A CASE STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION LAW ON THE RETENTION OF TENURED SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

A Dissertation by

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DEDICATION

To educators, as we all are teachers and learners
Knowledge comes at a price . . . it is called responsibility.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have influenced my learning. I have been called a perpetual student, which to me, is an accurate description of who I am and what I believe. My educational journey is unending, so while I am appreciative of specific people with regard to my doctoral endeavors, it would be impossible to name all who have influenced me to travel the roads to where I am today; needless to say, I would not be here without you.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe the influence of increased legal requirements on current or former Interlocal tenured special education teacher attrition or retention by reporting their reasons for staying or leaving through the theoretical perspectives of organizational learning and organizational culture. I conducted a qualitative multiple case study of two units of analysis through a constructionist epistemology. Data were collected from current and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers through focus groups, semi-structured interviews, the Left Hand and Right-Hand Column Case Method (LHRHCCM), and review of appropriate documents. Data collected were analyzed using text analysis software, content analysis, and pattern matching.

Four salient findings from my study were: (1) Current tenured special education teachers want to be listened to and have their needs considered, (2) Current tenured special education teachers feel overwhelmed by the workload related to state assessments, (3) Current and former tenured special education teachers believe that legally-required changes affected them in practice, and (4) Current and former tenured special education teachers perceive that time requirements for administrative tasks reduce time for student services. Implications for praxis include organizational learning and organizational culture that encourage listening to the experience of tenured special education teachers and including them in decisions that affect them in an effort to retain them.

My study adds to the body of knowledge surrounding special education teacher attrition by describing how tenured special education teachers believe increased legal
requirements influence their retention or attrition. Areas for future research include studying the time it takes special education teachers to complete legally-required administrative tasks and why those tasks are perceived as stressful, and the impact of special education administrator leadership on special education teacher retention, including the application of resources within an interlocal. During this time of critical shortage of special education teachers, findings from this study may be crucial to understanding the factors related to the retention and attrition of tenured special education teachers in the Interlocal and elsewhere.
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CHAPTER 1
Introduction

The shortage of special education teachers in public schools is at a critical level (McLesky, Tyler, & Flippin, 2004; McLesky & Waldron, 1998) and does not complement the demand placed on special education by the increased number of students receiving services (Brownell, Hirsch, & Seo, 2004; Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1999). The annual attrition rate of special education teachers compounds this issue. Many of the vacant positions are filled with unqualified general education teachers hired under waivers, while many other positions are left vacant (Billingsley, 2004).

Background of the Study

The Sedgwick County Area Educational Services Interlocal Cooperative #618 (hereinafter referred to as the Interlocal) is a separate legal entity comprised of nine member districts. The Interlocal’s role is to provide special education teachers and related service staff to meet the special needs of the special education eligible students within its districts. The Interlocal is located in Goddard, Kansas, and serves students in nine rural and suburban school districts, Valley Center, Clearwater, Goddard, Maize, Renwick, Cheney, Conway Springs, Burrton, and Sedgwick to the west of Wichita, Kansas. Approximately 19,000 students attend the 43 schools within the Interlocal’s districts. Twenty-eight hundred of these students are identified as eligible for special education services under Individual Education Programs (IEPs). These students range in age from 3 to 21, and represent the 13 Federal disabilities identified in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 2004) as well as the exceptionality of Gifted (Kansas Statutes
Annotated: Kansas Special Education for Exceptional Children Act 2005).

The Interlocal is partially funded based on the number of full-time equivalency (FTE) categorical teaching units, or the number of full-time licensed staff needed to serve its students. To receive state and federal funds, the Interlocal must follow specific guidelines when hiring staff, which includes licensing requirements. In Attrition of Special Education Personnel in Kansas for the School Years of 2004-05 to 2005-06 (McKnab, 2006), it was reported that the Interlocal had the highest total attrition rate of Kansas’ interlocals from the school years 1986-1987 to 2005-2006. It also had the 23rd highest attrition rate of the 79 districts employing 150 or more personnel over those 20 years. Since the 1999-2000 school year, the Interlocal averaged a total special education teacher attrition rate of 8%. Almost 40% of the teachers who left the Interlocal’s employ had tenure status.

As the student population grows in the Interlocal’s nine districts, so does the need for special education staff. The Interlocal has had to add positions to meet this increasing need. It is unlikely that teacher preparation programs will produce sufficient special education teachers to fill the demand (McKnab, 2006). The scarcity of licensed special education teachers has caused the Interlocal to hire teachers with provisional licenses, general education teachers under waivers, or long-term substitutes to fill vacant positions.

Problem Statement

A national shortage of licensed special education teachers exists. Part of the shortage is caused by those leaving special education teaching positions. The Interlocal loses an average of 8% of its licensed special education teaching staff each school year through retirements, transfers to non-classroom teaching positions within the Interlocal,
terminations, non-renewals, and resignations. Resignations include those moving from the area, taking special education positions elsewhere; non-renewed special education teachers cannot formally resign once they have actually been non-renewed. The Board of Education gives them intents to non-renew their contracts, at that time they have until the next Board of Education meeting or May 15, whichever comes first, to resign. If they do not resign, the Board of Education non-renews their contract, and will not accept a formal resignation after that point.

While the national attrition rate of special education teachers is similar to general education teachers (Miller et al., 1999), it is much higher when adding the special education teachers who transfer from special education to general education teaching positions (Billingsley, 2004), which also occurs in Kansas (McKnab, 1996). Retention could be improved through “the reduction in rate of transfer of teachers to other schools” (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, & Weber, 1996, p. 36).

Statistics indicate that the rate of all teachers leaving is higher for teachers with less than four years of experience (Boe et al., 1996). In the Interlocal, however, almost 40% of the special education teachers who leave each year have tenure status. Vacancies caused by the shortage and through attrition often are filled with staff who lack proper licensure (McLesky et al., 2004), or remain unfilled (Brownell, Miller, & Smith, 1999). Increased requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 2004) (IDEA 04) and No Child Left Behind (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002) state that special education teachers must be highly qualified.

Some special education teachers who originally were fully licensed and highly
qualified under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997, 1997) are no longer considered highly qualified, which may influence their decisions to stay or leave. Regardless of special education teacher shortages and attrition rates, schools are compelled under the law to provide the necessary services to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with special needs. Given the lack of qualified teachers, this presents a challenge to the Interlocal, which must fill 20 to 30 licensed positions each year (Brownell et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999).

Some factors that may affect special education teacher retention are personal characteristics, educational preparation and licensure status, salary, job satisfaction, opportunities for personal growth, working conditions, challenging student needs, supports in place, and excessive paperwork (Boe et al., 1996; Miller et al., 1999). While there are many reasons for special education teacher attrition, one important consideration is the influence of increased legal and bureaucratic requirements. IDEA 04 has changed what has to be implemented in schools for students with disabilities, and special educators are required to follow the reauthorized IDEA (Boyer & Gillespie, 2003). Some of the changes are increased paperwork, Focused Assistance and Monitoring (FAM), and increased licensing requirements. Special education teachers may perceive that the increased legal requirements interfere with teaching (Billingsley, 2004); therefore, some leave the field or transfer to general education positions because of the mandated requirements (Carlson, Chen, Schroll, & Klein, 2003).

One factor that affects special education teacher retention is the legally-required paperwork (McKnab, 1996, Carlson et al., 2003). Meeting notices, IEP documents,
consent forms, and progress reports are examples of paperwork that changed with the reauthorization of IDEA 04 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 2004). Other requirements added more paperwork to teachers’ responsibilities: transition planning in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA 97) (Hasazi, Furney, & Destefano, 1999) and the Summary of Performance in IDEA 04 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 2004). Each change requires additional training for special education teacher implementation. Some special education teachers report that they understand the value of paperwork, but some paperwork interferes with their teaching and influences their decision to remain in special education (Carlson et al., 2003).

As required by IDEA 04, Kansas adopted FAM. FAM addresses the State and Local Education Agencies’ accountability to student improvement and protection of rights (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 2004). For Kansas to meet this requirement under IDEA, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) has initiated the FAM process as part of its State Performance Plan to monitor student improvement outcomes (Kansas State Department of Education, 2006). Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must collect and report data on indicators specified. In Kansas, seven indicators measure LEA progress related to appropriate identification, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), state assessment performance, and graduation rates of students with disabilities. All indicators require a higher degree of special education teacher involvement due to increased accountability and possible sanctions.

IDEA 04 mirrors NCLB requirements related to teachers being highly qualified in grade levels and subject areas they teach (Individuals with Disabilities Education
Improvement Act of 2004, 2004). One Kansas State Board of Education’s (KSBE) goal for the 2005-2006 school year is to provide competent teachers for every classroom (Kansas State Board of Education, 2005). A highly qualified special education teacher is defined in IDEA to meet NCLB’s definition. In addition, (a) the teacher must have full state licensure as a special education teacher, (b) the special education teacher may not teach under a provisional license or waiver, (c) the special education teacher must possess at least a bachelor’s degree, and (d) the special education teacher must meet the state’s rubric standards for showing competence in all core areas or grade levels for which they possess no endorsement (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 2004).

The IDEA 04 mandate for special education teachers to be highly qualified for any subject or grade level is one of the increased requirements under the law that may affect their decision to stay in special education. While the inclusion of the Interlocal students with disabilities in general education classes taught by teachers who are highly qualified for their subject areas is considered first by IEP teams as least restrictive for placements of students with disabilities, some disabled students are taught in more restrictive settings, away from their general education peers. Instruction in these placements is typically provided by special education teachers. Under IDEA 04, they are required to be highly qualified for their core subjects, such as mathematics (Billingsley & McLeskey, 2004). Thus, a special education teacher potentially needs to be highly qualified in many different subject areas.

Many of the Interlocal special education teachers are not highly qualified for the subject areas in which their students need instruction. This further exacerbates special
education teacher attrition since those who were previously considered highly qualified are not qualified at the present; thus, increasing the shortage of highly qualified special education teachers. This may influence their decision to stay or leave special education (Brownell et al., 2004).

The shortage of highly qualified, licensed special education teachers in Kansas is critical given the increased number of students needing special education services. The Interlocal loses an average of 8% of its fully licensed teaching staff each year. Some special education teacher vacancies are filled with teachers who are not fully licensed or highly qualified, and at times, with long-term substitutes. For those Interlocal special education teachers who stay, the increased requirements under IDEA 04 necessitate more support and training to meet demands of increased requirements. This study describes how increased legal requirements affect the Interlocal tenured special education teachers’ decisions to stay or leave their special education teaching positions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to describe the reasons current or former Interlocal tenured special education teachers stay in or leave their special education teaching positions through the theoretical perspectives of organizational learning and organizational culture. My study describes the influence of increased legal requirements on current or former Interlocal tenured special education teacher attrition or retention by reporting their reasons for staying or leaving.

Significance of Study

Extensive research on general education teacher and beginning teacher attrition exists; however, there is a need to describe and report special education teacher attrition
(Billingsley, 2004). This study fills gaps in the research concerning retention and attrition of tenured special education teachers (Miller et al., 1999).

My study adds to the body of knowledge surrounding special education teacher attrition by describing how tenured special education teachers believe the increased legal requirements influence their decisions to stay or leave. The Interlocal, LEAs, and State Education Agency (SEA) may learn how to address issues that influence attrition or retention by describing how the increased and changed requirements under such laws as IDEA influence whether special education teachers stay or leave. This is important because there is a shortage of licensed, highly qualified special education teachers; retaining current teaching staff is desirable (Miller et al., 1999) to continue to provide the services for special education students to progress as required under IDEA and NCLB.

Data from my study may also be important to universities and school districts as they prepare teachers for special education licensure and plan professional development that supports retention of highly qualified special education teachers. Special education policies and/or regulations may be affected by the outcomes of this study. During a time of a critical shortage of special education teachers, findings from this study may be crucial to understanding the factors related to special education teacher retention and attrition in the Interlocal and elsewhere.

Overview of Methodology

A multiple-case study design was used for this study filtered through a social constructionist epistemology. I chose this methodology because the two groups of tenured special education teachers, while operating under the same Interlocal administrative direction of legal requirements, arrived at different decisions. One group
chose to leave their special education teaching positions with the Interlocal, while the other group chose to stay with the Interlocal, and therefore, represent very different social constructions of similar situations.

Units of Analysis

Data were collected from two units of analysis: current Interlocal tenured special education teachers, and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers, whose employment with the Interlocal included at least one contract year after the 1997 amendments to IDEA. I used the following methods to collect data: focus groups, semi-structured interviews, the Left Hand and Right-Hand Column Case Method (LHRHCCM), and review of appropriate documents. Data were analyzed using text analysis software, content analysis, and pattern matching.

Research Questions

The following overarching question guided this study: What is the impact of increasing IDEA requirements on the decision of tenured Interlocal special education teachers to remain in their special education teaching positions? Out of this overarching question, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How do staying tenured Interlocal special education teachers describe the impact that increased legal requirements have on their decision to remain in special education with the Interlocal?

2. How do leaving tenured Interlocal special education teachers describe the impact that increased legal requirements had on their decision to leave their special education positions with the Interlocal?
Assumptions

I made the following assumptions concerning this study:

1. Special education teachers enter the field because they are committed to working with special education students.
2. Special education teachers experience challenges with increased IDEA requirements.
3. Special education teachers perceive increased legal requirements as stressors in their jobs.

Limitations

This study had the following limitations:

1. The study was limited by the number of available Interlocal tenured teachers who left the Interlocal for participation in the study.
2. The study was limited by the researcher’s primary employment as an administrator in the primary research site; the teachers’ reactions to the researcher may have to take into account any perceived power relationship between the researcher and the teachers involved in the study.

Delimitations

This study had the following delimitations:

1. This study was delimited to tenured special education teachers who were employed by the Interlocal for at least one contract year after 1997 and have stayed in or left their special education positions with the Interlocal.
2. This study was delimited to include former teachers who, at the time of the study, lived within a 150 mile radius of the Interlocal.
Definition of Key Terms

The following terms were used throughout this study:

Special Education Student: In Kansas, an exceptional student, meaning a student with disabilities or giftedness (Kansas Statutes Annotated: Kansas Special Education for Exceptional Children Act 2005).

Staying teachers: For the purposes of this study, currently-employed Interlocal tenured special education teachers.

Leaving teachers: For the purposes of this study, tenured Interlocal special education teachers employed with the Interlocal at least one contract year after the 1997 IDEA amendments, and who left their teaching positions with the Interlocal.

Organization of Study

This dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter 1 included the purpose of the study, background of the study, problem to be studied, significance of the study, overview of the methodology, research questions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and definition of key terms. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature related to organizational culture and organizational learning in relation to special education teacher attrition and retention. Chapter 3 provides methodological information, including the research design, and data collection methods, and analysis. Chapter 4 provides a summary of the findings. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings, implications for future research, implications for praxis and recommendations, relationship of findings to relevant theory and a summary and conclusion of the study.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

I begin this chapter by describing my conceptual framework, describing the theoretical perspectives of organizational learning and organizational culture in relation to teacher attrition and retention, and demonstrating how the study is informed by empirical research in the areas of special education teacher attrition and retention.

Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework was based on my personal knowledge as a general education teacher, and as a special education teacher who left special education to be a general education administrator, only to return two years later to my current position as a special education administrator. I have experiential knowledge of the various legal requirements for special education teachers and general education teachers; I have oversight responsibilities regarding the accurate implementation of special education legal requirements through due process, and teacher recruitment and retention.

I have three beliefs regarding special education teachers. Special education teachers enter the field because they want to help students with special needs learn. Special education teachers want to implement legally-required IDEA changes and have varied experiences based on the meaning they construct. And, some special education teachers feel that increased legal requirements interfere with their teaching and impact their decision to remain in the field of special education. These beliefs are in alignment with a constructionist epistemology. I used the theoretical perspectives of organizational learning and organizational culture. The special education teacher is affected by his/her organizational learning and organizational culture as he/she constructs meaning. My
experience, beliefs, epistemology, and theoretical perspectives comprise my conceptual framework.

Symbols and events hold no value in themselves, but when special education teachers attach value to them, meaning is constructed, and those same symbols and events become their reality (Crotty, 2004). Each special education teacher makes sense of information encountered and constructs his or her meaning; how he/she chooses to respond in relation to the meaning he/she has constructed is affected by the organizational culture in which he/she works and learns. It is what Argyris describes as a theory-of-action (1999). How an individual acts is based upon his/her values and assumptions that he/she learned and to which he/she has contributed as part of a larger organizational culture (Schein, 1999). The theoretical perspectives of organizational culture and organizational learning will be explored in the following sections in relation to what the literature tells us regarding special education teacher attrition and retention.

Complimentary Theory

A complimentary theory that I considered to examine this issue was sensemaking. Sensemaking, although part of a larger social construction, has its foundation in individual construction of identity (Weick, 1995). Special education teachers may experience sensemaking due to changes in the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004. With regard to the impact that increased legal requirements may have on special education teachers, Weick (1995) addresses this issue in his seventh property of sensemaking, “Plausibility: I need to know enough about what I think to get on with my projects, but no more, which means sufficiency and plausibility take precedence over accuracy” (pp 61-62). Special education teachers may interpret what statutes, regulations, policies, or
procedures tell them to do. Their understanding, based on preexisting knowledge, can change as they put newly-required changes into practice and through social interaction (Coburn, 2005; Patterson & Marshall, 2001).

I decided not to use sensemaking as a theoretical perspective because it isolates teachers and their responses from their larger organizational culture. How special education teachers make sense of the new requirements in IDEA 04 may impact their decisions to stay in or leave their special education teaching positions. Sensemaking, however, does not allow me to present the ways special education teachers act on the sense they make of increased legal requirements. Without examining the impact each individual’s meaning and ultimate actions has on the organization’s learning and culture, this study may not fully explain the special education teacher retention or attrition from an organizational perspective.

