physical education therapists. Classes such as P.E., Band and Music, Computer Lab, and Library must also fit into the schedules of students in special education. The special education teacher is responsible for making sure all needs are met in accordance with each student's IEP and with the curriculum.

"I spend a lot of time on the paperwork that is involved in the scheduling. And even once it's scheduled, [I am] having to readjust scheduling and trying to make the time into mine or my assistant's schedule to serve the kids. Lots of time with that and with the paperwork involved in just communicating with the teachers . . . that's one other difference between resource and special day is the resource specialist has to communicate more with general ed teachers . . . I do a lot of memos with schedules, and it's just ongoing. I have a lot of forms now and templates I make on the computer so I can deal with that added paperwork. That's not to mention all the coordinating with the parents and notices for meetings with parents, especially the IEPs"

(Participant #103, p.14).

Initial referrals and testing.

Special educators in the resource specialist program have the responsibility of testing all the initial referrals from student study teams in general education. General education teachers refer at-risk students to be evaluated by student study teams who, in turn, decide whether or not a student's performance warrants intervention. The first step to intervention is to test the student using a standardized academic test. This part of the process falls on the resource specialist to

administer. In a large elementary school, the RSP teacher may have a backlog of students for testing in addition to his/her caseload of twenty-eight students. Participant #102 comments on the dilemma she faces when trying to balance teaching time with testing initial referrals.

“You get a tremendous amount of IEPs to write at one time because you have a lot of referrals. That means that you have to cancel instructional minutes with students. Otherwise, you won’t be able to get the work done, and then it gets to a point where you feel like you’re just writing about what you’re doing, rather than actually doing it . . . I have a lot of student referrals coming to me from student study team meetings from teachers, and then parents write letters and the district decides that we must test rather than be sued by this parent. I go through periods where I’m constantly testing kids and then writing IEPs. It takes two to two and a half hours to test a kid one on one, then an additional hour to an hour and a half to write the IEP, if you’re really writing it correctly, and the report that goes along with an initial. Then, you have to attend the meeting, and it’s nothing less than an hour. So when you look at that, you’re talking about five and half hours per each new initial student that is referred. That can get pretty taxing as far as being able to actually be present to teach your students. A lot of it will then fall on your assistant . . . as a resource specialist, you’re required to test every new initial referral . . . I got so busy that I was completely overloaded. At the beginning of this school year, I had one referral after another and [was] not being given the full 60-day timeline to complete my testing because teachers and the principal were so concerned that the parent’s needs weren’t getting met fast enough. I just was so overwhelmed that my aide pretty much had to send out the IEP notices. And if she’s sending out IEP notices, then that’s taking time away from her instructional time with the students. She’s only four and a half hours a day. If she’s spending a half hour a day on that, then she’s four hours a day with kids. And we’ll be pushed. Teachers will be pushy, and

they'll write the parent to get the parent to write a letter. Then, the principal and the district get worried they're going to get sued, so we end up testing somebody that we could have told you from the very beginning [would not qualify for special education]. That's 10 hours that we could have been instructing your students versus going through that wheel" (Participant #102, p. 3, 4).

Response in the negative about increased paperwork.

Participant #108 was the only participant who felt that paperwork had not increased. She commented that her lack of teaching experience precluded her from being able to offer a perspective on whether or not paperwork had increased.

"I'm only in my fourth year. I don't really know [if paperwork has increased] because I think that's a relatively short amount of time to say it's increasing or decreasing. But I would say for me, it's decreased in the sense that I don't have to take as long as I did my first year. So in that sense, it's decreasing. But as a teacher, I'm probably spending the same amount of time [on paperwork] because I feel like I'm spending more time on lesson planning. And I'm getting to that balance. I think first-year teachers should get more prep time; and as you get into year 20, those people don't need as much prep time" (Participant #108, p. 12).

Undecided responses about increase in paperwork.

Two other participants were unclear about their responses to this question. Both special educators had been teaching for a limited period of time (three years or less). Their comments reveal feelings of being overwhelmed by the amount of work and the time it takes to complete paperwork in their jobs.

"I'd say maybe [the paperwork is increasing]. It's hard. [It is] increasing with the sense that we are having more kids . . . I feel like I've let a lot of stuff go . . . I don't keep track of

grades anymore because they're not working at grade level. . . I just keep them working where they need to be . . . paperwork is hard. I let a lot of it go" (Participant #107).

"Only done one year . . . I don't have much to compare to . . . I would love computer demands in with paperwork demands. If you can lump them together, then having to spend two to three hours on the computer after class each day, and that doesn't even touch writing IEPs or prep, then I'd say it's overwhelming . . . [With moderate to severe students] parents caused the paperwork. When a parent calls an IEP every month and wants twelve people there, this results in endless paperwork. Those kids' needs were so great. There are so many people involved in them. And it created paperwork" (Participant #109, p.11).

The Effects of Paperwork and Administrative Duties on Job Efficacy

The burdens of paperwork and associated responsibilities take a toll on special education teachers' perceptions of their job performance and their viability toward helping their students. Research question two delves into the effects that paperwork and administrative duties have on special educators' views of job efficacy.