*Organizational Culture*

“Culture is the sum total of all the shared, taken-for-granted assumptions that a group has learned throughout its history” (Schein, 1999, p. 29). Organizational culture finds its genesis in social psychology and Lewin’s idea that an individual’s perceptions, feelings, and actions are a direct reflection of the group to which the individual belongs (Lewin, 1948). Schein (1999) explained the three levels of culture in an organization as artifacts or visible symbols, espoused values, and underlying tacit assumptions. Organizational culture is deeply rooted accumulated learning of a group where individuals behave according to tacit assumptions. One aspect of explaining an individual’s behavior in relationship to the organization is to examine the individual’s subgroup culture (Schein, 2004).
By questioning underlying assumptions, individual teachers can change the thoughts, values, and actions of their organizational culture (Lewin, 1948). This learning cycle is evident when a teacher feels personal responsibility for his/her choices and is intrinsically committed to choosing to change (Argyris & Schon, 1974). When special education teachers possess the necessary skills to change, their organizational culture can influence whether they choose to accept and incorporate changes required by increased legal requirements.

Since special education teachers interact with and within their culture, a change in their organizational culture is preceded by their relinquishing held values, beliefs, and actions (Lewin, 1948). Precipitated by a crisis, conflict or dilemma, special education teachers within an organization freely choose to unfreeze their held beliefs and values and discard existing information, acquire new or up-to-date information that bolsters the acquisition of new beliefs and values leading to a change in behavior, and re-freeze their new beliefs and values (Argyris, 1999; Argyris & Schon, 1974; Lewin, 1948; Schein, 1999; Schein & Bennis, 1965).

Researchers have used organizational culture to study special education teacher retention by relating it to job stressors such as job design, responsibilities, and administrative support (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001). Organizational culture can contribute to the overall stress special education teachers might feel or not feel (Miller et al., 1999). A culture that supports organizational defensive routines may not make the organizational changes needed to retain licensed special education teachers (Boe & Cook, 2006). Special education teachers who reported dissatisfaction with their teaching areas, conditions, or changes in required responsibilities, and leave their
positions are part of organizational cultures that support transfers to different teaching assignments or leaving the field of teaching (Carlson et al., 2003; Luekens, Lyter, Fox, & Chandler, 2004).

**Organizational Learning**

Special education teachers acting on behalf of an organization is an outgrowth of organizational learning (Argyris, 1999). They possess if-then propositions of their beliefs and values, and act on them. These are called theories-of-action. Espoused theories and theories-in-use comprise a person’s theories-of-action (Argyris, 1999). Organizational learning requires making theories-in-use explicit (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Schein, 2004).

Special education teachers at times separate their espoused theories from their theories-in-use, ignoring data that does not support their current theories-in-use, or suppressing them, and act in ways that fulfill their theories-in-use, even to the point of changing their espoused theories to match their theories-in-use, self-sealing them. Some special education teachers may continue to engage in theories-in-use, even when their theories-in-use are ineffective. In this way, they believe they can maintain a safe, predictable environment; they fit events into their existing espoused theories to maintain constancy (Argyris & Schon, 1974).

Theories-in-use are divided into two forms, Model I and Model II (Argyris, 1999). Model I is considered single-loop learning, where detected errors are corrected without questioning. Model I involves defensive reasoning where underlying values are not questioned. Model I is governed by the following variables:

1. Members define goals and try to achieve them.
2. Members maximize winning and minimize losing.
3. Members minimize the generation or expression of negative feelings.

4. Members rationalize their decisions (Argyris, 1974).

The governing variables of winning over losing and squelching negative feelings by rationalizing behavior leads to defensiveness, avoidance, mistrust, and face-saving behaviors (Argyris, 1982). While such defensive routines may be protective, they mask the underlying reasons for error in learning (Argyris, 1985).

Defensive routines are actions that shield people from threat or embarrassment, and are impediments to individual and organizational learning (Argyris, 1990). Individuals develop defensive routines for protection of self-interests and as a means of resisting change (Argyris & Schon, 1974). Organizational defensive routines are found within theories-in-use, and allow threats to be bypassed. Unfortunately, defensiveness is recursive where individuals keep their rationalizations private, and where their theories-in-use cannot be tested openly, they reach self-serving conclusions privately and continue to engage in defensive routines to protect themselves (Argyris, 1985, 1999).

The second form of theories-in-use is Model II learning. Model II learning involves engagement in inquiry into governing values and learning using (a) valid information, (b) free and informed choice, and (c) internal commitment to the choice and constantly monitoring its implementation (Argyris, 1999; Argyris & Schon, 1974). Model II learning is considered double-loop learning, which is necessary for error detection and correction to change an outcome by challenging underlying assumptions (Argyris & Schon, 1974). Teacher retention may be strengthened by applying double-loop learning; special education teachers can question the culture’s status quo by seeking valid information to make informed choices without engaging defensive routines to continue
learning (Argyris, 1999).

As special education laws change, special education teachers cannot rely on tacit knowledge to implement new legal requirements. Double-loop learning may be important to facilitate learning new information contained in the law. Organizations that engage in automatic defensive routines foster rationalization of their decisions affecting special education teacher retention or attrition (Argyris, 1999).

When collegiality is a governing value, attrition is reduced by decreasing feelings of isolation among special education teachers (Miller et al., 1999). Schein (1978) stated that teachers need continued occasions to learn at different stages in their teaching careers. This may also apply to special education teachers faced with increased legal requirements who necessitate on-going training. Regardless of years of experience, opportunities for personal growth and learning has been found to reduce special education teachers’ job-related stress and role dissonance (Gersten et al., 2001). I used organizational learning as a theoretical perspective to help understand how special education teachers describe the impact of changing legal requirements on their decision related to attrition and retention.

Search Criteria

My purpose in this section is to synthesize the relevant empirical research regarding organizational learning and organizational culture in relation to special education teacher attrition and retention. My search strategy was to find relevant empirical research by asking the following questions:

1. What is the relationship of organizational culture to special education teacher attrition?
2. What is the relationship of organizational culture to special education teacher retention?

3. What is the relationship of organizational learning to special education teacher attrition?

4. What is the relationship of organizational learning to special education teacher retention?

In order for empirical research to be included, it had to meet the following criteria:

1. Empirical research and a well-defined methodology
2. Special education teacher participants
3. Published in a refereed journal

I searched for studies that met the criteria in the following databases: Google Scholar, Infotrac, ERIC First Serve, and SAGE. My primary search strategy used the key words organizational learning, organizational culture, teacher attrition, teacher retention, and special education teachers. I conducted a secondary search, combining the aforementioned terms as listed with the results (in number of hits) of the searches in the following table.

Table 2.1

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I organized my review by separating the studies that included only general education teachers as participants from those that included only special education teachers as participants. Many of the hits revealed reviews of existing literature. Of the empirical research, some were not selected if they included only general education
teachers or did not explicitly specify whether participants were general or special
education teachers. Studies were not selected if they included special education teachers
where the focus of the organizational learning or organizational culture was linked to
student discipline, research problems related to student achievement or high stakes
testing, or if the methodology was not specified.

The studies I selected related attrition or retention of special education teachers to
organizational culture or organizational learning. The results of my review indicated
special education teachers’ perceptions of how organizational learning and their
organizational culture may have impacted their decisions, and ultimate actions, to stay or
leave the field of special education.

Synthesis of the Research

This section is a synthesis of the empirical research related to my study. First, I
provide findings from studies about the attrition and retention of general education
teachers or from those that were non-specific as to special education teacher participant
inclusion. Second, I discuss the research specific to special education teacher attrition and
retention. In both sections, I present findings from the empirical research that indicates
how support, working conditions, and job responsibilities and legal requirements impact
teacher retention decisions. Additionally, within the special education teacher participant
section, I added information from studies about other special education teacher attrition
factors such as opportunities to learn. Finally, the summary compares and contrasts
attrition and retention findings for both general and special education teachers.

General Education Teacher Participants

I identified studies that included (a) general education teachers only as
participants, (b) studies that did not make a distinction whether the participants were general or special education teachers, and (c) studies that included both groups. Fourteen studies fell into these categories. A large amount of the research focused on new teacher induction and required support for new teachers (Gold, Roth, Wright, & Michael, 1991; Henke & Zahn, 2001; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Kelly, Stetson, & Stetson, 1997; Molner Kelley, 2004). Another area of focus was related to licensure (Boe et al., 1996; Boe & Cook, 2006).

The sections that follow synthesize 11 studies that identified themes of attrition and retention research that included general education teachers. I focused specifically on the areas of support, working conditions, job responsibilities, and legal requirements.

Support. I found empirical research in this category concentrated almost exclusively on support for new general education teachers in relation to teacher retention (Certo & Englebright Fox, 2002; Eggen, 2002; Kelly et al., 1997; Wischkaemper, 2005). Beginning teachers perceive lack of administrative presence or feedback, or too much pressure regarding test scores, as unsupportive (Certo & Englebright Fox, 2002; Eggen, 2002; Inman & Marlow, 2004). The principal’s role in a new teacher induction program, as well as the explanation of the school culture, was critical to new teachers feeling supported, and to their ultimate retention (Wischkaemper, 2005). New and experienced teachers report leaving if administrative support is perceived as lacking, sometimes related to evaluations or professional development opportunities; teachers want to have a voice and be supplied with the tools they need to do their jobs (Certo & Englebright Fox, 2002; Eggen, 2002; Inman & Marlow, 2004).

Working conditions. I found empirical research in this category concentrated on
frustrations teachers felt from dissatisfaction with working conditions, some of which may be reasons teachers move from their teaching positions to other schools (Certo & Englebright Fox, 2002; Cobb, 1996; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Luckens et al., 2004; Mark Gritz & Theobald, 1995; Mutchler, 2005). General education teacher dissatisfaction with the workplace conditions in their previous school was similar to that reported by special education teachers (Luckens et al., 2004). Beside insufficient support, teachers report low salary as a motivator to leave (Certo & Englebright Fox, 2002), especially by experienced female teachers and male teachers of various experience levels, when salaries are not comparable to professions outside of teaching (Mark Gritz & Theobald, 1995).

In high-poverty schools, research indicated that the quality of working conditions, including relationships and shared values affect teachers’ commitment to stay and may impact student learning (Mutchler, 2005). The working conditions in a school are a reflection of the organization’s culture, and a contributing factor to teachers’ perceptions of their school climates (Cobb, 1996).

*Job responsibilities and legal requirements.* I found empirical research in this category concentrated on how increasing responsibilities add stress to teachers. Meetings and paperwork were named as contributing to a feeling of overload in teaching assignments (Certo & Englebright Fox, 2002; Eggen, 2002). One study’s findings related to general education teachers’ job responsibilities reported a correlation between increasing age and dissatisfaction with job responsibilities and indicated that the average percentage of total teachers who do not agree with new reform measures also increased with age (Luckens et al., 2004). In addition, the percentage of teachers who disagree with reforms or who do not feel prepared to implement them correlates with years of
experience (Luckens et al., 2004).

Legal requirements for general education teachers include licensure and the highly qualified status per NCLB. A 1989 study showed a correlation between licensure and attrition, reporting that 81.3% of all partially-licensed teachers (general and special) were likely to stay in their teaching assignment versus 87.4% of the fully-licensed teachers teaching in their licensed areas (Boe et al., 1996). Considering the correlation between licensing level status and attrition, data from 2002 indicated about twice as many special education teachers as general education teachers begin teaching careers only partially licensed is an even greater concern (Boe & Cook, 2006).

Special Education Teacher Participants

I found that empirical research specifying special education teacher participants and organizational culture or organizational learning focused on supportive climates and working conditions, job responsibilities and legal requirements, and learning opportunities and the stresses related to these areas (Boe et al., 1996; Boe & Cook, 2006; Luckens et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999). Some studies addressed student-related issues indicating that school culture and climate, as well as leadership flexibility and student discipline affect student achievement (Benda & Wright, 2002). While these student-related issues may impact their job perceptions, other research examines the stressors special education teachers may experience that affect their attitude toward attrition or retention.

Special education teachers experience different areas of job-related stress. The level of support they feel from their colleagues in learning and performing their duties impacts their retention decision (Gersten et al., 2001; Luckens et al., 2004; Miller et al.,
1999). In addition, less-than-supportive climates, poor salaries, and stress that arises when special education teachers’ expectations about their jobs do not match what they experience on a daily basis lead to special education teacher perceptions of less-than-desirable working conditions, contributing to their attrition decisions (Boe & Cook, 2006; Luekens et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999).

Continued changes in legal requirements related to licensure and required paperwork have been found to be a burden to special education teachers, and depending on how their organizational culture supports them, may lead to job dissatisfaction and attrition (Boe & Cook, 2006; Carlson et al., 2003; Gersten et al., 2001; Luekens et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999). Support from colleagues who have similar experiences may assist in lessening the burdens some special education teachers feel. Organizational learning that allows special education teachers to continue to learn through collegial networks as legal requirements change may assist in their retention by relieving the stressors they experience (Boe et al., 1996; Gersten et al., 2001; Luekens et al., 2004).

Support and stress. I found empirical research in this category concentrated on the support that special education teachers need to reduce stress and learn their jobs (Gersten et al., 2001; Luekens et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999). Special education teachers seem to experience stress while learning how to perform their expected job duties; those who perceive high stress tend to leave special education teaching (Miller et al., 1999). Some special education teachers’ perceptions of their ideal teaching role and experience may create role conflict; special education teachers have indicated that this dissonance between perception and reality is a source of high stress (Gersten et al., 2001; Miller et al., 1999).
When asked what impacts their decision regarding retention or attrition, special education teachers in Florida identified levels of support and interaction with colleagues (Miller et al., 1999). Moreover, research indicates that the support of collegial networks can alleviate the problem of role dissonance by helping to reduce stress and may have impact on special education teacher retention by increasing their job satisfaction (Gersten et al., 2001). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is mandated by the U.S. Department of Education to collect and report data regarding pertinent educational issues, status and trends; it has conducted four collections of data through the School and Staffing Survey (SASS) as well as four Teacher Follow-Up Surveys (TFS) to report on teacher mobility and attrition (Luekens et al., 2004). Data collected for the 2000-2001 TFS of 8,400 public and private school teachers who had participated in the SASS in 1999-2000 reported almost half of special education teachers were dissatisfied with administrative support. Researchers suggest that a supportive inclusive school culture may positively impact special education teachers’ decisions to stay in the field (Gersten et al., 2001).

*Working conditions and stress.* I found empirical research in this category concentrated on how stress related to working conditions such as salary and poor climate impact the retention of special education teachers (Boe et al., 1996; Gersten et al., 2001; Luekens et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999). School climates are perceived poor when working conditions create stress and positive when stressors are reduced. National data has shown that attrition declines with increasing salary, and has the strongest correlation of any working condition to attrition (Boe et al., 1996).

Role conflict was an additional working condition found to cause stress in a study
including almost 900 special education teachers in three large urban districts (Gersten et al., 2001); special education teachers experience role conflict when there is discrepancy between job expectations and job experiences. A study of over 1,500 special education teachers in Florida, however, found no difference between leavers, stayers, or movers with regard to role conflict and intentions to stay or leave (Miller et al., 1999). All are examples of special education teacher working conditions, and when perceived to be less than satisfactory, may contribute to attrition.

One-third of special education teachers who transfer to teaching positions in different schools reported dissatisfaction with their working conditions at their previous schools in the 2000-2001 TFS (Luckens et al., 2004). Special education teachers who remain in their positions appear to be satisfied with their working conditions and rate their school climate higher than those who leave (Miller et al., 1999). Some working conditions may contribute to special education teachers’ job performance. Limited information, resources, and power create poor job designs and conditions of stress, role conflict and dissatisfaction (Gersten et al., 2001). Poor job design also negatively impacted the retention of special education teachers; this is reported as an organizational failure to achieve value goals, and the poor job design leads to stress and lowered self-efficacy in a special educator, which may influence their decision to leave (Gersten et al., 2001).

*Job responsibilities, legal requirements, and stress.* I found empirical research in this category concentrated on how the stress special education teachers felt caused by legal requirement changes impacts their jobs (Carlson et al., 2003; Gersten et al., 2001; Luckens et al., 2004). The 2000-2001 TFS reported an average of 13.1% of all teachers
dissatisfied with their job responsibilities in comparison to 20.9% of special education teachers reporting dissatisfaction with their job responsibilities (Lueckens et al., 2004). Job design stressors, including paperwork burdens, can lead to special education teachers feeling dissatisfied with their jobs (Carlson et al., 2003; Gersten et al., 2001). Special education teachers who reported not having enough time to complete required paperwork stated that paperwork and other administrative duties interfere with teaching (Carlson et al., 2003). 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 2000-2001 TFS (Lueckens et al., 2004). What was not clear was whether special education teacher dissatisfaction with changes in job responsibilities included dissatisfaction with increased legal requirements. Implications from research offer different approaches school cultures may use to lessen special education teachers of some paperwork burden, suggesting that organizational cultures that do not offer relief may contribute to the dissatisfaction of special education teachers (Carlson et al., 2003). Paperwork and other job responsibilities may impact special education teacher retention.

Hiring fully licensed, experienced teachers for assignments for which they are qualified appears to increase retention rates (Boe & Cook, 2006). Special education teachers who are not sufficiently licensed for their positions tend to leave special education teaching (Miller et al., 1999). Data from the 1999-2000 SASS regarding partially-certified special education teachers entering the workforce due to the increasing shortage of fully-licensed special education teachers indicated the need for organizational learning that supports their retention, especially with increased NCLB and IDEA legal
requirements regarding being highly qualified in content areas (Boe & Cook, 2006).

Additional research in this area may assist in determining the impact that increased legal requirements have on tenured special education teachers’ decisions to stay or leave their special education positions for general education teaching positions.

Opportunities to learn. I found empirical research in this category concentrated on special education teachers’ dissatisfaction with professional development opportunities (Gersten et al., 2001; Luekens et al., 2004). Continued professional development may be necessary to retain special education teachers when taking into consideration new requirements regarding becoming highly qualified in content areas. The retention of special education teachers during this time of shortage can be hampered by organizational learning that supports defensive routines instead of embracing the necessary changes to avoid attrition (Boe & Cook, 2006). Model II organizational learning within a supportive culture can serve this process. Through the formation of collegial networks, special education teachers feel supported and continue to learn. Collegial networks may aid in special education teacher retention (Gersten et al., 2001).

Special education teacher attrition. I found empirical research in this category concentrated on special education teachers who leave or move to different positions (Boe & Cook, 2006; Luekens et al., 2004; Singer, 1992). According to Round 1 of SASS in 1987-1988 and the 1988-1989 TFS, 7.9% of special education teachers left the teaching profession (Boe et al., 1996). Of special education teachers surveyed between the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years in the TFS, the number who left the profession rose to 8.7%, 10.2% moved to different schools, and 40.7% left for different teaching areas (Luekens et al., 2004). Over 40% of public school special education teachers who moved
to different schools report that consideration of finding a better teaching assignment contributed to their decision to move. Teachers younger than 30 tend to transfer to different positions more than teachers older than 30; however, whether they transferred to other special education positions or to general education positions is unknown (Luken et al., 2004). A survival analysis found 8% of special education teachers left for general education positions after teaching students with special needs for only one year (Singer, 1992). The most recent figures reported in the 2004-2005 TFS indicated that the number of public school special education teachers who left had increased to 10% and those moving to different schools increased to 11.1% (Marvel et al., 2007).

Special education teachers who are not fully certified in special education or are not highly qualified for their teaching assignment are most likely to transfer to general education teaching positions (Boe & Cook, 2006). The 1987-1988 SASS sample of 40,593 public school teachers and its follow-up survey of 4,812 teachers in 1988-1989 (Boe et al., 1996), including special education teachers, indicated that, besides demographic variables, lowering the teacher transfer rate may improve retention.

Many factors found in the research may contribute to special education teacher stress, culminating in their attrition: support; working conditions; job responsibilities and legal requirements; and opportunities to learn. In the next section, I summarize what was contained in the empirical research in relation to special education teacher attrition and retention and the theoretical perspectives I chose for this study.

Summary

Chapter 2 described the conceptual framework as well as the theoretical perspectives for the study. The conceptual framework is built on the premise that special
education teachers want to implement legally-required changes, and that they implement the changes based on how they construct meaning about them. For some, the changes impact their decisions to remain in the field of special education.

Organizational culture and organizational learning are the lenses through which I studied special education teacher attrition and retention. Research has indicated that the culture of a school in which special education teachers teach as well as opportunities for learning can influence their decisions to stay or leave (Gersten et al., 2001). The way that a special education teacher learns influences and is influenced by the learning of the organization to which the special education teacher belongs (Argyris, 1985), and is an ultimate reflection of the organizational culture (Boe & Cook, 2006).

Within their organizational cultures, some similarities exist contributing to the attrition and retention of both general and special education teachers. Research has shown that both general and special education teachers experience stress while learning how to perform their expected duties on the job (Miller et al., 1999). This necessitates collegial support for the teachers (Gersten et al., 2001; Greiner & Smith, 2006; Luckens et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999; Wischkaemper, 2005). When working conditions are experienced as unacceptable by employees, they are dissatisfied (Herzberg, Mausner, & Bloch Snyderman, 1959). Both special and general education teachers are equally dissatisfied with their working conditions (Carlson et al., 2003; Gersten et al., 2001; Luckens et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999).

Findings from research indicate a correlation between dissatisfaction with job responsibilities, disagreement with educational reforms and increasing ages among special and general education teachers. The percentage of teachers in both teaching
groups who do not agree with reform movements or who feel ill-prepared to implement them increases with their years of teaching experience (Lukeks et al., 2004). These factors may affect job satisfaction and teacher retention (Gersten et al., 2001).

There were several differences between special education and general education in the reviewed research. Research indicated that special education teachers are more dissatisfied with their job requirements and responsibilities (Lukeks et al., 2004). Special education teachers also experience role conflict, which did not appear in the included literature about general education teachers (Gersten et al., 2001; Miller et al., 1999). Continued learning through professional development may provide relief for special education teachers’ dissatisfaction with their job requirements, responsibilities, role conflict, and present learning opportunities (Lukeks et al., 2004). Finally, increased highly-qualified requirements may have greater impact on special education teachers because of requirements for special education teachers to be highly-qualified in the multiple content areas they teach (Boe & Cook, 2006; Miller et al., 1999).

What proves to be dissatisfying to a special education teacher and possibly lead to attrition may be different than factors that may be satisfying to a special education teacher and encourage retention (Herzberg, 2003). The research indicated that some special education teachers leave their teaching positions for other teaching areas or for different schools, seeking what they perceive as better assignments (Lukeks et al., 2004). Some leave for general education teaching positions (Boe & Cook, 2006; Singer, 1992). The review also found that retention of special education teachers may improve if transfer rates can be lowered (Boe et al., 1996).

Conducting a case study through the theoretical perspectives of organizational
culture and organizational learning allowed me to relay the participants’ (special education teachers) descriptions of (a) how they learn the legally-required special education changes, (b) how they act on their beliefs, and (c) what impact legally-required changes has had on their retention. This study also asked special education teachers to describe how increased legal requirements affected their decisions to stay in or leave their special education teaching positions. In addition, I sought what influences tenured special education teachers to relinquish their tenure status, which is necessary data because their attrition will continue to exacerbate the problems of special education teacher attrition and retention in a time of chronic shortage (Miller et al., 1999).

In summary, the literature regarding organizational culture, organizational learning, and special education teacher attrition and retention supported this study’s focus on understanding what impact increased legal requirements has on special education teacher retention in the Interlocal. Chapter 3 explains the methodology I used to conduct this case study.
CHAPTER 3

Chapter 3 provides the research methodology that includes the research design, methods, and data analysis. I organize this chapter by first describing my research design, which reflects my theoretical perspectives of organizational learning and organizational culture through a constructionist epistemology. After I describe my research design, I restate the purpose of my study and research questions. I then describe the context of the study, units of analysis, my role as the researcher, methods, data analysis, and research quality.

Research Design and Methodology

I used a qualitative, multiple-case study to describe how increased legal requirements affect Interlocal tenured special education teachers’ attrition and retention. Qualitative data tell a story (Patton, 2002), and case studies offer opportunities to gain multiple perspectives of the participants within their naturally-occurring contexts, providing descriptive information including attitudes and beliefs of participants regarding special education as meaning is constructed (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005). The data I collected were filtered through a constructionist epistemology and the theoretical perspectives of organizational learning and organizational culture. I used an emergent design and analyzed data as it was collected to make decisions regarding the research design (Argyris & Schon, 1974). This design allowed the voices of current and former tenured special education teachers to be heard regarding attrition or retention decisions with the Interlocal.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to describe the reasons current or former Interlocal
tenured special education teachers stay in or leave their special education teaching positions through the theoretical perspectives of organizational learning and organizational culture. My study describes the influence of increased legal requirements on current or former Interlocal tenured special education teacher attrition or retention by reporting their reasons for staying or leaving.

Research Questions

The following overarching question guided this study: What is the impact of increasing IDEA requirements on the decision of tenured Interlocal special education teachers to remain in special education teaching positions? Data from the following research questions will aid in understanding special education teacher attrition and retention:

1. How do staying tenured Interlocal special education teachers describe the impact that increased legal requirements has on their decision to remain in special education with the Interlocal?

2. How do leaving tenured Interlocal special education teachers describe the impact that increased legal requirements had on their decision to leave their special education positions with the Interlocal?

Context

The Interlocal is a special education entity that serves exceptional students in nine rural and suburban districts to the west of Wichita, Kansas. The Interlocal serves about 2,800 disabled and/or gifted students out of a combined student population totaling 19,000 across the nine districts. The Interlocal’s 2005-06 special education percentage of 14.84 was less than the state average of 17.16% (Sedgwick County Area Educational
Services Interlocal Cooperative #618, 2006). The Interlocal’s role is to ensure that FAPE is provided to their member district’s eligible special education students; this includes employing fully licensed, highly qualified special education teachers to deliver those services.

Nationally, every four years, over half of special education teachers leave (McLesky et al., 2004). In Kansas, for the school years of 2004-05 to 2005-06, the 8,053 licensed special education personnel who left was the highest number in the 29 year history of the data collection system and measured an attrition rate of 11%, slightly higher than the 29-year average of 10.8% (McKnab, 2006). In McKnab’s (2006) Attrition of Special Education Personnel in Kansas for the School Years of 2004-05 to 2005-06, the attrition rate for special education personnel in Kansas interlocals measured at 9.9%, with the Interlocal number measuring 11.2%. Out of Kansas’ interlocals, the Interlocal has had the highest total attrition rate of special education personnel from the school years 1986-87 to 2005-06 (McKnab, 2006). The attrition rate for licensed special education personnel in the Interlocal between the 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years was about 18%.

For the 2006-07 school year, the Interlocal employed 258 licensed staff, 51 of whom were new to the Interlocal. Out of the 258 licensed staff, 160 are special education teachers; the rest of the staff includes related service providers such as occupational therapists, physical therapists, school social workers, speech language pathologists, and school psychologists, whose positions also require licensure. Of the 160 special education teachers, 40 (or 25%) were newly employed. This is the highest percentage of new teaching staff hired for the beginning of a school year in the Interlocal’s history.
Currently, the Interlocal employs 131 fully licensed special education teachers for the 2006-07 school year. A total of 29 teaching staff (or 22% of total teaching staff) are not fully licensed for their positions, (a) 16 have provisional licenses, (b) nine are teaching under waivers, and (c) four positions are filled with substitutes. Many of the Interlocal’s special education teachers were also not considered highly qualified for their positions at the beginning of the 2006-07 school year based on the grade levels and content areas to which they were assigned.

Units of Analysis

There were two units of analysis in my study: current Interlocal tenured special education teachers, and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers. Eighty-nine current special education teachers in the Interlocal have tenure. Forty-seven former Interlocal tenured special education teachers were employed at least one year after the 1997 IDEA amendments. Tenure signifies that a special education teacher has either been under contract with the Interlocal for three years and has been offered a fourth contract, or became employed by the Interlocal after already being tenured in another Kansas district and worked for the Interlocal for two years and was offered a third contract. Tenure status indicates that teachers cannot have their contract non-renewed by the Interlocal’s Board of Education, which, in Kansas, means they have an implied continuing contract for the next school year unless there is just cause for termination.

The participants were purposively selected from two pools of special education teachers. Each pool contained teachers who had tenure status with the Interlocal, worked at least one year after the 1997 IDEA amendments, and continued to work for the Interlocal or left the Interlocal’s employ. I selected participants for the different data
collection methods by using a list of current Interlocal tenured special education teachers provided through an Interlocal personnel document provided to the researcher. The names were first divided female and male, and then further divided within each gender into groups by years of experience, four to seven years and eight years or more. The names were listed alphabetically and each was assigned a number, beginning with one, to coincide with their alphabetical orders. Using the internet randomization program Research Randomizer, an online randomizer using JavaScript to generate random numbers to be used in research (Urbaniak & Plous, 2007), current Interlocal tenured special education teachers were selected to fill their data collection method groups’ proportional number within each data collection method to that of their proportion of the total number of current Interlocal tenured special education teachers within their gender/years of experience. Seven current Interlocal tenured special education teachers’ names were selected first for the focus group, followed by seven current Interlocal tenured special education teachers’ names being selected for semi-structured interviews, and finally ten current Interlocal tenured special education teachers’ names were selected to complete the LHRHCCM. The same process was then completed for former Interlocal tenured special education teachers, whose names also were provided to the researcher by the Interlocal; however, the study was further delimited here to include only former Interlocal tenured special education teachers who lived within a 150 mile radius of the Interlocal for a greater possibility for former teacher participation.

The participants randomly-selected were individually contacted by the researcher, who explained the study and asked them if they were willing to participate. From those who voluntarily consented to participating, data were collected from two focus groups, 14
semi-structured interviews, 14 LHRHCCM written scenarios, and a review of pertinent documents. For teachers who could not be reached either due to insufficient phone numbers, a new participant was selected via the randomization program to fill the vacant position. This process was repeated until the pre-determined number of participants was contacted for the data collection methods as specified. The researcher conducted the data collection methods with the former Interlocal tenured special education teachers, and a non-administrative surrogate researcher conducted the data collection methods with the current Interlocal tenured special education teachers.

Each focus group consisted of six members, one focus group being comprised of current Interlocal tenured special education teachers, and the other being comprised of former Interlocal tenured special education teachers. Each group was asked the question per the focus group protocol and allowed to answer the questions as they felt comfortable. Exchange between participants occurred in relation to the topic, and participants were allowed to veer in directions related to the topic but not explicitly stated by the facilitator. The focus groups were digitally recorded transcribed verbatim.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven current and seven former Interlocal tenured special education teachers using the semi-structured interview protocol. Some semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face, while some former teacher participants requested phone interviews. The open-ended questions were flexible and allowed participants to expand upon the questions as they chose. The semi-structured interviews were digitally recorded transcribed verbatim.

The researcher and the non-administrator surrogate researcher explained the LHRHCCM to the participants, who completed the written scenarios on their own. Other
than the designation of former teacher on the LHRHCCM forms given to former
Interlocal tenured special education teachers, there were no identifying marks on the
LHRHCCM forms nor on the white envelopes the teachers returned to the researcher.
Some participants asked to be allowed to submit their LHRHCCM responses via email to
the researcher, which was allowed, with the guarantee of anonymity in data reporting.
Handwritten responses were typed into a computer data collection file for purposes of the
study.

Each participant was asked to voluntarily participate in the study. Proper
procedures for informed consent, confidentiality and the ethical treatment of human
subjects were employed throughout the study (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002). The two
units of analysis of current and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers were
studied within the study’s context and overarching question (Yin, 2003).

Role of the Researcher

My role as researcher was to explain the purpose of the study, to collect data that
matched what the research questions asked, and to interpret the data while maintaining an
ethical study. Although the study was limited by my primary employment as an
administrator in the Interlocal, I recognized that the teachers’ reactions to my role as an
administrator may have to take into account any perceived power relationships between
the researcher and teachers in the study. Through my constructionist epistemology, I
attempted to make meaning from the participants’ perceptions, recognizing and making
any biases I may have explicit (Creswell, 2003). Finally, I attempted reciprocity by
reporting findings to the Interlocal’s special education director (Creswell, 2003).
Methods

I used several methods to collect data: focus groups, semi-structured interviews, the LHRHCCM, and a review of pertinent documents. Using multiple methods allowed me to triangulate my data and increase its trustworthiness. I initiated data collection on December 10, 2006 and data collection continued throughout December, 2006 and January, 2007. A total of 40 teachers participated, 22 current and 18 former Interlocal tenured special education teachers. I used a non-administrator surrogate researcher to attempt to reduce potential researcher bias with current Interlocal teachers. I discussed the protocols with my surrogate researcher at length before she used them with the participants to insure understanding. We each reviewed expectations with participants prior to conducting the data collection method.

Focus Groups

I used focus groups with each unit of analysis to gain multiple perspectives from current and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers regarding how they constructed meaning of increased legal requirements and how that impacted their attrition or retention. Each group was comprised of six members—seven were randomly selected and agreed to participate, but one member of each group was unable to attend on the day of their focus group. One focus group was comprised of current Interlocal tenured special education teachers. The other focus group was comprised of former Interlocal tenured special education teachers. I reduced issues of bias and perceived power relationships by having a non-administrator surrogate researcher facilitate the focus group of currently employed Interlocal special education teachers. I facilitated the focus group consisting of former Interlocal tenured special education teachers.
There was inclement weather in our geographical area the day of the former Interlocal tenured special education teachers’ focus group. Snow and ice began to close schools and businesses in surrounding Wichita areas. I contacted the participants at noon to alert them that I would continue to watch the storm’s movement and also to ask if they would rather reschedule the focus group. Only the two teachers from the greatest distance expressed concern about continuing as planned; the other five wanted to proceed as planned. A few hours later, I called to confirm that the focus group would be held; one teacher from farthest away chose not to risk the bad weather heading her direction. The other, who lived where the ice and snow had already arrived, asked to participate by phone, which she did. The other five former teachers stated they planned to come and wished to proceed as planned. I conducted the former Interlocal tenured special education teacher focus group at 4:00 p.m., and participants were able to arrive and depart safely before the big storm hit our immediate area. As former Interlocal teachers, they felt strongly about participating and giving input for this study.

Open-ended questions surrounding the topic of how increased legal requirements impact current and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers’ decisions to remain in the field were used with the focus groups. Questions were framed within the theoretical perspectives of organizational learning and organizational culture (Argyris, 1999; Schein, 1999). This gave the research participants the opportunity to express their perceptions in a non-threatening environment regarding their experiences as Interlocal tenured special education teachers or former Interlocal tenured special education teachers (Patton, 2002).

The first and second questions for each focus group asked current or former
Interlocal tenured special education teachers to describe their experiences as special education teachers in the Interlocal to understand the values and assumptions held by the organizational culture of which they are or were a contributing member (Lewin, 1948; Schein, 1999). The third and fourth questions asked how they learned any increased legal requirements (Schein, 1999). The fifth, sixth, and seventh questions inquired about how implementing changes impacted their jobs (Argyris & Schon, 1974), and ultimately their decisions to stay or leave in questions eight through ten (Carlson et al., 2003; Gersten et al., 2001). The focus group questions elicited responses related to individual tenured special education teacher’s espoused theories in relation to their theories-in-use (Argyris, 1990, 1999; Argyris & Schon, 1974). The focus group questions and protocol can be found in Appendix A.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used with seven purposively selected participants in each of the units of analysis related to data collection focused on the impact increased legal requirements have had on their decisions related to attrition and retention. Current and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers who did not participate in focus groups and who volunteered were individually interviewed. Face-to-face interviewing allowed the current and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers to share their perspectives regarding their thoughts related to how IDEA changes have impacted their delivery of services to special education students, how they learned the changes required, how the legally-required changes impacted their day-to-day duties, and how the organizational culture supported their decisions to stay or leave (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

When the non-administrator surrogate researcher or I conducted the semi-
structured interviews, we used an interview guide containing probing, open-ended questions to facilitate a similar line of questioning between participants as well as serving as a tool to aid in the efficient use of time (Patton, 2002); however, the questions were flexible enough to ask follow-up questions for participants to expand and share their perceptions (Stevens, 2004), and allowed for an emergent design. The interview guide facilitated data analysis when sorting answers to similar questions.