With the amount of instructional and non-instructional paperwork facing today's special educators, time is a major consideration. The two categories of resource specialist and special day class teacher have different approaches and guidelines for each program. Resource specialists all agree that they have more opportunities in their week to create or 'carve' time out of their schedules to include paperwork responsibilities than do special day class teachers. However, the demands placed on RSP teachers produce similar dilemmas for finding time to address the paperwork load they face on a daily basis. The law mandates that resource specialists have a cap on the number of students they are allowed to have on a caseload. That cap is twenty-eight students. Special day class teachers, on the other hand, have no such

protection or ceiling on the number of students they can have in their classrooms. The education code recommends that no more than thirteen students be assigned to a special day class; however, as is the case in this particular district, several of the teachers have between seventeen and nineteen students in their classrooms. They are paid overages for each additional student. Nevertheless, the number of students with special needs impacts the classroom to such an extent that safety issues regarding the numbers of students with behavior issues in one small space become a daily problem with regard to instruction, meeting the needs of all students, and job efficacy.

Resource Specialists and Job Efficacy. Participants #101 and #102 are each resource specialists who have each taught in the resource specialist field for fifteen or more years. Even with the amount of experience that they have in this field, paperwork continues to challenge them to make difficult decisions about the amount of time they can spend working with students and groups.

“The instructional paperwork that I do is purposeful . . . The non-instructional paperwork I do takes a lot more time . . . I do work at home . . . I work till probably 5:00 every day. I carve time out. I could be doing more groups, but then I would be bringing stuff home even more . . . I think you have to carve out time during the day and specify what you're doing. Make it clear that you need that time, otherwise you won't get it. You've got to make some time to get that stuff done” (Participant #101).

“Well, as a resource specialist teacher, when I first began doing this job 20 years ago, I used to spend all my weekends doing my paperwork. As time went on, I learned how to schedule within my program more time to allow me to get most of the paperwork done at school . . .

However, the more time I'm spending on paperwork, the less time I'm spending with students. . . That means that you have to cancel instructional minutes with students. Otherwise, you won't be able to get the work done. It gets to a point where you feel like you're just writing about what you're doing rather than actually doing it" (Participant #102).

Participant #103 worked as a special day class teacher for twenty years before switching to the resource specialist field. She has been teaching as a resource specialist for four years. Other than the twenty-eight special education students on her caseload, she, like other RSP teachers, works with other students, not identified as special education students, in groups who also need assistance with reading or math. For the resource specialists interviewed, the reality is that their actual caseload is more in the range of fifty or more students that they provide services for, including the ceiling limit of 28 identified special education students with IEPs. Participant #103 describes her sense of pride in being able to help more students, yet at the same time, she expresses her sense of frustration at the dilemma facing many special educators – that of maintaining a family, home life, and social life in addition to her job.

"I don't really take breaks or lunch. I just use that time to do paperwork. I'll eat, but I do the paperwork through my lunch and after school hours, in the evening or the weekends. As a resource specialist, we do have some time allotted for testing and paperwork during the week, some prep time. Most of it I can get done if I stay at work late . . . We never, ever finish our notes . . . Every year I always try to incorporate more and more to make sure I serve more kids, incorporate more specific instructional programs. I did do that in this last school year, I was so impacted with so many kids. And I served all the kids. It was great as far as that. I did do a lot, but it was nonstop, and I'm exhausted. You come home at night, and you've got your family. I

have a child, [and I'm] switching gears and trying to do all the things as a parent or a family. How the heck do I do bills? I've got to run a household, too. Nothing gets fixed, nothing gets done. It's hard to have a life. Sometimes, I actually break down and pay someone [to clean the house], [or] get my daughter to help. But it's just too much. I think what happens is people burn out. It's just too hard, really. [In school, I] run around sometimes trying to get from place to place in time. You've got a group of kids, they're stuck on something, and then their time is up. You've got to be somewhere at the same time. It's just spill over" (Participant #103).

Special Day Class Teachers and Job Efficacy. The participants who work as special day class teachers candidly describe the logistics of completing their paperwork as very challenging. Elementary school teachers have two hours of preparatory time a week in which to catch up on paperwork duties. What becomes glaringly apparent in the interviews with these teachers is their sense of dedication in doing the best job that they can despite the insurmountable odds they are facing while trying to balance paperwork overload, time constraints, and deadlines along with finding time for family life. Other valid concerns stated by these educators are lack of energy, exhaustion, lack of collaboration and support with and from other special educators, too many students in a classroom, and feelings of frustration and doubt about job efficacy.

"Sometimes I give up my lunchtime. Sometimes I meet after school. Sometimes I meet during my prep time which then takes away from whatever else I was going to do. A lot of times it's during lunch. I take work home every day. Most times, I don't get home until five o'clock. IEPs are always done after school or on the weekends" (Participant #105).