The first question in the interview guide asked individual current or former Interlocal tenured special education teachers to state their length of employment with the Interlocal to verify tenure status. The second through sixth questions asked individual current or former Interlocal tenured special education teachers to describe their delivery of services to special education students in the Interlocal both pre- and post-IDEA 04 changes (or IDEA 97 for those teachers who left the Interlocal prior to IDEA 04) to provide an opportunity for them to indicate how learning occurred within their organization (Argyris, 1999; Argyris & Schon, 1974). The final four questions asked individual current or former Interlocal tenured special education teachers to describe how the legally-required changes in IDEA impacted their day-to-day duties as special education teachers with the Interlocal and their decisions to remain in special education in an attempt to understand how their organizational culture supported their actions (Argyris, 1990; Argyris & Schon, 1974; Boe & Cook, 2006; Carlson et al., 2003; Luckens et al., 2004). The semi-structured interview questions and protocol can be found in Appendix B.

*Left-Hand Right-Hand Column Case Method*

The LHRHCCM is a process of collecting qualitative data through dialogue
(Argyris, 1999). It was used to triangulate my data regarding how increased legal requirements impact Interlocal tenured special education teacher attrition and retention. Participants in the LHRHCCM were different from those who participated in focus groups or semi-structured interviews. The LHRHCCM required participants to write on the right hand column of a sheet of paper an imaginary conversation between themselves and an Interlocal administrator regarding how increased legal requirements have influenced his/her decision to stay in or leave their special education teaching position. In the left hand column, participants were to write down any thoughts, feelings, or perceptions that occurred during the conversation that they did not feel free to discuss openly with the Interlocal administrator. Nine current Interlocal tenured special education teachers and five former Interlocal tenured special education teachers participated in the LHRHCCM. The LHRHCCM and protocol can be found in Appendix C (Argyris, 2000). A non-administrator surrogate researcher gave instructions to currently employed Interlocal tenured special education teachers and I gave instructions to former Interlocal tenured special education teachers. Participants had the choice of completing the exercise with paper and pencil or electronically. When they completed the exercise, the participants placed the LHRHCCM in a white envelope, sealed it, and returned it to the researcher or sent it back electronically. The participants who chose the paper and pencil option did not leave any identifying marks on the exercise or envelope. These precautions further reduced the affects of teacher perceived issues of the power relationship with administrator. I reduced issues of bias and perceived power relationships by having a non-administrator surrogate researcher facilitate the LHRHCCM of currently employed Interlocal special education teachers. I facilitated the LHRHCCM of former Interlocal
tenured special education teachers.

Document Review

I reviewed Interlocal documents pertinent to the study such as the Interlocal Board of Education meeting minutes, Interlocal records that describe employment history, and the Board Information Book (Sedgwick County Area Educational Services Interlocal Cooperative #618, 2006). School Board information allowed the researcher to gain information related to student and district Interlocal participation, and records of employment provided necessary information for the selection of participants in the study. In addition to providing records of employment, these documents also provided examples of the Interlocal’s organizational culture (Patton, 2002).

Data Analysis

In this section, I describe how I analyzed my data through pattern matching, content analysis, and the use of the text-analysis software CATPAC. Focus groups and semi-structured interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data from LHRHCCM and document reviews were unitized and entered into a database. Data was unitized, sorted, and coded through an open and axial coding process (which is a process of breaking down the data and then synthesizing it in a meaningful way) (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), using text analysis software (Ryan & Bernard, 2000) so that the participants’ perspectives were synthesized in a manner that allowed the research questions to be answered (Huberman, 1990). This process of bracketing, analyzing, and comparing data allowed me to investigate and describe former or current Interlocal tenured special education teachers’ perceptions of how increased legal requirements have influenced their attrition or retention. Pattern matching and content analysis looked for
similarities among the data. CATPAC software, based on a neural network model of connections, was used to analyze the data by reading the text for interrelationships between words as well as identify common themes (Woelfel, 1990).

Research Quality

I took precautions to ensure the research quality of my study. The quality of the data I collected and the processes that I used was consistent with the concepts of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability of the study and its data and data collection procedures.

Credibility depends on rigorous methods as well as a credible researcher; the researcher, as the instrument, must believe in qualitative research (Patton, 2002). As the researcher in this study, my credibility came from my educational background, prolonged engagement in my experiential background as a special education teacher and administrator with the Interlocal through which trust has been established, and as a field researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was bolstered using member checking to confirm what was said and what may have been meant by what was said throughout each focus group and semi-structured interview. Transferability occurs when findings may be applied to similar contexts. I sought thick, rich descriptions of current and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers’ perceptions of the impact increased legal requirements has had on their decisions to remain in their special education positions; these data may allow others interested in the findings to determine if the findings are transferable to their particular situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The dependability of my study was strengthened through the protocols I used in data collection. Dependability is enhanced when the results are consistent with the data, and, if replicated, would likely

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yield similar results (Merriam, 1995). I ensured dependability in my study by first
demonstrating credibility as a researcher and through member checking, through
triangulation of data, and through an audit trail, including a reflexive journal (Lincoln &
Guba, 1985). Member checking occurred throughout data collection by the researcher
and the non-administrator surrogate reviewing expectations with participants prior to
conducting the data collection method as well as during data collection through re-stating
questions and asking for clarification to participant responses as appropriate.

I gained confirmability of the data by having participants review a draft of the
results. By having participants review the results, I was able to verify the veracity of my
results. The reviewers did not have to agree with my results or the supporting data. If the
participants had disputed the results or supporting data, I would have collected additional
data to support or refute the disputed data (Yin, 1984); the participants understood the
findings and said that they made sense to them. I also used a peer review team to provide
feedback on my results; my peer review team concurred with the findings. Additionally, I
maintained a reflexive journal that included logistical information for the study as well as
my reflections on the process and methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I compared findings
to examples from the raw data I collected to ensure that I drew logical conclusions. I used
triangulation to improve credibility and confirmability. Patton (2002) suggests several
kinds of triangulation to verify and validate qualitative data; I used methods triangulation
for consistency of data between different methods, source triangulation for consistency
between data within the same methods, and an audit trail so that others can replicate my
study (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).
Summary

Chapter 3 explained the qualitative research methods to I used in this research. An emergent, multiple-case study research design was used with two units of analysis: current Interlocal tenured special education teachers and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers. The four methods of data collection were (a) focus groups, (b) semi-structured interviews, (c) LHRHCCM, and (d) review of relevant documents. Participants were selected by purposive sampling methods. I chose to focus this study through the theoretical perspectives of organizational learning and organizational culture. My primary data analysis methods were pattern-matching, content analysis, and the use of the text-analysis software CATPAC. Data were unitized, sorted, and coded through an open and axial coding process to investigate and describe current and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers’ perceptions of how increased legal requirements have influenced their attrition or retention.
CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4 provides the findings from data collected during this study. I organize this chapter by first restating the purpose of the study and theoretical perspectives, methodology, research questions, data analysis, and a summary of findings. I then present my findings in the order they are found in the summary of findings.

Purpose of the Study and Theoretical Perspectives

The purpose of my study was to describe the reasons current or former Interlocal tenured special education teachers stay in or leave their special education teaching positions through the theoretical perspectives of organizational learning and organizational culture. My study describes the influence of increased legal requirements on current or former Interlocal tenured special education teacher attrition or retention by reporting their reasons for staying or leaving the Interlocal.

Methodology

I used multiple methods to collect data for this qualitative study: focus groups, semi-structured interviews, the Left-Hand Right-Hand Column Case Method (LHRHCCM), and a review of pertinent documents. Using multiple methods allowed me to triangulate my data and increase its trustworthiness.

The data I collected was filtered through a constructionist epistemology and the theoretical perspectives of organizational learning and organizational culture to answer the following research questions:
1. How do staying tenured Interlocal special education teachers describe the impact that increased legal requirements has on their decision to remain in special education with the Interlocal?

2. How do leaving tenured Interlocal special education teachers describe the impact that increased legal requirements had on their decision to leave their special education positions with the Interlocal?

The qualitative multiple case study design was emergent. There were two cases. Each case had a separate unit of analysis. The two units of analysis were comprised of current Interlocal tenured special education teachers and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers. A total of 40 teachers participated voluntarily in this study, 22 current Interlocal tenured special education teachers and 18 former Interlocal tenured special education teachers.

My primary data analysis methods were pattern-matching, content analysis, and the use of the text-analysis software CATPAC. Data were unitized, sorted, and coded through an open and axial coding process to investigate and describe current and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers’ perceptions of how increased legal requirements have influenced their attrition or retention.

Summary of Findings

Four salient findings were derived from my data analysis. They are listed below.

Finding 1: Current tenured special education teachers want to be listened to and have their needs considered.

Finding 2: Current tenured special education teachers feel overwhelmed by the workload related to state assessments.
Finding 3: Current and former tenured special education teachers believe that legally-required changes affected them in practice.

Finding 4: Current and former tenured special education teachers perceive that time requirements for administrative tasks reduce time for student services.

Findings

The sections that follow will address the four findings from my study. Each section will present the results of one finding. Current and former teachers commonly refer to the Interlocal as the co-op, which will be reflected in many of the quotations. I used the abbreviation CT to correspond to current teachers and the abbreviation FT to correspond to former teachers throughout my report of findings for ease of reading. The pseudonyms June, Autumn, Katie, Lynn, Jack, and Evan will represent CT respondents, and the pseudonyms for FT respondents will be Devin, Owen, Darla, Karen, Sue, and Catherine.

Finding 1: Current Tenured Special Education Teachers Want to be Listened to and Have their Needs Considered

Current Interlocal tenured special education teachers report that they want to be listened to and have their needs considered. Table 4.1 offers quotations by CTs as they relate to this first finding. The quotations supporting Finding 1 are distributed across the two theoretical perspectives of my study. The desire to be heard among CTs was related directly to both theoretical perspectives – organizational culture and organization learning (See Table 4.1).
Table 4.1

Current Tenured Special Education Teachers Want to be Listened to and Have Their Needs Considered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Current Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Culture</strong></td>
<td>I feel like the Interlocal administration wants to be a good support system. I know they are busy and have a lot of pressure with many big cases. I think that we have a good support system and that it’s important that each and every teacher be heard and supported. I don’t feel like we’re forgotten.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When I have a question, somebody gets right back to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The support is comforting. You say, “Well, this may be a real stupid question” and they’ll say &quot;No, no, no stupid questions.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Any time that I have questions or am upset about something, I’ve gone straight to the special education administrator for this building, and I’ve always felt that I’ve been listened to on 99% of the cares and concerns that I’ve had.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I’ve never called them for help that they haven’t come right away and done what they could do to support me, so that’s been really important to me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Learning</strong></td>
<td>I was short of help when I lost my right hand para last year, which about killed me. The Interlocal administrator asked me if I wanted such and such a person for the para position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I had some choice about it; they kind of looked out for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I wanted support from the Interlocal regarding an uncooperative, unsuccessful student. I sought support from an Interlocal support person who said that sometimes failing is an option. I didn’t have the leverage to move him into another program at that time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Perspective</td>
<td>Current Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Learning</strong></td>
<td>I’ve not had as positive an experience in the last couple of years with the para shortage. There was a point in the past where I had so much para absenteeism that it made me want to quit. I quit calling the Interlocal for paraeducator substitutes because they don’t ever have them. I don’t think we get the support we need and that is very frustrating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There’s a conflict between the school district and the Interlocal. We need materials. We need them right off the bat and we shouldn’t have to beg from the school district or the Interlocal to get the materials for our students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I asked to be moved four times and they said no each time for different reasons.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They allowed me to stay here, which is a district that I really have enjoyed. I’ve not been moved and I think that has been very supportive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They have always responded in a way that helps me. It may not always be the way that I want it, but everything has been addressed and taken care of. I think that our co-op realizes that I love and enjoy doing this job.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Current Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Learning</strong></td>
<td>I have received support from the co-op all the way through my 10 years, and they’ve always been supportive of whatever I’ve needed. Even if I didn’t always agree with the support they gave, they know the different requirements and the law, and it’s always been what I needed. All the years that I’ve taught, I don’t think that anybody has supported me more than the Interlocal. If I have a question, it’s answered promptly, or they get right back to me with the answer. If I need to attend a workshop, I’m always given permission to go to a workshop to enhance what I know. Supplies are given to me. And knowing that just down the street there are people I can talk to who are willing to talk to me in a positive way even if I mess up, is very comforting. I don’t get beaten up for mistakes, which is really big. I think overall that they have supported me personally and they’ve always been very supportive of me no matter what I did.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(29 similar comments)

While some CTs report that they have been listened to and had their needs considered, other CTs state the opposite. In either case, both groups wanted to be heard. June shared:

I feel like the Interlocal administration wants to be a good support system. I know
they are busy and have a lot of pressure with many big cases. I think that we have a good support system and that it’s important that each and every teacher be heard and supported. I don’t feel like we are forgotten.

Current teachers who spoke about Interlocal administrators’ responses to their requests for information reacted positively. Autumn said, “When I have a question, someone gets right back to me.” Katie agreed. She said, “The support is comforting. You say, ‘Well, this may be a real stupid question’ and they’ll say ‘No, no, no stupid questions.’” Interlocal administrator responsiveness appeared to be the norm. Lynn, a CT, suggested:

Any time that I have questions or am upset about something, I’ve gone straight to the special education administrator for this building, and I’ve always felt that I’ve been listened to on 99% of the cares and concerns that I’ve had.

Additionally, Katie stated, “I’ve never called them for help that they haven’t come right away and done what they could do to support me, so that’s been really important to me.”

Electronic communication is an effective means for CTs to communicate with Interlocal administrators. Autumn spoke of her experience:

There is support through e-mail. If we have a question and e-mail somebody from the Interlocal, they get right back to us; I had a legal question on a move-in and implementing another IEP (Individualized Education Program) and I just e-mailed and if it’s not to the right person, they get it to the right person, so I feel like we are supported in that way.

Lynn shared a similar experience, stating:

I have access and I can talk to Interlocal administrators if I want. I can e-mail any
of them and everybody is so willing to talk or to interact, and I think those are really positive things.

Autumn believes that she is supported by Interlocal administrators. She stated, “I was short of help when I lost my right hand para last year, which about killed me. The Interlocal administrator asked me if I wanted such and such a person for the para position.” Furthermore, she added, “I had some choice about it; they kind of looked out for me.”

The majority of CTs shared positive perceptions regarding being listened to and having their needs considered. Some CTs, however, expressed concern with being listened to and having needs considered. Lynn, for example, sought help for working with a student with a significant behavioral issue. She said:

I very much wanted support from the Interlocal regarding an uncooperative, unsuccessful student. I sought support from an Interlocal support person who said that sometimes failing is an option. I didn’t have the leverage to move him into another program at that time.

June also shared an experience of not being listened to or having her needs considered by the Interlocal administrators regarding staff shortages and how this influences her desires to remain in her teaching position. June said:

I’ve not had as positive an experience in the last couple of years with the para shortage. There was a point in the past where I had so much para absenteeism that it made me want to quit. I just quit calling the Interlocal for paraeducator substitutes because they don’t ever have them. I don’t think we get the support we need and that is very frustrating.
Katie felt that she was not being provided with materials needed for students. She said:

There’s a conflict between the school district and the Interlocal. We need materials. We need them right off the bat and we shouldn’t have to beg from the school district or the Interlocal to get the materials for our students.

June expressed more frustration of not having her needs considered when it came to her job responsibilities. She expressed anger related to her struggle to have an Interlocal provided laptop:

Do I get extra incentives for this?! The school district won’t give me a laptop even though all the other teachers got one. They expect the co-op to provide us with one. And the co-op says they can’t. Someone give me a laptop!!

Current teachers also want to be listened to regarding their teaching assignments.

While Lynn reported, “I asked to be moved four times and they said no each time for different reasons,” Katie stated, “They allowed me to stay here, which is a district that I really have enjoyed. I’ve not been moved and I think that has been very supportive.”

Regardless of whether or not the Interlocal responds in a manner that provides teachers with what they request, CTs expressed that they want to be listened to and know that their needs are considered. Autumn shared:

They have always responded in a way that helps me. It may not always be the way that I want it, but everything has been addressed and taken care of. I think that our co-op realizes that I love and enjoy doing this job.

An additional recollection by Evan addresses the trust that he has in the Interlocal administrators’ decision-making:
I have received support from the co-op all the way through my 10 years, and they’ve always been supportive of whatever I’ve needed. Even if I didn’t always agree with the support they gave, they know the different requirements and the law, and it’s always been what I needed.

The following statement by Autumn illustrates how listening to teachers and considering their needs can be perceived as supportive:

All the years that I’ve taught, I don’t think that anybody has supported me more than the Interlocal. If I have a question, it’s answered promptly, or they get right back to me with the answer. If I need to attend a workshop, I’m always given permission to go to a workshop to enhance what I know. Supplies are given to me. And knowing that just down the street there are people I can talk to who are willing to talk to me in a positive way even if I mess up, is very comforting. I don’t get beaten up for mistakes, which is really big. I think overall that they have supported me personally and they’ve always been very supportive of me no matter what I did.

Finding 1 Summary

Current Interlocal tenured special education teachers report that they want to be listened to and have their needs considered. Reports included the Interlocal responding to CTs by telephone, e-mail, and in person. CTs want to be heard in several areas including para shortages, student behavioral support, teacher and student materials, and teaching assignments.

The majority of CTs shared perceptions about the Interlocal as a good support system that responded to their needs. Even in situations where CTs stated they did not get
what they had requested, many CTs reported that they felt the Interlocal administrators listened to them.

Some CTs perceptions of the Interlocal were not as positive. They stated that their requests were not answered. They perceived they were not being listened to or having their needs met. Whether it was because they had or had not perceived that they were listened to or had the needs considered, CTs wanted to be heard and have their needs met by the Interlocal.