"There's no way you can do your paperwork during your workday because you're active, you're on, you're teaching. There's not even enough time even in your prep time to do it because

you're prepping for instructional stuff. I'm using my own time to do this; especially the first, you know, several weeks of school, at least two months of school when we start back. You're so exhausted you literally get home and you fall asleep on the couch, or that's at least what I do, so . . . there's not enough time in the day, or on the weekends, to get everything done . . . I schedule my IEPs around my prep time because the school district can't afford for us to [be paid overtime]. . . It does impact on my getting paperwork done because we have a lot of teachers that are very passionate, and we've been doing the best we can with what very little we have, yet we have nothing. There's definitely more work in special ed" (Participant #106).

"Most of my afterschool time in the paperwork department was on the computer just communicating and collaborating. I was in by 7:15 [a.m.] on average. And at the beginning of the year, I was leaving by seven [p.m.]. After about three months of that, I could leave by six. Three months of that, I could leave by five. So life was getting better. But there was usually a whole weekend day dedicated to school. Requirements with instructional time? I did it all after school. I didn't try to do any non-instructional paperwork during school. It was impossible because I never had any breaks. My IEPs I did at home because I have a laser printer. It was quiet, uninterrupted. I needed a weekend. I couldn't start an IEP at school. [It] made me crazy" (Participant #109).

Switching Jobs in Education Due to Job Efficacy. Three of the participants made job changes in their special education teaching careers due to job efficacy. Participant #103 was a special day class teacher for twenty years before she switched into the position of being a resource specialist. Participant #104 was a special day class teacher for nineteen years before switching to a Kindergarten position in general education. Participant #109 was an elementary

special day class teacher for one year before switching to a resource specialist position at the high school level. Their responses are very clear as to the reasons for switching from teaching in special day classes to their current teaching positions. Their statements illustrate the difficulties educators face in terms of burnout from paperwork, behavioral issues with students, and difficulties switching between special education and general education jobs when in these teaching capacities.

Switching from Special Day Class Teacher to Resource Specialist Teacher. “I did that because when my last years as a special day class teacher [occurred], I took a little time off as I did the home school program. I was on leave. Then, I actually asked for RSP when I came back because of the types of students they were putting in the [SDC] class. I wanted to work with kids with learning disabilities to help them to learn to read or write and do math. But obviously when you’re working with kids, you have some behavioral. What was happening was it was more really emotionally disturbed, really behaviorally challenged students in the [SDC] classroom, and the small group that was learning disabled was a little group of kids. The other [behaviorally challenged group] was more, I was doing more behavioral management. There were a lot of kids that were really severe, emotionally and behaviorally. It was taking its toll on me because it was hard getting support sometimes. The responsibility of having to do whole classroom management that was all based on behavior [was infeasible], and I wasn’t able to [do it]. . . [There are] more meetings and paperwork for behavioral plans and more IEP’s to deal with. [There were] the challenges of the kids and their parents” (Participant #103).

Switching from Special Education (SDC) to General Education (Kindergarten).

“[Paperwork] was a real impetus for me to leave because I hate paperwork. . . And it was getting

to be so all-consuming. Especially when I was dealing with two assistants, and they weren't one-on-ones; they were both special day class assistants. [I was] trying to write down lesson plans for them, and take care of the kids' IEPs. I remember being responsible for that and then responsible for the academic testing. So, [REDACTED] was the Director of Human Resources, and I went to her and said, 'I am going to have to ask for a stress leave because I cannot do this job anymore. I've told you for three years - I'm done. I can't do it anymore. I may be still good at it, and you may think that I am, but [REDACTED], I cannot do this. I'm just sick and tired, especially when I've done it for too long now. Now my doctor is giving me this (verification for stress leave).' And it took kind of that kind of a threat. She finally let me out that year. It took me three years to get out."

"The paperwork that I would choose to bring home now would be looking at a unit and planning it, but it's voluntary paperwork to me. I'll bring home things to cut out or I'll be coloring in something for a game to put together. It's stuff that I want to do. It's creative, and it will make my life easier in the long run. Whereas in special ed, it was mandatory paperwork; I had to have it done. There was a timeline. There were things that had to be done. The biggest thing that involves my time at home now is report cards" (Participant #104).

Switching from Elementary Special Day Class Teacher to High School Resource

Specialist Teacher. "[I switched jobs] because I hated it [teaching elementary special day class from grades three to five]. It was seventy hours a week. It's very isolating. And I had heard that being a teacher's isolating. You're the only adult in the room. You don't have coworkers to bounce off of throughout your workday. Being a special ed teacher's even more isolating because you don't even have PLC meetings, and you're not collaborating in the teachers' room.

You never get to go to lunch or brunch or prep. You never see any other people. It's totally lonely. If you're trying to meet new people, forget it. Being a single homeowner with two dogs, I had no time for a life. My quality of life was really low. All I did was get through the day, do about three hours of paperwork, go home, go to bed, and do it again. It's awful. I didn't have time for any socializing with friends. The job brought me no joy whatsoever. The hours were way too long, and [it was] not my age group. I take pride now [in the fact] that I'm going to work at the high school. I like the teachers there. They're a higher caliber. They had to excel at their subject in school. I like the group. They're more dynamic. I like the age group better. And I always wanted to do resource. Just pull them out, do my magic. I'm better being cool with older kids—I like high school kids; I like their age—than I am being all motherly. Wipe their noses. I was changing a diaper in there. I did not go to school all this time to do this. I hated it" (Participant #109).

The Effects of Increased Class Sizes, Budget Cuts, and Diverse Disabilities of Special Needs Populations on Paperwork Demands.

The third research question examines the issues of increased class sizes, budget cuts, and diverse disabilities that special educators face in the classroom in conjunction with paperwork requirements. Responses from the participants during their interviews illuminated these relevant concerns and the impacts they are having on paperwork stress.

Increased Class Sizes.

As has previously been stated, there is no legal cap or ceiling on the number of students a teacher can have in a special day class setting. The education code has a recommendation of no more than thirteen students in a setting of this kind, but there is no legal limit as to the number of special needs students in one classroom. Every special day class teacher has one full time

assistant. Some teachers have other assistants who are assigned to particular students as a requirement written in those students' IEPs. At times, these other assistants are able to help out in the teacher's class. However, there is no guarantee that there will be additional aid in a classroom of seventeen or more students. These large class sizes create conflicts for the teachers because the situation reduces to a matter of maintaining classroom behavior and management over specialized instruction and meeting or even addressing each individual's goals. Participants #106, #107, and #108 have seventeen or more students at three different grade levels (combination classes of 4th, 5th, and 6th grades) they are working with.

"I started out with five students in my SDC class, and nineteen years later, I ended up with seventeen students in my SDC class" (Participant #104, p.24).

"The biggest impact, I think, is the numbers that are under our caseload. I don't think that's fair, and it does impact on the students because we're not then able to provide them the time and the quality of time that they need to be working with us one-to-one . . . It's insane. You know, it would be nice just to have twelve students, where it was before they renegotiated our contract where they bumped us up to thirteen [students]. But, I think twelve would be nice" (Participant #106).

"I know when I first started teaching I had nine kids. And it was amazing. I had a binder for every kid with their IEP goals on it. And it was like, oh, we, you know, they can do something early and there was work for them to do. And it was all goal based. And it just gives you a lot more freedom to do. With eighteen [students], there's no way" (Participant #107).

“When you're at twelve [students], you can instruct it. When you're at eighteen [students], you're just maintaining . . . And then you find yourself working with just the needy ones, and the other kids . . . the behavior . . . so you're working on behavior; you're not working on academics. Which I really see as my job. My job's to get them back to gen ed, if at all possible” (Participant #108, p. 17).

Below is a chart showing the actual caseloads of each participant and their responses to the question of what they would define as a reasonable caseload.

Responses from participants regarding their perceptions of a reasonable number of students for a caseload:

Participant #/Position	Actual # of Students on Caseload	Reasonable # of Students/ Reasonable Caseload
#101 RSP	24	15 for 100% position; 12 for 80% position
#102 RSP	32	28
#103 RSP	28	15
#104 (formerly SDC) Currently Kindergarten	17 (SDC) 31 (Kindergarten)	10 (SDC) 22 (Kindergarten)
#105 SDC	13	12
#106 SDC	17	12
#107 SDC	18	9-10
#108 SDC	17	12
#109 SDC	13	13

Budget Cuts: Decrease of paraprofessional hours in the classroom for RSP teachers. Resource Specialists also have assistants who help them with group instruction,

paperwork, and scheduling. Originally, these assistants worked full time with the resource specialists. In an effort to cut costs, the district reduced the number of hours an RSP assistant could work so that the assistants now only work a portion of the day, usually in the morning hours (four and one-half hours a day). Along with the reduced number of hours are reductions in benefits for these personnel. The resource specialists interviewed expressed their frustration in the amount of stress this has added to their jobs as well as the reduction in being able to serve the students as effectively.

“[The assistant] is with me twenty-two and a half hours a week . . . It would definitely help everybody to have their assistants there full time. They cut, they cut them, when they cut them several years back, it did really impact our program. If we had them, then we would be able to do even more in the service of instructional time with kids to help them more in the classroom with projects and those kinds of things that are challenging for them in addition to the programs that we use to help them progress in there, reading and writing and math . . . We’re the ones who are responsible for our caseloads. Our assistants are support people” (Participant #103).

“My assistant can handle little intervention groups so easily and so well . . . And their benefits are being cut. It's ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous. The powers that be don't see the value in [our assistants]—I mean, our assistants are gold. They really are. They work their little tails off for next to nothing. Keep me at 80%, but make my assistant, at least, full time. She's in the classroom, usually, serving kids, doing groups, or with the kids in the classroom. Give them a living wage at least” (Participant #101).

Diverse disabilities of special needs populations within the classroom.

The issue of diverse disabilities of special needs population within the classroom affects both RSP and SDC teachers. The problems of time, being able to address everyone's needs, class sizes, behavior plans and behavior management, and increased paperwork demands associated with a wide array of disabilities impact a teacher's ability to perform as well as affecting self-confidence and fulfillment of job expectations. Questions arise as to what is appropriate for a classroom setting. These educators seem to agree that inclusion of all students with all kinds of disabilities is not effective for addressing the needs of all students. It became clear throughout the interviews that the behaviors of a few students were a major obstacle in being able to instruct a whole class. Students identified with ED (Emotional Disturbance) or ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) often require much more support and attention which detracts from being able to serve the rest of the students in the classroom. As several of the participants remark, the students with learning disabilities often defer to the students who demand, require, and receive more time and attention from the teacher and assistant. Additionally, there is the paperwork aspect of documenting all the behaviors of students who have behavior goals and behavior support plans with their IEPs.