Finding 2: Current Tenured Special Education Teachers Feel Overwhelmed by the Workload Related to State Assessments

Current Interlocal tenured special education teachers report feeling overwhelmed by their workload related to new state assessment requirements. Some of the CTs reported that the increasing demands of the state assessments confine their teaching, take time, and affect their decisions regarding retention. Table 4.2 offers quotations by CTs as they relate to the second finding. The quotations supporting Finding 2 are distributed across the two theoretical perspectives of my study. CT responses to their workload related to increasing state assessment requirements and were related directly to the organizational learning theoretical perspective (See Table 4.2).
Table 4.2
Current Tenured Special Education Teachers Feel Overwhelmed by the Workload
Related to State Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Current Teachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Culture</strong></td>
<td>I’m teaching to a test.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t know if I can go through alternate assessment again. More and more I don’t teach; I do the paperwork, more and more.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The alternate assessment is eating me up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Learning</strong></td>
<td>I have turned into a paperwork machine. A lot of my day is put toward paperwork, particularly with the testing. I have to compile a thousand pieces of information for each student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The state assessments are just killing me because I can’t teach everything I want to teach.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>We are focused on the assessments. There are times when I think that all the information on the assessment is important. Sometimes I think students need more time on remedial things. I’m supposed to work on the same content as regular education classes, but my students are not there yet.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Is it fair for special education students to test on a different level and have their scores be part of the school’s total cumulative scores?</td>
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Table 4.2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Current Teachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization Learning</td>
<td>There is a huge gap between the Kansas Assessment with Modified Measures (KAMM) and the alternate assessment. But the KAMM is very, very, very difficult.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>When the alternate assessment came through I was frustrated because they changed it from being a shared responsibility. Now, I have the full responsibility and have to do 80 pieces of information per child.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>We get updated a great deal on alternate assessment. Probably, because it changes five times each year – before we do it.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I’m tired of waking up at 2:00 a.m. and worrying about state assessments, and the time I need to teach them things they are not ready for, and then go back to their regular lessons when assessment time is over. This job, or any job, is not worth losing good health.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>If I could even find one job that was comparable to the money that I make now, even if it’s not that grand, I think I would do it. Alternate assessment is that bad.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(13 similar comments)</td>
</tr>
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Several of the CTs felt overwhelmed by the workload related to state assessments. Katie stated how the volume of what is required by the state assessments affects her day,
“I have turned into a paperwork machine. A lot of my day is put toward paperwork, particularly with the testing. I have to compile a thousand pieces of information for each student.” June discussed how preparing for the state assessments confines her teaching, she said, “The state assessments are just killing me because I can’t teach everything I want to teach.” Autumn expressed a similar frustration. She said, “I’m teaching to a test.”

Lynn perceived that some basic areas of academics for students that suffer due to the increased state assessment requirements:

We are focused on the assessments. There are times when I think that all the information on the assessment is important. Sometimes I think students need more time on remedial things. I’m supposed to work on the same content as regular education classes, but my students are not there yet.

Jack questioned the levels for testing versus student performance levels. He asked, “Is it fair for special education students to test on a different level and have their scores be part of the school’s total cumulative scores?”

Some students are eligible for alternate assessments due to their disabilities. In Kansas, a modified assessment, KAMM, is available for some students. Katie expressed concern with the difficulty level of that assessment, “There is a huge gap between the Kansas Assessment with Modified Measures (KAMM) and the alternate assessment. But the KAMM is very, very, very difficult.”

The state’s alternate assessment has become time consuming for teachers. Lynn spoke of her experience, “When the alternate assessment came through I was frustrated because they changed it from being a shared responsibility. Now, I have full responsibility and have to do 80 pieces of information per child.”

65
The alternate assessment impacted Lynn in the following way, “I don’t know if I can go through alternate assessment again. More and more I don’t teach; I do the paperwork, more and more.” And there have been on-going adjustments since the alternate assessment was begun. Jack stated, “We get updated a great deal on alternate assessment. Probably, because it changes five times each year – before we do it.” Autumn summarized the feelings of many of the participants when she said, “The alternate assessment is eating me up.”

For some, the responsibilities associated with the state assessments affected more than their job. Some CTs shared that increasing requirements related to state assessments caused undue stress on their health, and even impacted their desire to remain in special education. June revealed:

I’m tired of waking up at 2:00 a.m. and worrying about state assessments, and the time I need to teach them things they are not ready for, and then go back to their regular lessons when assessment time is over. This job, or any job, is not worth losing good health.

Lynn spoke of thinking about leaving the profession for a different job, “If I could even find one job that was comparable to the money that I make now, even if it’s not that grand, I think I would do it. Alternate assessment is that bad.”

Finding 2 Summary

Current Interlocal tenured special education teachers report feeling overwhelmed by the workload they have related to new state assessment requirements. Many CTs stated that teaching toward the state assessments did not allow them to teach other necessary skills, some of which were remedial in nature and needed by the students they
served. They also shared that collecting the required data added to their workload. In addition, some CTs questioned whether their students were being assessed at levels for which the students were not prepared to pass the assessments.

The overall perception from CTs indicated that continuous changes with state assessments required a large time requirement. This time requirement impacted their teaching. The CTs’ comments also provided examples of the stress they felt from increasing workload and time requirements. CTs felt the workload and time requirements that state assessments require have become overwhelming.

Finding 3: Current and Former Tenured Special Education Teachers Believe that Legally-Required Changes Affected Them in Practice

Both CTs and FTs believe that legally-required changes in special education have affected them in practice. Table 4.3 offers quotations by members of each unit of analysis as they relate to this third finding. The quotations supporting Finding 3 are distributed across the two theoretical perspectives of my study. Both current and former Interlocal teachers believed that legally-required changes affected how they operated on a day-to-day basis (See Table 4.3).
Table 4.3

Current and Former Tenured Special Education Teachers Believe that Legally-Required Changes Affected them in Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Current Teachers</th>
<th>Former Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Culture</td>
<td>It would be nice to have consistency for two or three years in a row instead of changes every year.</td>
<td>Having to complete all the paperwork made me feel like I was jumping through hoops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal documentation requirements for teachers continue to be duplicated, added to, and changed in format. The amount of time spent to complete paperwork has become enormous. It places unnecessary demands on teachers and takes crucial time away from students.</td>
<td>One of the major things was that the paperwork became so overwhelming. It felt like you were doing more paperwork than teaching.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The legal requirements have not impacted me at all.</td>
<td>More paperwork, a different way of doing the paperwork.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>More paperwork was the huge thing.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There was another form to fill out.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More forms. Always more forms.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Procedures became overwhelming.</td>
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Table 4.3 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Current Teachers</th>
<th>Former Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Culture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instead of 10 pages, the IEPs grew to 15 pages, and there was more and more and more testing.</td>
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<td>It went from one IEP meeting to another for the transition services.</td>
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<td>The one thing that really had an impact was when inclusion and transition services started.</td>
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<td>Do you know how much time I have spent on this? I usually spent one half day to a full day in my district on the weekends. It seemed to consume my life.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>I’m not sure the delivery of services has changed a great deal.</td>
<td>I don’t really think they’ve had an impact. Federally speaking, I don’t think that my delivery of services was impacted either negatively or positively.</td>
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<td>Legal requirements are one of the smaller concerns.</td>
<td>I don’t think I had a problem with Federal concerns or mandates.</td>
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Table 4.3 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
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<th>Former Teachers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Learning</strong></td>
<td>I don’t think that IDEA has changed how I operate.</td>
<td>We work around the rules. You find a way to serve the kid whether it matches what Uncle Sam says or not. If the kid gets what they need, we’re happy, and we’ll put down on paper whatever you want to hear.</td>
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<td>The legal requirements have no impact because as soon as No Child Left Behind goes away, it’ll be another program, and as soon as that one goes away, it’ll be another one, and it doesn’t make any difference what the legal requirements are, that’s just part of the job.</td>
<td>I remember in the seven years that I was with the co-op, there were nine sets of rules, so after a while, you get to the point where you realize, it doesn’t matter what they say the rules are now, they’re going to change next year anyway.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>I don’t know that it made any difference . . . other than changing that alternate assessment.</td>
<td>Some of it is just terminology. I was teaching special education in 2004. They didn’t really change what we had to cover, just what they called it.</td>
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Table 4.3 (continued)

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<tr>
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<th>Former Teachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Learning</strong></td>
<td>I can’t say how the Federal changes have impacted me. At the State level, trying to get timeout rooms and the locking doors up to compliance has had an impact. Other than that, I really haven’t felt any impact.</td>
<td>It’s the combination of the fact that it’s more paperwork, but that it’s disconnected from serving the students. We dotted all the I’s and crossed all the T’s so that the Federal funding was provided to the co-op, so that the co-op could provide the staff to serve the kid. That was the only connection between the actual paperwork and working with the kid.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>We have changed everything about my classroom in response to IDEA. It’s been a positive change.</td>
<td>I would go [to school] early and I would stay late to get those things written right.</td>
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</table>
Table 4.3 (continued)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Current Teachers</th>
<th>Former Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Learning</td>
<td>I’ve totally changed how my classroom is organized to better meet kids’ needs right before the assessments. A year ago we were on a totally individualized program and we are no longer on that totally individualized program.</td>
<td>So much of the stresses come with the territory, you know, there’s a lot of paperwork; I found myself working on IEPs during class time because I didn’t have time before and after school to work on them unless I stayed after hours and I was not willing to do that, so I missed a lot of opportunities in the classroom because I was on the computer working on IEPs. The students were busy and they were learning but it was not the one-to-one that I had gotten used to when I first started teaching in special education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Perspective</td>
<td>Current Teachers</td>
<td>Former Teachers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Learning</td>
<td>I’ve had to change what I teach in the classroom because I have to pick out standards and indicators for each student taking the alternate assessment. So in order to be more individualized to fit each student’s particular needs, I have to pick out the five or eight things from the 80-page booklet of extended state standards to meet No Child Left Behind for each student . . . and teach to all students’ assessment indicators . . . everybody is so different.</td>
<td>That was a huge thing because, during the day, I didn’t even have a planning period, which probably was my own fault, not fitting that in my schedule, so we’d stay before or after school trying to get those done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Perspective</td>
<td>Current Teachers</td>
<td>Former Teachers</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Learning</strong></td>
<td>I think there’s been a big change in my paperwork as far as the job goes with creating IEPs and gathering documentation and knowing the standards well enough to be able to teach those standards. As far as the classroom, I don’t know that I’ve changed too many things except teaching to the test.</td>
<td>Progress reports started to take away more time from kids. I spent two days doing progress reports and not seeing kids. We have to call another meeting to make small IEP changes. We used to be able to just get a verbal ‘Okay.’ I think they’re back to that now, but that wasted a lot of time.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There’s no time. I am trying to work and take care of all the paperwork – IEPs done by their due dates. Our school changed to designated staffing days; I might have three IEPs on the same day. I cannot serve the children and do five IEPs . . . it takes a lot of time because I put a lot of heart in it . . . that the child’s needs are met.</td>
<td>I had so much paperwork to complete that I didn’t feel I had the time to teach. I was responsible for learning the curriculum. Instead of learning the curriculum and developing lesson plans, I spent my days completing IEPs that were due, putting grades in, and completing special education progress reports.</td>
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Table 4.3 (continued)

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<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Current Teachers</th>
<th>Former Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Learning</td>
<td>What are the options of having no changes... before we have to upset the apple cart again? Why do I have to change again this year? I know I’m going to have to change again next year and that’s more stress.</td>
<td>(19 similar comments)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current and former tenured special education teachers believe that legally-required changes affected them in practice. Lynn stated, “We have everything about my classroom changed in response to IDEA. It’s been a positive change.” Autumn agreed, “I’ve totally changed how my classroom is organized to better meet kids’ needs right before the assessments. A year ago we were on a totally individualized program and we are no longer on that totally individualized program.”

Some CTs reported additional paperwork burdens with regard to IEPs and the state assessments. Katie recounted the difficulties in individualizing for the alternate assessment in relation to lesson planning:

I’ve had to change what I teach in the classroom because I have to pick out standards and indicators for each student taking the alternate assessment. So in order to be more individualized to fit each student’s particular needs, I have to pick out the five or eight things from the 80-page booklet of extended state
standards to meet No Child Left Behind for each student . . . and teach to all students’ assessment indicators . . . everybody is so different. 

Lynn believed the legally-required changes have impacted her job responsibilities. She felt that the increased paperwork made a big difference. She said:

I think there’s been a big change in my paperwork as far as the job goes with creating IEPs and gathering documentation and knowing the standards well enough to be able to teach those standards. As far as the classroom, I don’t know that I’ve changed too many things except teaching to the test.

Several CTs expressed their beliefs that the legally-required changes affected them in practice. Autumn said:

There’s no time. I am trying to work and take care of all the paperwork – IEPs done by their due dates. Our school changed to designated staffing days; I might have three IEPs on the same day. I cannot serve the children and do five IEPs … it takes a lot of time because I put a lot of heart in it . . . it is important that the child’s needs are met.

June stated her dilemmas about accomplishing all she is required to do, “Legal documentation requirements for teachers continue to be duplicated, added to, and changed in format. The amount of time spent to complete paperwork has become enormous. It places unnecessary demands on teachers and takes crucial time away from students.”

Other CTs acknowledged the legally-required changes and expressed a longing for some stabilization. Lynn said, “It would be nice to have consistency for two or three years in a row instead of changes every year.” Katie expressed the stress she feels from
on-going changes when she verbalized her plea for consistency, asking:

What are the options of having no changes . . . before we have to upset the apple
cart again? Why do I have to change again this year? I know I’m going to have to
change again next year and that’s more stress.

The paperwork requirements bothered some FTs when they worked for the
Interlocal. As Karen recalled, “One of the major things was that the paperwork became so
overwhelming. It felt like you were doing more paperwork than teaching.” And several
other FTs echoed that sentiment. Sue stated, “More paperwork, a different way of doing
the paperwork.” Karen echoed, “More paperwork was the huge thing.” Darla added,
“There was another form to fill out,” which was a perception shared by Catherine, who
said, “More forms. Always more forms.” Devin also felt that, in addition to forms, that
the “Procedures became too overwhelming.”

Some of the forms and procedures that changed with each reauthorization of
IDEA surrounded the IEPs for students. Several FTs mentioned the increase in time it
took to write IEPs. Sue provided her example that, “I would go [to school] early and I
would stay late to get those things written right.” Sue describes the stress she felt:

So much of the stresses come with the territory, you know, there’s a lot of
paperwork; I found myself working on IEPs during class time because I didn’t
have time before and after school to work on them unless I stayed after hours and
I was not willing to do that, so I missed a lot of opportunities in the classroom
because I was on the computer working on IEPs. The students were busy and they
were learning but it was not the one-to-one that I had gotten used to when I first
started teaching in special education.
Similar to other FTs, Catherine found it difficult to find time in her teaching day to complete IEPs. She speaks to time and stress:

That was a huge thing because, during the day, I didn't even have a planning period, which probably was my own fault, not fitting that in my schedule, so we’d stay before or after school trying to get those done.

According to Devin, the IEPs became also more complicated, “Instead of 10 pages, the IEPs grew to 15 pages, and there was more and more and more testing,” and, “It went from one IEP meeting to another for the transition services.”

Other requirements also were reported to have affected FTs. Owen shared, “The one thing that really had an impact was when inclusion and transition services started.” In addition to more IEP meetings, progress reports also became a burden as Karen recalled:

Progress reports started to take away more time from kids. I spent two days doing progress reports and not seeing kids. We have to call another meeting to make small IEP changes. We used to be able to just get a verbal ‘Okay.’ I think they’re back to that now, but that wasted a lot of time.

Sue expressed how she felt pulled in many directions and could not always devote the time she wished to the students:

I had so much paperwork to complete that I didn’t feel I had the time to teach. I was responsible for learning the curriculum. Instead of learning the curriculum and developing lesson plans, I spent my days completing IEPs that were due, putting grades in, and completing special education progress reports.

She was not alone in her frustrations with how requirements impacted her day. Darla could not even find the time within the school day to finish what was required. She
shared, “Do you know how much time I have spent on this? I usually spent one half day to a full day in my district on the weekends. It seemed to consume my life.”

*Teacher denial of impact of legally-required changes.* Although many CTs described how the legal requirements affected them in practice, some felt that legally-required changes did not have an impact on them. Autumn said, “Legal requirements are one of the smaller concerns.” June added, “The legal requirements have not impacted me at all.” Katie said, “I’m not sure the delivery of services has changed a great deal.” Lynn said, “I don’t think that IDEA has changed how I operate.” Jack’s perception of changing legal requirements on special education indicated that requirements could be ignored:

The legal requirements have no impact because as soon as No Child Left Behind goes away, it’ll be another program, and as soon as that one goes away, it’ll be another one, and it doesn’t make any difference what the legal requirements are, that’s just part of the job.

CTs spoke of how they believed they were not affected by the changing legal requirements; yet, they continued to describe how the legal requirements affected them in practice. June said, “I don’t know that it made any difference . . . other than changing that alternate assessment.” Some CTs differentiated between Federal and state-required changes. Evan stated, “I can’t say how the Federal changes have impacted me. At the State level, trying to get timeout rooms and the locking doors up to compliance has had an impact. Other than that, I really haven’t felt any impact.”

Former teachers agreed with the CTs. Some stated that the legally-required changes had little or no impact on them. Devin said, “I don’t really think they’ve had an impact. Federally speaking, I don’t think that my delivery of services was impacted either
negatively or positively.” Owen offered, “I don’t think I had a problem with Federal concerns or mandates.”

Some FTs indicated that to do what was best for students, they sometimes had to ignore the requirements, or that legal requirements are a means to an end. Darla shared her perception about legal requirements, stating, “Having to complete all the paperwork made me feel like I was jumping through hoops.” As Devin said:

We work around the rules. You find a way to serve the kid whether it matches what Uncle Sam says or not. If the kid gets what they need, we’re happy, and we’ll put down on paper whatever you want to hear.

And Owen added:

I remember in the seven years that I was with the co-op, there were nine sets of rules, so after a while, you get to the point where you realize, it doesn't matter what they say the rules are now, they’re going to change next year anyway.