“[Paperwork demands] can really impact a Special Day Class situation where they have your little, sweet, darling, learning-handicapped kid that just wants to learn, and then you have your genius ED kid who's violent. And then you have your kid with autism, and then you have your kid with Down's syndrome, and they are all being placed in the same classrooms in the public school system, which is a crying shame. And it's all boiling down to one thing—money” (Participant #102, p. 5).

“There’s more paperwork. They’re mixing a lot more different kids together in one class, particularly in special day class. And there are kids with different needs and different disabilities that don’t really lend themselves to being together because their needs are too diverse to be served in the classroom. They’re mixing all the kids even more. To me it seems like a nightmare. I don’t get it. I don’t see it. . . I think it’s because it’s too demanding. It’s too much. There’s too much diversity, too much paperwork, too many demands. And for one person, it’s sometimes actually impossible” (Participant #103, p. 14, 20, 24, 34).

“Because your modification [with Emotionally Disturbed and Autism Spectrum Disorder students] is completely different, you can’t do the stuff that you would normally do in a regular special day class, especially with your kids who are just learning-disabled. That’s all that’s wrong with them, and they’re really good kids. And it’s not fair for them, because they really need that time, and they need the support from us. . . . Because you’re assessing an ED student or you’re targeting a behavior versus an autism behavior, you’re doing two different things, and you’re looking at two different things. So not only are you collecting data on multiple things—that’s a whole other set of paperwork—but you’re also trying to pull everything else together And the behavior support plans are different. Whatever tools they need are different. You’re constantly shopping for the new tools. You have to replace the tools because things happen to them. It’s definitely more work. It would be easier for a teacher to just focus on one type of group, definitely, though we know legally we’re not supposed to categorize them. But in the long run it does help, especially for your EDs and your autism students, because they’re so unique in what they need and how to service them” (Participant #106, p. 8, 11).

Discussion

The analysis in the findings revealed striking similarities between the themes of the findings and the themes that emerged in the literature review. The previous literature examines the burdens of paperwork demands associated with increasing caseloads and class sizes along with time constraints, budget cuts, and special education teacher burnout resulting in teachers leaving their jobs. Further analysis demonstrated limitations of the study and described areas for future research including special education reform and alternative settings as well as increased collaboration and communication between administrators and special educators. After careful consideration of all the factors involved in this study, a statement on the overall significance of the study can be made.

Comparison of Findings with Existing Studies

When comparing the findings of the research with existing studies, there are many similarities between the findings and the existing literature. Two specific areas of the findings which corroborated existing studies include reasons for difficulties in retaining special education teachers and problems regarding job efficacy. The studies of time allocation of paperwork by special educators is of particular interest as the findings of this research indicate an increase in the amount of time that special education teachers spend on non-instructional paperwork in comparison with two other existing studies.

Reasons for Difficulties in Retaining Special Educators. In Boe, Cook, and Sunderland's study (2005), the double-edged sword of a shortage of highly-qualified, special education teachers with high attrition rates of special educators leaving their original teaching positions within the first four years of employment is apparent when analyzing the responses of

the research participants regarding paperwork burdens and time deadlines. Participants #106, #107, #108, and #109, as teachers who have had four or fewer years of teaching in special day classes, confirm that the high numbers of students in their classrooms increase the paperwork burdens they handle and produce stress in the form of decreased time and energy outside of school for family, home, and social life. Two of these four participants have seriously considered leaving the teaching profession as a result of their experiences within the special day class setting from paperwork overload and lack of administrative support. Their responses affirm Futernick's (2007) and Billingsley's (2006) research that younger and less experienced special education teachers leave their positions due to work environment factors such as high caseloads, lack of administrative support, lack of resources, and low morale.

For the more experienced teachers in this study, Participants #101, #102, #103, #104, and #105, the findings of this research support studies done by Kaff (2004) regarding the complexity and constant changes of the IEP document in addition to the pressures of increased accountability under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). All of these educators agree that the IEP has become much more cumbersome and more complicated to complete. Participant #102 stated that she retired sooner than she anticipated due to the amount of time taken for testing, meetings, and associated paperwork she encountered in her job. Participant #104 stated that the increased pressures of paperwork demands and deadlines created serious, stress-related, health issues that eventually persuaded her to switch to a general education teaching position.

The threat of lawsuits is another cause for stress and concern regarding documentation and paperwork among special educators. Aligning with studies by Nance and Calabrese (2009),

participants expressed their apprehension about parents suing the district over a student's IEP being written incorrectly. Several of the participants stated that they felt a lack of support in training when encountering updated versions and additions to the IEP document. It is obvious from all participants' responses that the combination of larger caseloads, increased non-instructional paperwork, increased accountability, and higher expectations of performance are creating tremendous amounts of stress and exhaustion which affect their quality of work and quality of life.