Owen summarized his perception of the purpose of the legally-required changes, stating, “Some of it is just terminology. I was teaching special education in 2004. They didn’t really change what we had to cover, just what they called it.” Furthermore, he questioned the link between the legal requirements and actually serving the students when he shared:

It’s the combination of the fact that it’s more paperwork, but that it’s disconnected from serving the students. We dotted all the I’s and crossed all the T’s so that the Federal funding was provided to the co-op, so that the co-op could provide the staff to serve the kid. That was the only connection between the actual paperwork and working with the kid.
**Finding 3 Summary**

Current and former tenured special education teachers believe that legally-required changes affected them in practice. As CTs and FTs responded, they shared how the affects of the legally-required changes impacted their jobs operationally. Some gave examples of how their classrooms or lessons were designed differently to meet new requirements. Others shared how increasing requirements increased the amount of their workloads, including longer IEP meetings and more forms to complete. They were frustrated by the amount of paperwork, stress, and the constant changes. Some CTs and FTs reported ignoring new requirements, stating that they would be replaced by other requirements at some point, so they chose not to address the changes; some questioned the relevance of new legal requirements. Many FTs and CTs denied the impact of legally-required changes although they acknowledged evolving legal requirements affected their work each day.

**Finding 4: Current and Former Tenured Special Education Teachers Perceive that Time Requirements for Administrative Tasks Reduce Time for Student Services**

Current and former tenured special education teachers perceive that the time it takes to complete all required administrative tasks takes time away from services they can provide to students. Many examples were provided by Interlocal teachers, both CTs and FTs, described how paperwork and procedures lessened the time they perceived should be spent with students. Table 4.4 offers quotations by members of each unit of analysis as they relate to the fourth finding. Both CTs and FTs perceived that paperwork and procedural responsibilities take time away from students unless they extend their day to complete required tasks (See Table 4.4). The quotations supporting Finding 4 are
distributed across the two theoretical perspectives of my study.

Table 4.4
Current and Former Tenured Special Education Teachers Perceive that Time Requirements for Administrative Tasks Reduce Time for Student Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Current Teachers</th>
<th>Former Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Culture</td>
<td>Legal documentation requirements for teachers continue to be duplicated, added to, and changed in format. The amount of time spent to complete paperwork has become enormous. It places unnecessary demands on teachers and takes crucial time away from students.</td>
<td>Being in special education, it's almost like you're expected to know the curriculum that you’re teaching like a regular education teacher, and you have you know how to do IEPs, progress reports, and all of this other paperwork. You’re given the exact same amount of time to do it all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One of the major things was that the paperwork became so overwhelming. It felt like I was doing more paperwork than teaching.</td>
<td>Because we can't do it all.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Current Teachers</th>
<th>Former Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Learning</strong></td>
<td>I’m the teacher and I’m supposed to be working with the kids but I can’t work with them because I have this document that I have to make sure I complete. Do I stay after school or not?</td>
<td>It just took a lot more time. I feel like we should have had more time to do that kind of paperwork, because if you're doing lesson plans and this tremendous amount of paperwork, you should have extra time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The increased paperwork, trying to keep on top of best practice in the field, and the ever changing technology in the field are very time consuming. I find that I usually work at least 10 hours a day.</td>
<td>I was always being stymied and spent so much time just trying to get the paperwork caught up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We didn't choose teaching to fill out forms all day. We wanted to make a difference in students’ lives.</td>
<td>I want to do a good job but it’s unrealistic to expect a teacher to do it all.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

83
Table 4.4 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Current Teachers</th>
<th>Former Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Learning</strong></td>
<td>We do not have enough hours in the day to teach, plan, complete paperwork including scheduling IEPs, holding IEP meetings, completing the IEP documents, completing teacher reports, progress reports, Medicaid logs, talking to paras, consulting with other special education teachers and regular education teachers, social workers, and parents, grading papers, entering grades, writing and answering e-mails . . . That is just a partial list of our duties. We either need a professional day each quarter to complete paperwork or an assistant who will record information or someone needs to revamp some of the requirements.</td>
<td>We want to do it, but that's why we get burned out.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(29 similar comments)

84
Current and former tenured special education teachers perceive that the time it takes to complete all required administrative tasks takes time away from services they can provide to students. Lynn states, “Legal documentation requirements for teachers continue to be duplicated, added to, and changed in format. The amount of time spent to complete paperwork has become enormous. It places unnecessary demands on teachers and takes crucial time away from students.” Katie shared her conflict between responsibilities and time available, “I’m the teacher and I’m supposed to be working with the kids but I can’t work with them because I have this document that I have to make sure I complete. Do I stay after school or not?” Autumn revealed how she manages to accomplish everything in spite of the increased paperwork and procedures by working long hours. She 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 that I usually work at least 10 hours a day.”

Some teachers gave examples of role conflict related to the time needed to complete all required administrative tasks. They initially expected to be spending their days teaching students; yet, their administrative tasks were taking them away from those students.

June described the dissonance she experienced from what she expected the time requirement of her job to be and what it actually entails. She spoke about how her time is spent filling out forms, “We didn't choose teaching to fill out forms all day. We wanted to make a difference in students’ lives.” CTs and FTs expressed a desire to problem solve to complete all their required tasks. Lynn and several of her colleagues felt overwhelmed with dissemination of time. She provided an example of all that is expected of her and
what she thinks should happen to make things better:

We do not have enough hours in the day to teach, plan, complete paperwork including scheduling IEPs, holding IEP meetings, completing the IEP documents, completing teacher reports, progress reports, Medicaid logs, talking to paras, consulting with other special education teachers and regular education teachers, social workers, and parents, grading papers, entering grades, writing and answering e-mails … That is just a partial list of our duties. We either need a professional day each quarter to complete paperwork or an assistant who will record information or someone needs to revamp some of the requirements.

Former teachers mirrored statements made by CTs regarding the necessary time procedural responsibilities took to complete. Catherine made a comparison of general and special education responsibilities she perceived as related to the time it takes a special education teacher to complete all that is required:

Being in special education, it's almost like you're expected to know the curriculum that you’re teaching like a regular education teacher, and you have to know how to do IEPs, progress reports, and all of this other paperwork. You’re given the exact same amount of time to do it all.

The feeling of more time needed to complete required administrative tasks was echoed by Karen:

It just took a lot more time. I feel like we should have had more time to do that kind of paperwork, because if you're doing lesson plans and this tremendous amount of paperwork, you should have extra time.

Some FTs felt overwhelmed by the time it took to complete the necessary paperwork in
their special education position. Devin recalled, “I was always being stymied and spent so much time just trying to get the paperwork caught up.”

Former teachers indicated that the time administrative tasks took away from teaching impacted their decisions to leave their Interlocal teaching positions. Darla stated, “I want to do a good job but it’s unrealistic to expect a teacher to do it all.” Sue added, “We want to do it, but that's why we get burned out.” Many FTs shared that the time it took them to complete the increased paperwork took them away from students and may have played a role in their attrition. When asked about contributing factors to her decision to leave, Karen stated, “One of the major things was that the paperwork became so overwhelming. It felt like I was doing more paperwork than teaching.” A final thought was provided by a Catherine when she said succinctly, “Because we can't do it all.”

Finding 4 Summary

Current and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers perceived that the time it takes to complete all required administrative tasks takes time away from services they can provide to students. Teachers from both units of analysis described examples of how their procedural duties required so much time of them that it impacted services to students. Many CTs and FTs stated that the amount of time allotted during the school day was not enough to teach and complete the administrative tasks; therefore, they had to choose between reducing student time or increasing time to their teaching day.

Teachers described the amount of time these duties take as enormous. Some teachers reported that the time they had spend on required administrative tasks in relation to time spent teaching students was greater than they had expected. They shared that they wanted to complete all duties related to their teaching assignments, but could not fit
Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the findings from data collected during this study. The four salient findings related to the retention and attrition of current or former Interlocal tenured special education teachers were: 1) current tenured special education teachers want to be listened to and have their needs considered; 2) current tenured special education teachers feel overwhelmed by the workload related to state assessments; 3) current and former tenured special education teachers believe that legally-required changes affected them in practice; and 4) current and former tenured special education teachers perceive that time requirements for administrative tasks reduce time for student services. Chapter five will provide implications for future research, implications for praxis and recommendations, relationship of the findings to relevant theory, significance of my study, and a summary and conclusions.
CHAPTER 5

Introduction

My study was designed to describe the impact increased legal requirements has on the retention and attrition of tenured special education teachers. I organize this chapter by first restating the purpose of the study, summary of the literature review, methodology, research questions, and a summary of findings. I then proceed to discuss each of my findings. After I discuss my findings, I present implications for future research, implications for praxis and recommendations, relationship of the findings to relevant theory, significance of my study, and a summary and conclusions.

Purpose

The purpose of my study was to describe the reasons current or former Interlocal tenured special education teachers stay in or leave their special education teaching positions through the theoretical perspectives of organizational culture and organizational learning. My study describes the influence of increased legal requirements on current or former Interlocal tenured special education teacher attrition or retention by reporting their reasons for staying or leaving.

Summary of the Literature Review

The literature regarding organizational culture, organizational learning, and special education teacher attrition and retention supported this study’s focus on understanding what impact increased legal requirements has on special education teacher retention. The research regarding special education teachers and general education teachers showed that both groups experience stress while learning their jobs, which can be eased by the support of collegial networks (Miller et al., 1999), both are dissatisfied
with their jobs when they perceive working conditions to be unacceptable (Herzberg et al., 1959), and both are equally dissatisfied with their working conditions (Carlson et al., 2003; Gersten et al., 2001; Luckens et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999). There is a correlation between both groups’ job responsibility dissatisfaction and disagreement with, or feelings of unpreparedness for, educational reforms (Luckens et al., 2004). The aforementioned similarities between special education teachers and general education teachers identified in the research may affect their retention (Gersten et al., 2001).

Several differences between special education teachers and general education teachers also existed in the literature. Research indicated that special education teachers are more dissatisfied than general education teachers with their job requirements (Luckens et al., 2004), including the highly qualified requirement (Boe & Cook, 2006; Miller et al., 1999). Role conflict also was present in the special education teacher research (Gersten et al., 2001; Miller et al., 1999). An organizational culture that supports continued learning opportunities to learn the special education teaching job duties may provide relief for special and general education teachers and aid in their retention (Luckens et al., 2004).

One way to reduce the stress that special education teachers feel is to provide them with support (Gersten et al., 2001; Luckens et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999). The literature states that when administrators are perceived to be supportive, this increases special education teacher retention (Luckens et al., 2004). Another stress reducer for special education teachers is to provide them with a collegial support system (Miller et al., 1999). This is affected by the type of organizational learning that occurs within the system and the opportunities supported by the organizational culture (Boe et al., 1996;
Gersten et al., 2001; Luekens et al., 2004).

Research also shows that another way to reduce special education teacher stress is to improve their working conditions (Miller et al., 1999). When special education teachers feel they have limited power, information or resources, this may negatively impact their retention (Gersten et al., 2001). The literature shows that a supportive school climate will increase retention (Miller et al., 1999). An additional source of stress and dissatisfaction with working conditions is role conflict; when a special education teacher feels dissonance between their perception of what their job would entail and the reality of their job, their retention is at risk (Boe & Cook, 2006; Gersten et al., 2001; Luekens et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999). Improving working conditions, including the aforementioned support systems will increase their likelihood of special education teacher retention.

The stress special education teachers experience from job responsibilities and legal requirements may also impact their retention (Luekens et al., 2004). Special education teachers leave because they do not like the paperwork and other administrative duties that are a part of their jobs (Carlson et al., 2003). Unless they are part of an organizational culture that allows organizational learning of newly required responsibilities through a supportive collegial network, there is a risk of job dissatisfaction and attrition of special education teachers (Boe et al., 1996; Carlson et al., 2003; Gersten et al., 2001).

Especially in regard to learning new requirements for which they are held accountable, the continued opportunity to learn can influence special education teachers’ decisions to stay or leave (Gersten et al., 2001). Special education teachers who are not given this opportunity or who are dissatisfied with the professional development
opportunities they are afforded are at risk for attrition (Boe & Cook, 2006). Opportunities for learning may also aid in special education teachers understanding role conflict. The support provided through collegial learning opportunities in a culture that encourages Model II organizational learning can aid in the retention of special education teachers.

Methodology

I used multiple methods to collect data for this qualitative study: focus groups, semi-structured interviews, the Left-Hand Right-Hand Column Case Method (LHRHCCM), and a review of pertinent documents. Using multiple methods allowed me to triangulate my data and increase its trustworthiness.

The data I collected was filtered through a constructionist epistemology and the theoretical perspectives of organizational learning and organizational culture to answer the following research questions:

1. How do staying tenured Interlocal special education teachers describe the impact that increased legal requirements has on their decision to remain in special education with the Interlocal?

2. How do leaving tenured Interlocal special education teachers describe the impact that increased legal requirements had on their decision to leave their special education positions with the Interlocal?

The qualitative multiple case study design was emergent. There were two cases. Each case had a separate unit of analysis. The two units of analysis were comprised of current Interlocal tenured special education teachers and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers. A total of 40 teachers participated voluntarily in this study, 22 current Interlocal tenured special education teachers and 18 former Interlocal tenured special
education teachers.

My primary data analysis methods were pattern-matching, content analysis, and the use of the text-analysis software CATPAC. Data were unitized, sorted, and coded through open and axial coding processes to investigate and describe current and former Interlocal tenured special education teachers’ perceptions of how increased legal requirements have influenced their attrition or retention.

Summary of Findings

Four salient findings were derived from my data analysis. They are listed below.

Finding 1: Current tenured special education teachers want to be listened to and have their needs considered.

Finding 2: Current tenured special education teachers feel overwhelmed by the workload related to state assessments.

Finding 3: Current and former tenured special education teachers believe that legally-required changes affected them in practice.

Finding 4: Current and former tenured special education teachers perceive that time requirements for administrative tasks reduce time for student services.

Discussion of Findings

Finding 1: Current Tenured Special Education Teachers Want to be Listened to and Have Their Needs Considered

The impact of believing that Interlocal administrators are listening to CTs and providing support may be a crucial factor in CT retention. Some CTs feel they are listened to while others feel they are not, which is a source of stress for them. All CTs in my study want to be heard. An organization’s culture may contribute to the stresses that
teachers experience (Miller et al., 1999). Individual contextual factors and how each CT constructed meaning, where the same Interlocal administrative response was perceived differently by different CTs, led to both positive and negative responses in this finding. If the organizational culture is one of defensiveness and does not listen and respond to teachers’ needs, it may have an affect on the retention of its teachers (Boe & Cook, 2006).

Current special education teachers felt less isolated when Interlocal administrators listened to and considered their needs – this was a positive outcome. I believe this is important because some CTs may feel isolated in the general education building, especially if they are the only special education teacher in the building. At times, they need to discuss ideas with someone who can understand and be empathetic to the particulars of their situations.

One way to reduce special education teacher attrition is to decrease feelings of isolation (Miller et al., 1999). The level of support special education teachers feel from their colleagues, including administrators, impacts their retention decisions (Gersten et al., 2001; Luekens et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999). Also, they may need something that the Interlocal administrators provide instead of their district. It was clear they needed to feel that someone at the Interlocal will listen to them and consider their needs. Even CTs who stated that they did not always get what they asked for, also stated that they trusted Interlocal administration to make those decisions.

Current teachers who feel Interlocal administrators do not listen to them or consider their needs expressed feelings of isolation and being unappreciated. CTs feel isolated on certain occasions. It is not uncommon for a CT to be the only special
education teacher in the building or disability area. The CT may feel alone and isolated. This CT wants to feel the support of Interlocal administrative by being listened to and having their needs considered.

Current teachers felt unappreciated when they believed they were not listened to or having their needs considered. This perceived lack of support may lead to attrition. Positive collegial Interlocal administrative support was important to CTs; it may contribute to retention decisions.

Both groups of CTs want to have input in decision-making that affects them in areas such as: (a) availability of Interlocal administrators; (b) teaching assignments; (c) paraeducators; and (d) materials. These issues are important to special education teachers in the Interlocal because, while they work for the Interlocal, they are placed in buildings within the nine districts the Interlocal serves.

Current teachers spoke of the need for Interlocal administrators to be available when they need to discuss teaching assignments and to also provide the support they need to be successful. Because CTs are employed by the Interlocal, there must be a way for conversations to occur between those who make the decisions and those whom the decisions affect. An organizational culture that does not support collaboration leaves CTs feeling isolated. This lack of administrator availability may contribute to attrition. CTs want to have their needs considered regarding decisions that affect them; in this way, retention efforts may be strengthened as well.

Current teachers want to be listened to and have their needs considered regarding their teaching assignments. Research indicates that teachers want to feel a part of their school culture, which has a positive impact on special education teachers’ retention
decisions (Gersten et al., 2001). Teachers who are not in positions they find desirable may decide to leave (Boe & Cook, 2006; Luekens et al., 2004). Another issue regarding teaching assignments concerns role conflict, where dissonance exists between CT job responsibilities and what they actually experience. Some of the Interlocal’s CTs felt like they were given more job responsibilities than they expected. The literature indicates that stress related to unexpected job duties has contributed to special education teacher attrition (Boe & Cook, 2006; Gersten et al., 2001; Luekens et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999). Support through collegial networks related to unexpected job duties has been shown to assist in alleviating role conflict by helping to reduce stress and may have an impact on special education teacher retention by increasing their job satisfaction (Gersten et al., 2001).

The Interlocal relies on paraeducator help for its teachers, and CTs want input in this area. The teachers rely on paraeducators to assist them meet special education students’ needs. When paraeducator positions are unfilled due to a shortage of applicants, or when paraeducator absenteeism is high, CTs feel overburdened by the workload. They felt that this is another source of stress.

Some CTs felt that Interlocal administrators were not listening to them or that their needs were not being considered related to paraeducator positions. They wanted the paraeducator vacancies filled in a timely manner; they wanted substitutes when paraeducators were absent. They felt stress about both issues: paraeducator vacancies and absenteeism. If this stress is perceived to contribute to less-than-desirable working conditions by special education teachers, this could lead to their attrition (Boe et al., 1996; Gersten et al., 2001; Luekens et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999).
Some CTs who feel that they have had their paraeducator needs met, may have the perception that their needs are being considered and that they are being listened to by Interlocal administrators. This feeling of being heard may lead to an increased chance of job satisfaction and teacher retention.

Another area where CTs want to be heard is related to having the proper materials to do their jobs. CTs do not want to feel like they are treated differently than general education teachers. CTs felt that they and general education teachers were serving the same students; therefore, they wanted to be treated the same and receive appropriate materials needed to perform job duties. CTs did not feel they were listened to or had their needs considered when they do not receive appropriate materials to perform their jobs.

Current teachers who received materials may feel that Interlocal administrators listened to them; yet, this may not be the case. CTs noted that they do not want to beg for what they need or debate whether the Interlocal or their district is responsible for purchasing these materials. When this occurs, CTs’ perceptions are that they are not being listened to or having their needs considered.

Current teachers in this study spoke in detail of wanting to be listened to and having their needs considered. Areas they addressed related to being heard and needs considered included the (a) availability of Interlocal administrators; (b) teaching assignments; (c) paraeducators; and (d) materials. If CTs’ were listened to and had their needs considered, the positive impact could lead to greater CT retention.

*Finding 2: Current Tenured Special Education Teachers Feel Overwhelmed by the Workload Related to State Assessments*

The impact of the workload related to state assessments leaves many CTs feeling
overwhelmed and stressed and may be a crucial factor in CT attrition. The workload related to state assessments has become a stressor for CTs. They feel overwhelmed by the requirements associated with state assessments. The time it takes for them to learn how to administer the assessment and have it changed several times in a year, was a source of frustration for CTs.

Current teachers spoke of many changes that occur each year with the state assessments. I believe that CTs’ stress related to changes in state assessments goes deeper. The impact of NCLB and pressures to meet AYP goals has been perceived as pressure to many educators. CTs reported feeling overwhelmed by the procedures involved with the state assessments. They also feel overwhelmed with special education students who are assessed over material before they are prepared to be assessed. CTs feel they are labeled as teachers who are keeping their building from reaching AYP goals. As a result, many CTs are teaching to the test. They have revised their lessons to meet only the standards covered in the state assessments. They spoke of no longer having time to teach the remedial skills that their students need or anything extra.

Some CTs also reported not being able to individualize their lessons because of the workload. They feel confined in what they teach, and powerless over this process. This perceived limited power can also affect their retention (Gersten et al., 2001). In addition, those required to conduct alternate assessments have reported much additional paperwork and time involved, which is viewed as a burden.

I believe that the stress some CTs experience from the state assessments will cause them to become dissatisfied with their job and will generate a negative effect of teaching special education leaving the field (Boe & Cook, 2006; Carlson et al., 2003;
Gersten et al., 2001; Luekens et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999).

Current teachers in my study feel overwhelmed by the workload related to state assessments. Their lesson plans have been amended to only teaching to the test. Sometimes they teach at skill levels beyond their special education students’ current performance ability. Moreover, there are many pieces of documentation that must be processed, especially for the alternate assessment. As a result, the workload related to the state assessments is creating additional stress for CTs, which may impact their retention.

Finding 3: Current and Former Tenured Special Education Teachers Believe that Legally-Required Changes Affected Them in Practice

The impact of legally-required changes affects CTs and FTs in practice, and when perceived as a burden, may lead to their attrition. The requirements from laws such as IDEA and NCLB related to state assessments and the provision of special education services have impacted both FTs and CTs. Some CTs and FTs feel they have changed everything about their classrooms, including what and how they teach.

Many special education teachers have had to devote more time to teaching the standards because they know that their students will be assessed through state assessments. I believe they have done this in response to pressures for their special education students to perform well on state assessments. Special education teachers are frustrated because they feel that they take the blame when their students do not perform well, even when some students are not at the skill levels of the assessment. They now teach to the standards on which their students will be assessed instead of teaching special education students at their instructional levels.

Special education teachers also are facilitating student’s IEPs to be more grade-
level, standards-based. Teachers who report they are only teaching to the test may not be addressing some of their students’ needs, such as life skills, behavioral skills, and instructional-level appropriate skills because of increased legal requirements regarding assessing students.

Not only has preparing students for their state assessments impacted special education teachers in practice, but the legal requirements for the provision of special education and related services change on a regular basis, requiring teachers to learn new procedures to meet those requirements. They regularly make their plea to Interlocal administrators for constancy of forms and procedures. As IDEA is reauthorized, followed by new Federal regulations, the State special education law is amended to be in accordance with the Federal law and then the State develops new regulations and guidelines to implement the new laws.

Special education teachers are frustrated that each year they seem to be given new IEP requirements, changed meeting requirements, more forms and amended versions of familiar forms, and when they seem to have a grasp of those forms, they change again. As a result, those types of changes and the amount of paperwork required by legal requirements have become overwhelming to some CTs, and may be the cause for the attrition of some Interlocal FTs.

While both CTs and FTs have been affected by legally-required changes, most do not perceive that these have had much of an impact on them. A disconnect between what they perceive and what they experience with regard to the impact of legally-required changes may add to any dissonance they feel about job expectations versus actual job duties. Most CTs and FTs relied on the Interlocal administrators to share what they
needed to implement through in-service training each year. Perhaps they believe that the changes are strictly Interlocal practice and not legal mandates.

Some teachers who researched the laws and regulations seemed to have a better understanding that some of the changes were beyond the Interlocal’s control and believed that everyone involved needed to find ways to make things work in accordance with the law to better serve the students. Other teachers, however, worked around the rules because their experience has been that each new requirement is replaced at some point by another; therefore, they choose to ignore them, rationalizing their behavior (Argyris & Schon, 1974).

Some special education teachers value the procedures and paperwork while others do not. In listening to CTs and FTs, I have heard their frustrations, feeling as if they must follow without questioning to provide services to students. They recognize they were hired to provide services to students; yet, they do not see the connection between the procedural requirements and services to students.

I believe that CTs and FTs construct meaning of newly-required legal changes and fit these changes into their teaching experience sometimes separating their espoused theories from their theories-in-use (Argyris & Schon, 1974). Some choose to change their behavior to meet requirements and some did not change. Organizational defensive routines may be interfering with teachers learning new requirements, which can affect retention (Boe & Cook, 2006).

Whether special education teachers recognize the connection between legally-required changes and how their daily practice has been affected, they experience stress due to the increased legally-required paperwork and changing procedures. When
perceived by teachers as a burden, this can lead to job dissatisfaction and attrition (Boe & Cook, 2006; Carlson et al., 2003; Gersten et al., 2001; Luckens et al., 2004; Miller et al., 1999).

The strongest feeling that most CTs and FTs shared was how the affects of the legally-required changes impacted their special education teaching position. They spoke of meeting requirements, form changes, and preparing for state assessments and the implications of daily practice and student teaching time. Special education teacher research indicated that paperwork and other administrative duties interfere with teaching, and unless they are supported through their organizational culture to provide relief for this concern, schools risk losing those teachers (Carlson et al., 2003).

**Finding 4: Current and Former Tenured Special Education Teachers Perceive that Time Requirements for Administrative Tasks Reduce Time for Student Services**

The perception by CTs and FTs that administrative tasks take time away from students could affect teacher retention. They feel that the expectations of special education teachers are unrealistic. In addition to their contracted teaching day, some teachers spend countless hours during the week and on weekends to complete paperwork. While I believe the Interlocal has dedicated teachers, many of whom are willing to extend their days to complete their contractual obligations regarding administrative tasks, this may be asking too much of them, and they are at risk for attrition. There is no extra monetary compensation for this time and work. At some point, these teachers may not be willing to give of personal time to complete tasks for their jobs. At that point, they may choose to leave the profession.

Other teachers do not choose to work outside of their contract day on
administrative tasks, and they either take time away from students to accomplish what is required or they do not complete everything. I believe that teachers want to do their jobs well, but more and more is required of them without decreasing any other responsibilities during their day. CTs and FTs feel they have to do it all, having to have knowledge of general education teachers as well as to understand the unique special education needs of each student and complete all the requisite accompanying tasks to serve them. They feel overloaded with responsibilities and do not have time to do it all.

Teachers who do not perceive their contract day as adequate to complete all that is required must make choices. They wonder if they should compromise how they spend time with students. They debate if they should give up the time they may have for lesson planning or lunch to complete administrative tasks, or take their work home. As a result, some leave their teaching positions.

For those special education teachers who do not see the connection between administrative tasks and teaching students, there may even be a bigger question in their minds regarding why they are required to perform these tasks. This was especially true for some teachers because they did not anticipate the requirements for administrative tasks that were included in their teaching role. Without explanation with regard to why these administrative tasks are important to teaching, and without proper training to accomplish all that is required, special education teacher retention will continue to be a major challenge (Boe et al., 1996; Gersten et al., 2001; Luekens et al., 2004). Teachers state that they entered teaching to make a difference in students’ lives, not to fill out forms. Some CTs and FTs may not understand the connection between the teaching and administrative tasks.
Teachers want to do a good job and get everything done; when they cannot, they get dissatisfied, discouraged, burned out, and oftentimes – quit. The time it takes to complete administrative tasks takes teaching time away from teachers, and has influenced their decisions to stay or leave their positions (Carlson et al., 2003).

Implications for Future Research

I believe several areas for further research may have important implications for the retention of special education teachers: the time it takes for teachers to complete all of their required tasks; why teachers perceive administrative tasks as a source of stress and interfering with teaching; impact of special education administrator leadership on teacher retention within an Interlocal; and determining how decisions are made for the application of resources for the education of special education students in an Interlocal.

Research that considers the time it takes for special education teachers to complete their required administrative tasks in addition to their teaching time with students is a logical outgrowth of my study because CTs and FTs shared that administrative tasks, some of which are due to legally-required changes, reduce their service time to students. Conducting a comparative analysis across the Interlocal may assist in understanding the time that is required for administrative tasks reduces from the direct teaching time with students. Since this has been a source of stress for Interlocal special education teachers, information that can help reduce or eliminate that stress may aid in teacher retention.

A follow-up study to the former would be to better understand CTs’ positions on why these issues are sources of stress. A case study of current Interlocal teachers’ perceptions could lend understanding to those in decision-making positions, which could
include teachers, to consider and better meet teachers’ needs. Being heard in this area of stress could have a positive impact on special education teacher retention.

Interlocal administrators recruit and hire teachers to work in member districts’ schools under the direct supervision of member districts’ administrators to teach member districts’ students. This unique situation requires many factions that work together to meet students’ needs. Teachers need leadership from both Interlocal administrators and member districts to work with them to successfully complete their job requirements. A multiple case study of the perceptions of Interlocal administrators, member district administrators and Interlocal teachers in relation to Interlocal administrators’ leadership styles may assist in special education retention by gaining insight into Interlocal administrative leadership for special education teachers’ job satisfaction and their ultimate retention.

A companion study to the former, research to determine how decisions are made regarding the application of resources for the education of special education students in an Interlocal would assist in teacher retention efforts by describing how an organization works together to make resource allocation decisions. Being hired by the Interlocal and placed in buildings within the member districts, special education teachers are expected to become a part of the building to which they are assigned. The students they serve are the districts’ students; the Interlocal has no students.

Resources such as materials are provided in combination by the districts and the Interlocal. Support staff such as paraeducators are hired by the Interlocal and placed in buildings based on IEP team decisions. From the results of my current study, Interlocal teachers feel divisiveness at times between the Interlocal and member districts regarding
the allocation of resources. A study that focused on describing how an organization that works together to make resource allocation decisions for students will lessen stress CTs express in trying to gain access to necessary resources to do their job effectively. Describing such an organization should allow the Interlocal and its member districts to work together to provide what teachers need, thus aiding in retention efforts.

Implications for Praxis and Recommendations

Implications from my study for praxis are twofold: tenured special education teachers have experience and need to be listened to regarding their many duties; and, especially in this time of chronic special education teacher shortage, organizations who employ them must consider ways to include them in understanding the decision-making that affects them. In these ways, organizational culture will support learning that allows effective and necessary change to occur, which also should aid in special education teacher retention.

As I constructed my meaning from the findings of my study, I make recommendations to improve praxis. Most recommendations were direct outcomes from CT and FT input through the data collection phase, however, some had their genesis as I observed and listened to CTs. I make the following four recommendations related to the finding from my study.

Recommendation One

One way to include teachers in decision-making is to establish an Interlocal special education advisory council, consisting of CTs from each district, other Interlocal licensed staff, Interlocal administrators, and district administrative representatives. Specific time would be provided for the council to meet and address needs identified in
this study’s findings such as materials, support staff, special education teaching positions, and state assessments. Current teachers will have a vehicle for their voices to be heard, which should aid in their retention.

*Recommendation Two*

I also recommend establishing a more formal mentoring program when hiring licensed special education teachers without tenure. Given the appropriate match of mentor/mentee and the time necessary, issues such as role conflict, procedures, and paperwork could be addressed. Financial compensation for the mentor, time allotted for training, mentor/mentee guidance, and reflection/evaluation, could better prepare newly-hired licensed Interlocal teachers. They would have a better opportunity to be granted tenure and better prepared for their duties. They would also be better trained and assimilated into the organizational culture and organizational learning of the Interlocal who supports their efforts. Effective mentoring could lead to the development of new mentors who will support other new teachers and hopefully diminish their risk of attrition.

*Recommendation Three*

I recommend extra planning time for CTs to meet the extra demands on special education teachers. Currently, they are afforded at least the same amount of planning time as other general education teachers. For some, however, this may not be enough. In addition to learning and implementing the requirements of general education teachers: curriculum, lesson planning, grading, and other non-teaching tasks such as supervision at lunch, recess, and bus duty, additional planning time for special education teachers is needed for IEP development, IEP meetings, collaboration time with related service
providers, paraeducators, and general education teachers, and writing IEP progress reports. This recommendation could improve retention and may boost recruiting efforts.

Recommendation Four

My final recommendation is related to practice. Keep forms and procedures constant or with the fewest changes necessary. When items of a legal nature require changes in forms and procedures, this must be communicated in the most efficient and effective manner that is also meaningful to teachers. The impact of believing that Interlocal administrators are listening to CTs and providing support during time of changes may be a crucial factor in CT retention. Provide directed staff development with smaller groups, to explain why the changes are necessary, and allow time for questions. Interlocal administrators should be more specific on implementing changes and provide follow-up sessions at the building level to answer questions after teachers have had a chance to experience implementation of newly-required changes.

Relationship of Findings to Relevant Theory

I asked CTs and FTs questions regarding their retention and attrition in relation to their perceptions of the impact of legally-required changes within the Interlocal’s organizational learning and organizational culture. I sought to learn how legally-required changes affected their work. I also wanted to know how they reacted to what they believed about the legally-required changes, and the impact they felt the legally-required changes had on their retention or attrition.

Finding 1 reported that CTs wanted to be listened to and have their needs considered. Because special education teachers construct meaning from their own contexts, it was not surprising that some CTs felt they were heard and others felt they
were not heard.

With regard to those CTs who did not feel that Interlocal administrators listened to them, I questioned whether this was a reflection of the Interlocal’s organizational culture. An organization that engages in Model II, double-loop learning will be a culture that will listen to others and consider their input. It will accept new information that questions tacit assumptions. This type of organizational learning will allow special education teachers to be heard and will encourage their retention.

Current teachers who felt that Interlocal administrators listened to them and had their needs considered and met may be indicative of the Interlocal’s organizational culture being open to them. Some CTs, however, stated that they were being heard and did not receive what they requested; they believed that the Interlocal administrators knew what was best for them. These CTs may have engaged in theories-in-use, rationalizing the Interlocal administrators’ responses.

Each of these CT groups felt they were listened to and had their needs met. The first CT group, however, reflects an organizational culture that allows its values and assumptions to be questioned, and engages in Model II organizational learning. The second CT group is part of this same type of organizational culture if their needs truly were considered albeit not responded to in the manner the teacher had requested. Or, their organizational culture is one that is not open to allowing its tacit assumptions to be questioned, and that is why their needs were not met.

Current teachers stated that they need to be heard and wanted their needs to be considered. They are requesting a supportive organizational culture. If the Interlocal administrators, conversely, engage in organizational learning that concentrates on
maximizing winning, minimizing losing, engage in defensive routines, rationalizing decisions, this could lead to CT mistrust and face-saving behaviors, which may end in teacher attrition. For Interlocal administrators to be viewed as supportive—listening to and considering the needs of the CTs—they must engage in Model II organizational learning that allows their underlying assumptions to be challenged.

Model II, double-loop learning will encourage special education teacher retention by allowing teachers in the Interlocal to question the status quo by seeking valid information and making informed choices to continue learning. In this way, CTs will feel supported because they believe they will be listened to and have their needs considered, which should encourage their retention.

Finding 2 focused on how CTs felt overwhelmed by the workload related to state assessments. They feel that state assessments dictate what they teach, sometimes to the exclusion of other concepts and skills their students need. Some CTs shared that this part of their teaching responsibility is affecting their decisions regarding retention.

The stress of preparing students for the state assessments and having their students perform at proficient levels has contributed to some CTs considering leaving their positions. They rationalize their behavior of changing what or how they teach to the test, which is an example of Model I organizational learning. Since the Interlocal’s special education teachers are placed into buildings within the districts it serves, it is difficult to discern whether this rationalization is supported by the organizational culture of the school, the Interlocal administrators, or both.

Some CTs’ espoused beliefs were positive regarding state assessments, especially the focus on standards. I believe that these CTs are trying to make the best of this
additional teaching duty by fitting the state assessment requirements into their espoused theories as a form of self-protection.

Other CTs had questions about the state assessments and how they have to implement them. This may be a reflection of their organizational culture as well as the single-loop organizational learning, where teachers were not encouraged to assimilate new information regarding state assessments. Some teachers view the state assessment window as an independent event, after which, they return to what they perceive to be their regular teaching.

The organizational culture contributes to teacher stress. CTs reported immense stress associated with what they perceived as state assessment burdens, even to the point of compromising their health. They felt overwhelmed by the workload related to state assessments and dissatisfaction with their jobs. These stress factors may lead to their attrition.

Finding 3 revealed that CTs and FTs did not perceive legally-required changes as impacting them; they, however, shared how the results of those changes affect them in daily practice. This relates to the theoretical perspective of organizational learning in that their espoused beliefs are different than their theories-in-use.