The findings of this study are in agreement with those discussed in Benefield's articles (2010, 2011) about the impact of budget cuts in the schools of Cotati-Rohnert Park. Special education teachers reported increased class sizes, decreased support from paraprofessionals, radical changes in classroom populations, and increased caseloads of students with IEPs, Behavior Support Plans, and 504 Plans along with increases in paperwork demands. A significant issue that all participants agreed upon concerned the amount of time consumed by non-instructional paperwork which interfered with instructional time with students. In accordance with research by Nance and Calabrese (2009) regarding time spent with students, every participant agreed that the increase in paperwork overload negatively impacted their instructional time with their students. In some cases, instruction was cancelled due to IEP meetings or testing, creating the conflict of finding extra time to fulfill the total instructional time students were allowed per their individual IEPs. In other instances, part time assistants were sometimes able to fill in for instructing some of the groups or individual students. Without exception, participants expressed their concerns and frustrations about the impact of non-instructional paperwork, plans, and meetings with regard to their instructional time with students.

Job Efficacy. In her study on teacher retention and attrition, Billingsley (2003) discusses the problems associated with prolonged work problems and job efficacy. Her comments about teachers' weakened abilities to be effective and the negative effects on self-esteem produced by excessive overloads are directly reflected in the responses by teachers in this study. Participant #107 expresses self-doubt as to her effectiveness as a teacher due to feeling overwhelmed by the number of students in her classroom, the amount of paperwork, and the many behavioral issues of students she deals with everyday. She is in her third year of teaching, and the strain of her job is apparent in her feelings about too many students, too much work, and not enough time. Participant #109 also shows the effects of job-related stress and frustration when she comments about working seventy hours a week, the isolation of her job, and the lack of time for recovery after school and on weekends. Her statements of the lack of support, lack of resources, and lack of intrinsic rewards as being among the chief reasons for leaving this position mirror Billingsley's report (2003) on the toll of job overload on today's special education teachers. After one year of teaching in a moderate-to-severe special day class, Participant #109 decides to switch to an RSP position at the high school in her district.

Many of the participants described working nonstop all day long, during breaks and during lunch, in order to handle the demands of the paperwork and associated duties such as conferring with specialists, teachers, administrators, and parents. Nance and Calabrese (2009) in their study indicate that high levels of stress associated with ongoing demands may lead to a sense of alienation for teachers. Accordingly, research done by Cordes and Dougherty (1993) on job burnout asserts that there are three main components present in those who are affected by work overload: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal

accomplishment. Strikingly, to a greater or lesser degree, all of the participants interviewed in this study exhibited these three components in their responses.

Time Allocation of Paperwork. Two studies in the literature review section discuss time allocation of paperwork by special education teachers. SPeNSE (Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education) in their Paperwork Substudy of 2003 states that special educators spend an average of 38.5 hours per month on non-instructional paperwork. Using the conversion of seven-hour work days for teachers (most elementary school teachers are contracted to work from 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.), this equates to 5.7 additional days per month that special educators devote to non-instructional paperwork. Wilmshurst and Brue (2006) in their work state that in a survey of special education teachers, the average time spent on non-teaching activities was 57.9 hours a month. This equates to 8.3 additional days per month of non-instructional paperwork for special education teachers. In this study, the data from the participants show that an average of 65 hours a month is spent by special educators on non-instructional paperwork. This correlates closely with the study by Wilmshurst and Brue. Based on a seven-hour work day, this is the equivalent of 9.3 extra days a month that these educators spend on paperwork in addition to instruction and related instructional paperwork. It is startling to realize that special education teachers spend almost two additional work weeks per month handling non-instructional paperwork on top of instruction and instructional paperwork. Furthermore, the amount of preparation time that many elementary school teachers receive is two hours per week compared with two hours per day that most high school teachers receive.

From the information in this study and in the literature review, it is easy to understand the reasons for the attrition rates and difficulties in retaining special education teachers in today's world. Clearly, many new special educators are not sufficiently prepared for the onslaught of

paperwork demands, class sizes, time constraints, and behavioral considerations that exist in special education classrooms. More experienced special educators are straining to keep up with the increased demands of diverse student populations, increased caseloads, and decreased support. Although this study is a microcosmic view of nine special educators' challenges and perceptions of their jobs, it reflects the dilemmas facing many special education teachers nationwide as districts and states look for ways to decrease expenses and balance their budgets.

Limitations of the Study

There are several aspects of this study that limit the generalization of its results to special educators nationwide. First, this study was conducted using two small, school districts as the sites of the study. Therefore, it is likely that the findings cannot be applied to larger urban or suburban school districts. Other limitations of this study include the sample size and the sampling procedure. The sample size was small, consisting of only nine participants. Additionally, the sampling procedure used was purposive sampling, resulting in a sampling that was representative of different kinds of special educators who had various teaching backgrounds and experience. A larger number and variety of participants would provide a more accurate representation of the population. Furthermore, eight of the nine participants were from one district and were familiar with one another. These eight participants were known to the researcher based on the researcher's year as a special educator in the district and from previous experience as a student teacher and substitute teacher. The ninth participant from a different school district was also known to the researcher. Although contact was limited between the researcher and the nine participants, with the researcher making every attempt to be unbiased during the study, the element of bias cannot be ruled out.

Implications for Future Research

Several areas to be further explored emerged from this study. First, it is obvious that special education and its teachers and students, in the current form in these two districts, require immediate attention and support. Administrators at the district level for the group of eight participants are in the process of creating a 'think tank' involving special educators and administration to work together to come up with ideas that will ease the current burden being experienced by the elementary school special education teachers. The administration has made it clear that no additional teachers will be hired at this time due to its budget. Alternative models of special education reform are being considered, such as Learning Centers. Following the decisions and implementation of a different special education model in this district warrants further research.

Nationwide, special education is undergoing reform in many states. Due to the fast-changing nature of special education settings at this time, it might be helpful to study the various alternative settings that exist in schools nationwide, to analyze cost effectiveness and student performance. Of concern to many parents of children with special needs is the balance of stability in a small class setting versus more opportunities for academic and social growth in mainstream, inclusive settings. Further research and long-term study are needed to evaluate the alternative programs that are currently being implemented in schools today.

Other areas that warrant further research as a result of this study include analyzing the effectiveness of self-contained, special day classrooms versus full inclusion into mainstreamed classrooms for students with special needs, studying the teacher to student ratios in other special education settings, special educators co-teaching with general educators, and effective learning environments for special needs students.

Another consideration to research is the development of opportunities for more collaboration and communication among special educators in a district and community. From this study, it was apparent that these special educators felt isolated and alienated from each other. There were no opportunities for collaboration among the educators as a group or at various grade levels. During each interview, it was evident from each participant that the opportunity to express feelings, concerns, and problems was very important. These special educators were passionate about working with their students, families, and other personnel. Their dedication to their jobs and in doing their best was amazingly clear. It is important for their voices to be heard.

Overall Significance of the Study

The findings of this study confirm the need for support and aid for special educators who are struggling to meet the demands of their jobs and to be effective teachers for their students. The courage, perseverance, and dedication exhibited by the participants in this study were both illuminating and inspiring. It was important to examine each participant's history and background in education in order to appreciate the challenges that each person was facing in her particular job position.

The study clearly addressed the issues of increased paperwork, the causes for paperwork burdens of special educators, and the effects these demands had on job efficacy. Furthermore, the data supplied by the participants demonstrated the effects of severe budget cuts that most school districts are currently experiencing at this time. Increased class sizes, decreased benefits, reduction of instructional days per year, paperwork burdens in two essential areas of special education (non-instructional and instructional) all contribute to the stress and burnout that many special educators are experiencing.

Of special note is the difference in paperwork burdens between RSP teachers and SDC teachers. The information from this study points out the amount of work RSP teachers face with initial referrals from general education teachers, testing, reports, meetings, IEPs, and scheduling so that the maximum number of students can be served. Concurrently, SDC teachers face the challenges of large class sizes, diversity of disabilities within the classroom and the effects of addressing everyone's needs in accordance with their IEP goals, and balancing the non-instructional paperwork with teaching and instructional paperwork.

Research in the area of special educator perceptions on paperwork and job efficacy has proven to be illuminating and alarming. Although the research done in this study indicates that there is only a slight increase in the amount of time that special educators spend on non-instructional paperwork, an increase of one additional day since 2006 (Wilmshurst and Brue), the evidence suggests that in the current climate, special education teachers are working an average of two additional work weeks per month above and beyond their instructional and preparation time each month in school. There is a desperate need for better communication and collaboration between special educators and district administrators to find solutions that will benefit both teachers and students and that will accommodate a reasonable budget.

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Appendix A**Demographic Questionnaire**

Participant ID Number	Current Position/Grade Level	Years in this Position	Previous Teaching Experience	Yrs. Teaching In District	Other Jobs You Have Held

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Special Educators

Regarding Time Spent on Paperwork Associated with Job

Please fill in the average number of hours you spend each month on the following areas:

Description of Paperwork Area	Average Number of Hours Spent Per Month Working in this Area
SSTs, Meetings with Gen. Ed. Teachers, Administrators, Parents, associated paperwork	
Initial IEPs, Meetings with Teachers, Administrators, Parents, associated paperwork	
IEP preparation, conferring with specialists, IEP meetings	
BSP preparation, conferring w/School Psychologist, associated meetings/paperwork	
Assessments, administration, scoring, reporting results	
Administrative Work: Other reports, documentation, letters, Progress Reports, copying, filing, updating records, conferring with physicians & associated paperwork	
Documents for School, District, County, State (MAA, etc.); Daily student reports, Report Cards, Referrals	
Other: Any other paperwork or related area that you spend time on other than instructional or instructional planning/prep:	
Total Number of Hours Spent Per Month On Non-Instructional Paperwork:	
Average number of hours spent per month on preparation and planning of lessons, instructional materials, grading	
Average number of hours spent per month on instruction	
Total Number of Hours Spent Per Month on Instruction and Related Paperwork:	