Each special education teacher constructs meaning of newly-required changes and decides how to act on them. How teachers learn new changes demonstrates the type of organizational learning that their organization models. Whether they make the changes necessary reflects their own personal commitment to accepting responsibility of newly-required changes. Their decisions for action reflect the larger organizational culture of which they are a part.
Current teachers and FTs gave examples of how their daily practice has been affected by legally-required changes. The implication is directly related to Interlocal administrators who did not rely on tacit knowledge when new laws and regulations required changes; organizational learning within the Interlocal allowed new information in and disseminated it to its teachers, who, in turn, put some into practice. This is an example of Model II, double-loop learning, where the Interlocal allows new, valid information in that may change its governing values. It is important, therefore, for Interlocal teachers to feel informed of changes for them to make decisions for their accompanying actions. Model II, double-loop learning, applied in its purest form with regard to legally-required changes, would strengthen retention.

Some FTs shared that they ignored newly-required changes. They rationalized that something different would replace the new requirements at some point; therefore, they chose not to implement them. They ignored information that did not fit their current theories-in-use, self-sealing their new espoused theories, which they changed to match their current theories-in-use to maintain constancy and resist change. Continued practice within a theory-in-use that does not match new required changes is ineffective. An organizational culture that supports such defensive routines and does not make requisite changes, risks the retention of its teachers.

Finding 4 found that CTs and FTs perceived the required time of administrative tasks reduced the time they had to serve students. This relates to the theoretical perspective of organizational culture as CTs and FTs described that they had to complete more tasks as part of their teaching duties than they had time to complete during their teaching day. If this is a direct reflection of the organizational culture to which they
belong, then perhaps this is an underlying assumption that has not been allowed to be questioned.

Current teachers and FTs shared that they performed the additional administrative tasks required by adding time to their work day. This is a direct reflection of Model I organizational learning perspective where people will do what is necessary to maximize winning and minimize losing to maintain more constancy, in this case, of managing the completion of forms and procedures. Some teachers voluntarily extended their work days to complete administrative tasks so their teaching time would remain as unaffected as possible. The teachers did not question the underlying assumptions of the organization, perhaps as a defensive routine to shield them from possible embarrassment of admitting that they have too much to accomplish in their regular teaching day and risk being perceived as not able to do their jobs. CT and FT job dissatisfaction and perceiving that the Interlocal administrators are not supportive could impact their decisions to stay in or leave their special education teaching positions.

Other CTs and FTs shared that they take time away from serving students to complete required administrative tasks. They stated that Interlocal administrators expect of that administrative tasks are completed and take priority over working with students. Organizational learning also plays a role in this finding in how CTs and FTs learn what administrative tasks are required as well as what guidance is provided to complete these tasks in an effective and efficient manner. Collegial networks that encourage and practice double-loop learning can also help alleviate issues of role conflict with regard to this finding. In these ways, the organizational culture can support learning and aid in the retention of its teachers.
An emerging theory to my study was bureaucracy theory. Besides the vertical bureaucracy of Federal government to state government, to school districts, to administrators to teachers, there is also a horizontal struggle of power or authority between the Interlocal and its individual districts. When districts work in coordination with the Interlocal, making hiring decisions, being responsible for resources, and collaboratively serving the same students, who has the legitimate authority, and what types exist (Weber, 1964)? CTs and FTs have shared their challenges related to decisions made by those with authority; bureaucracy theory may provide a perspective through which Interlocal special education teacher retention and attrition may be studied.

Weber (1964) stated that “bureaucratic administration means fundamentally the exercise of control on the basis of knowledge” (p. 339). With regard to disseminating information about legally-required changes to Interlocal teachers, Interlocal administrators appear to claim legitimate authority (Anderson, 1968; Beetham, 1974; Roth & Wittich, 1968). Most information of legally-required changes comes from the state, who is instructed by the Federal government; at that point, special education administrators are told not to question change, because by the time it is law, the time for public input is over. It is not customary that those who inform others of legally-required changes discuss why those changes came about—just that they are to be implemented. Those with the perceived power ask those at lower hierarchical levels to accept what has been changed.

Individual special education teacher’s actions are an outgrowth of their culture, and the culture of the organization, largely determined by its type of administration, determines its direction (Stammer, 1971). The bureaucracy within the Interlocal
demonstrates that, while the Interlocal administrators allow in new information necessary for legally-required changes, the new information is not made clear to some of its teachers, which is evident through the variety of actions they have described in the current study. The reasons that some teachers accept and implement changes may be explained by their compliance with legal authority (Weber, 1964). For other teachers, it can be difficult to accept because they see the side effects of the change, for example, the necessary forms that must be completed. If they knew, however, the reasons for the forms and valued what those forms represented in relation to student services, they may be more ready to accept the change. These CTs and FTs recognized that new changes affected their daily practice and took time away from teaching students.

Currents teachers and FTs need an understanding of how to unfreeze current beliefs and practices and establish new ones to make required changes. Both CTs and FTs expressed that they did not see a connection between procedural requirements and their services to students, other than receiving funding. This is supported by many of their comments regarding legal requirements being a smaller concern or having no impact on them. Those statements do not indicate that they are informed. In the current Interlocal bureaucracy, the Interlocal administrators hold the authority to provide them with valid information, which they must do if they expect teachers to make the legally-required changes. In this context, I believe bureaucracy theory is an emergent theory from this study and could be considered when trying to impact special education teacher retention.

Significance of the Study

My study added to literature of teacher attrition and retention in the field of special education. My research has shown that special education teachers leave their
positions because of added stress from excessive paperwork responsibilities. My study linked the paperwork burdens to increased legal requirements. Even when special education teachers did not connect the legal requirements and the paperwork burdens that caused stress and contributed to their attrition, much of the paperwork that they mentioned was directly related to legal requirements, such as state assessments, IEP additions, meeting requirements, and forms.

In addition, my study added data that addresses why a specific group of special education teachers leave or considers leaving their teaching positions. Previous research has studied teachers, special education teachers, and teachers new to the profession; however, my study added research related to attrition and retention of special education teachers with tenure.

Former teachers in my study relinquished job security after having been granted tenure. They had a stronger desire to leave than to stay. Tenured special education teachers in the Interlocal, which employs teachers for special education positions only, have at least several years of experience implementing special education requirements, and as this study was delimited to include tenured teachers who were employed at least one contract year after the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA, they also had experience implementing legally-required changes brought about at least in part from an IDEA reauthorization, which was a pivotal part of this study.

Summary and Conclusions

My study described the impact increased legal requirements has on the retention and attrition of tenured special education teachers. I conducted a qualitative multiple case study through the theoretical perspectives of organizational culture and organizational
learning to answer the research questions of how staying and leaving tenured Interlocal special education teachers describe the impact of legal requirements on their decisions to stay or leave their positions with the Interlocal. I included 40 current and former tenured special education teachers in my study, collecting data through focus groups, semi-structured interviews, the LHRHCCM, and a review of pertinent documents; using multiple methods aided in triangulation and trustworthiness of the study. Four salient findings from my study were:

Finding 1: Current tenured special education teachers want to be listened to and have their needs considered.
Finding 2: Current tenured special education teachers feel overwhelmed by the workload related to state assessments.
Finding 3: Current and former tenured special education teachers believe that legally-required changes affected them in practice.
Finding 4: Current and former tenured special education teachers perceive that time requirements for administrative tasks reduce time for student services.

My study adds to current research regarding increased legal requirements’ impact on the retention and attrition of tenured special education teachers. The findings found that current and former teachers were frustrated regarding legal requirements and how those requirements affected them. This study also indicated how organizational culture and organizational learning influence special education teachers’ perceptions of their jobs and, ultimately, their decisions to stay in or leave their positions. This research provides Interlocal administrators with valid information from which to make informed decisions without engaging in defensive routines about improving the retention of its special
education teachers. Engaging in Model II, double-loop learning should encourage an
Interlocal organizational culture that supports making its theories-in-use explicit, and will
allow the status quo to be questioned as a means of continuous learning and better
retention of tenured special education teachers.
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APPENDICES
Appendix A

Focus Group Protocol and Questions

Current Interlocal Tenured Special Education Teachers

Good morning/afternoon. My name is (state name). I will be conducting the focus group discussion. Your research responses will assist Erica Nance, a doctoral student at Wichita State University. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this discussion today. This discussion is in regard to special education teacher attrition and retention. The shortage of licensed special education teachers is at a critical level, and it is hoped that the information you provide will assist in the retention of special education teachers. Your participation and responses are valued and nothing you share, nor if you choose to withdraw, will negatively affect your position with the Interlocal. At this time I need you to review the letter explaining the study and the accompanying consent form. If you have any questions regarding the study or your potential participation in the study, I will answer them for you at this time. Before we proceed, if you choose to participate in the study, please sign the consent form. If you choose not to sign the consent form, you may leave without fear of any retribution or penalty.

PAUSE TO DISTRIBUTE EXPLANATORY LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

I would like to record our discussion to aid in transcription and for accuracy of content; however, your anonymity will be protected in the final written document. Your willingness to participate is appreciated and your input to assist in this effort is valued.

1. Please describe your day-to-day experiences as special education teachers in the Interlocal (Lewin, 1948; Schein, 1999).

2. Please describe how you deliver special education services in the Interlocal.
3. Please describe how you became aware of any changes in IDEA that would impact your job with the Interlocal (Argyris, 1999).

4. What else could the Interlocal do to assist you in learning how to implement any legally-required changes (Argyris, 1999)?

5. Please describe how the legally-required changes in IDEA 04 have impacted your day-to-day duties as a special education teacher with the Interlocal (Argyris & Schon, 1974).

6. How have the increased requirements in IDEA 04 influenced your role as a teacher in the Interlocal?

7. Please describe a time, if one occurred, when legally-required changes were not fully implemented by Interlocal special education teachers (Argyris, 1990; Argyris & Schon, 1974).

8. Please describe the impact that increased legal requirements have had on your decision to remain in special education (Carlson et al., 2003).

9. Please describe how the Interlocal has supported your decision to remain in your special education teaching position with the Interlocal (Gersten et al., 2001; Lewin, 1948).

10. What do you think led the Interlocal to respond in that manner (Schein, 1999)?

*Former Interlocal Tenured Special Education Teachers*

Good morning/afternoon. My name is Erica Nance, and I am a doctoral student at Wichita State University. I am conducting this focus group discussion as part of my doctoral dissertation regarding special education teacher attrition and retention. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this discussion today. The shortage of licensed special
education teachers is at a critical level, and my hope is to provide information to assist in the retention of special education teachers. I realize that you know me as an assistant director of the Interlocal. My role as assistant director is not a factor in this focus group. Your participation and responses are valued. At this time I need you to review the letter explaining my study and the accompanying consent form. If you have any questions regarding the study or your potential participation in the study, I will answer them for you at this time. Before we proceed, if you choose to participate in the study, please sign the consent form. If you choose not to sign the consent form, you may leave without fear of any retribution or penalty.

**PAUSE TO DISTRIBUTE EXPLANATORY LETTER AND CONSENT FORM**

I would like to record our discussion to aid in transcription and for accuracy of content; however, your anonymity will be protected in the final written document. I appreciate your willingness to participate and value your input to assist in this effort.

1. Please describe your experiences as special education teachers in the Interlocal (Lewin, 1948; Schein, 1999).
2. Please describe how you delivered special education services in the Interlocal.
3. Please describe how you became aware of any changes in IDEA 97 or IDEA 04 that impacted your job with the Interlocal (Argyris, 1999).
4. What else could the Interlocal have done to assist you in learning how to implement any legally-required changes (Argyris, 1999)?
5. Please describe how the legally-required changes in IDEA impacted your day-to-day duties as a special education teacher with the Interlocal (Argyris & Schon, 1974).
6. How did the increased requirements in IDEA influence your role as a teacher in the Interlocal?

7. Please describe a time, if one occurred, when legally-required changes were not fully implemented by Interlocal special education teachers (Argyris, 1990; Argyris & Schon, 1974).

8. Please describe the impact that increased legal requirements had on your decision to leave teaching special education with the Interlocal that you feel comfortable sharing (Carlson et al., 2003).

9. Please describe how the Interlocal supported your decision to leave your special education teaching position with the Interlocal (Gersten et al., 2001; Lewin, 1948).

10. What do you think led the Interlocal to respond in that manner (Schein, 1999)?
Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Current Interlocal Tenured Special Education Teachers

1. How long have you been employed as a special education teacher with the Interlocal?
2. Please describe how you deliver special education services in the Interlocal.
3. Please describe how you became aware of any changes in IDEA that would impact your job with the Interlocal (Argyris, 1999).
4. What else could the Interlocal do to assist you in learning how to implement any legally-required changes (Argyris, 1999)?
5. Please describe how your delivery of services has been impacted by the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 (Argyris & Schon, 1974).
6. Please describe how the legally-required changes in IDEA 04 have impacted your day-to-day duties as a special education teacher with the Interlocal (Argyris & Schon, 1974).
7. Please describe a time, if one occurred, when legally-required changes were not fully implemented by Interlocal special education teachers (Argyris, 1990; Argyris & Schon, 1974).
8. Please describe the impact that increased legal requirements have had on your decision to remain in special education (Carlson et al., 2003).
9. Please describe how the Interlocal has supported your decision to remain in your special education teaching position with the Interlocal (Gersten et al., 2001; Lewin, 1948).
10. What do you think led the Interlocal to respond in that manner (Schein, 1999)?

Former Interlocal Tenured Special Education Teachers

1. How long were you employed as a special education teacher with the Interlocal?

2. Please describe how you delivered special education services in the Interlocal.

3. Please describe how you became aware of any changes in IDEA that would impact your job with the Interlocal (Argyris, 1999).

4. What else could the Interlocal have done to assist you in learning how to implement any really-required changes (Argyris, 1999)?

5. Please describe how your delivery of services was impacted by the reauthorizations of IDEA (Argyris & Schon, 1974).

6. Please describe how the legally-required changes in IDEA impacted your day-to-day duties as a special education teacher with the Interlocal (Argyris & Schon, 1974).

7. Please describe a time, if one occurred, when legally-required changes were not fully implemented by Interlocal special education teachers (Argyris, 1990; Argyris & Schon, 1974).

8. Please describe the impact that increased legal requirements had on your decision to remain in special education (Carlson et al., 2003).

9. Please describe how the Interlocal responded to your decision to leave your special education teaching position with the Interlocal (Carlson et al., 2003; Gersten et al., 2001; Lewin, 1948).

10. What do you think led the Interlocal to respond in that manner (Schein, 1999)?
Appendix C

Left-Hand Right-Hand Column Case Method and Protocol

Current Interlocal Tenured Special Education Teachers

Good morning/afternoon. My name is (state name). I will be administering the Left-Hand Right-Hand Column Case Method to you. Your research responses will assist Erica Nance, a doctoral student at Wichita State University. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this activity today. This exercise regards special education teacher attrition and retention. It provides a vehicle for you to anonymously share any thoughts, feelings, or perceptions that you may have about the impact increased legal requirements has had on your decision to stay in your special education teaching position with the Interlocal. Nothing that you share will negatively impact your position with the Interlocal. Imagine a situation where you find yourself telling an Interlocal administrator about the impact increased legal requirements has had on your decision to stay in your special education teaching position with the Interlocal. I am providing you with a large white envelope to seal your responses after you complete the exercise.

In the right hand column of this page, write the conversation that you might have with the Interlocal administrator. Your conversation may go on for several pages (always in the right hand column). Write down what you think the administrator might say, and then the response you would make to the administrator. Do not write anything in the left hand column until you complete the conversation you are having with an Interlocal administrator (See the following example).

Once you complete the conversation in the right hand column, read it to yourself, make sure it is how you think the conversation would have gone. In the left hand column,
write what you were thinking and/or feeling, but unwilling to openly say with the Interlocal administrator. These might be thoughts you would share with a relative or friend, but would not share with the administrator (see example in the left hand column below). When you complete this exercise, please place your exercise sheets in the white envelope, seal it, and return it to the researcher. Do not place any identifying marks on the exercise or envelope. Do not refer to anyone by name. Use fabricated names as in the example below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Left-Hand (think or feel)</th>
<th>Right-Hand (what is said)</th>
</tr>
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<td>Ms. Jones: He didn’t see the mess of dishes in the sink and my teenage daughter this morning. I wonder what he wants.</td>
<td>Principal: Good morning Ms. Jones. Are you off to a great day? Ms. Jones: Can’t wait to get started.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Jones: We haven’t even mastered the last one yet.</td>
<td>Principal: We have an opportunity to learn a new reading strategy! Ms. Jones: Great. When do we start?</td>
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IN THIS EXERCISE, YOU CONTINUE TO WRITE UNTIL THE ENTIRE CONVERSATION IS COMPLETED.

Former Interlocal Tenured Special Education Teachers

Good morning/afternoon. My name is Erica Nance, a doctoral student at Wichita
State University. I will be administrating the Left-Hand Right-Hand Column Case Method to you. Your research responses will assist me in my dissertation research. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this activity today. This exercise regards special education teacher attrition and retention. It provides a vehicle for you to anonymously share any thoughts, feelings, or perceptions that you may have about the impact increased legal requirements has had on your decision to leave your special education teaching position with the Interlocal. Imagine a situation where you found yourself telling an Interlocal administrator about the impact increased legal requirements had on your decision to leave your special education teaching position with the Interlocal. I am providing you with a large white envelope to seal your responses after you complete the exercise.

In the right hand column of this page, write the conversation that you might have had with the Interlocal administrator. Your conversation may go on for several pages (always in the right hand column). Write down what you think the administrator might have said, and then the response you would have made to the administrator. Do not write anything in the left hand column until you complete the conversation you had with an Interlocal administrator (See the following example).

Once you complete the conversation in the right hand column, read it to yourself, make sure it is how you think the conversation would have gone. In the left hand column, write what you were thinking and/or feeling, but unwilling to openly say with the Interlocal administrator. These might be thoughts you would share with a relative or friend, but would not share with the administrator (see example in the left hand column below). When you complete this exercise, please place your exercise sheets in the white
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