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Question	Follow Up	Follow Up
What do you perceive as the purposes that paperwork serves with regard to your students?	Which specific paperwork tasks serve your students best and which paperwork tasks seem less important?	
How do you balance non-instructional paperwork requirements with instructional time and related paperwork in your job?	When do you complete paperwork requirements?	How does paperwork impact instructional time?
Do you think paperwork demands are increasing, staying the same, or decreasing?	Can you give an example of your answer?	What do you attribute your answer to?
What impacts do paperwork tasks have on your ability to serve students?	What impacts do paperwork tasks have on your assistant(s)?	
Considering the time you spend on paperwork, both non-instructional and instructional, what do you consider to be a reasonable caseload?	What paperwork tasks directly affect the amount of time you spend with each student?	
Does full inclusion impact the amount of paperwork you process?	If so, can you give an example of your answer?	How do you think this will change in the current special education climate?
Are paperwork demands complicated by the ranges of special needs within a classroom (e.g. inclusion of students with ED disabilities or students with autism)?	If so, in what ways are paperwork tasks affected?	How would you restructure your caseload?
Does online accessibility to IEPs and other documents impact paperwork requirements with your job?	If so, what are the advantages and disadvantages of online computing and record-keeping?	What additional online programs do you feel would help in managing current paperwork demands?
What changes or improvements would you like to see in terms of handling paperwork associated with your job?		

If you have been teaching for more than six years, has the field of special education changed since you began teaching?	If so, in what ways has the field of special education changed in your experience?	Have paperwork demands changed over time since you began teaching in special education. If so, in what ways have they changed?
If you have been teaching less than six years, did your teacher training program adequately prepare you for your job?	If so, please give examples of what best helped you from your program.	If not, what could your program have offered to help you become better prepared for your job?
Have you considered leaving your job as an education specialist?	If so, can you give some reasons for this consideration?	Did paperwork tasks influence your decision? If so, in what ways?
If you have changed your job position within special education, or changed from special education to general education, what were your reasons for changing?	Did paperwork tasks impact your decision? If so, in what ways?	

Appendix D**Data from Demographic Questionnaire**

Participant ID Number	Current Position/Grade Level	Years in this Position	Previous Teaching Experience	Yrs. Teaching in this District	Other Jobs you have held
Participant #101	Resource Specialist Teacher K-6	5	5 years elementary, General Ed teacher, K, 2, 5, 6	5	Grocery checker, Phone solicitor, Electronics assembly line worker, drug store clerk

Participant ID Number	Current Position/Grade Level	Years in this Position	Previous Teaching Experience	Yrs. Teaching in this District	Other Jobs you have held
Participant #102	Resource Specialist Teacher K-6	0	0 years	9	Kindergarten Teacher, Pre-school Teacher, Sales, Waitress

Participant ID Number	Current Position/Grade Level	Years in this Position	Previous Teaching Experience	Yrs. Teaching in this District	Other Jobs you have held
Participant #103	Resource Specialist Teacher K-6	4	SDC 9-12 (7 years), SDC 3-5 (7 years), RSP 5-12 (2 years), RSP K-12 (2 years), Independent Study/RSP (2 years)	8	Office manager, Secretary, Special Ed Ass't (SH Classroom)

Participant ID Number	Current Position/Grade Level	Years in this Position	Previous Teaching Experience	Yrs. Teaching in this District	Other Jobs you have held
Participant #104	General Ed Teacher – Kindergarten	5	First Grade Teacher, Special Day Class Teacher (19 years), RSP Teacher	2	None listed

Participant ID Number	Current Position/Grade Level	Years in this Position	Previous Teaching Experience	Yrs. Teaching in this District	Other Jobs you have held
Participant #105	Special Day Class Teacher K-1	7	General Ed, K-1, RSP Assistant	7	Retail, Dept. Store, RSP Assistant, Retail, Candy Store

Participant ID Number	Current Position/Grade Level	Years in this Position	Previous Teaching Experience	Yrs. Teaching in this District	Other Jobs you have held
Participant #106	Special Day Class/Autism K-3	1 st year teaching class of students with autism	3 years in SDC, 4/5/6 5 Years Gen. Ed. Tchr (K, 3 rd , 5 th Grades)	9	None listed

Participant ID Number	Current Position/Grade Level	Years in this Position	Previous Teaching Experience	Yrs. Teaching in this District	Other Jobs you have held
Participant #107	Special Day Class 4, 5, 6	3	Student Teaching, Anova 1:1	3	Anova Teach. Ass't, Soccer coach, Nanny

Participant ID Number	Current Position/Grade Level	Years in this Position	Previous Teaching Experience	Yrs. Teaching in this District	Other Jobs you have held
Participant #108	SDC Teacher, 4, 5, 6	4	0	4	Sports Marketing, Federal Express Courier

Participant ID Number	Current Position/Grade Level	Years in this Position	Previous Teaching Experience	Yrs. Teaching in this District	Other Jobs you have held
Participant #109	SDC Teacher, 3, 4, 5	1	Student Teaching, Substitute Tchr, 4 mos.	1	None related to Education field except Teacher's Aide in 1978 Gen. Ed. ; Shipping Mgr.

Appendix E

Chart Data from
Questionnaire for Special Educators Regarding Time Spent on Paperwork Associated with Job

