

66TH CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

## Survive and Thrive As a Beginning EC Teacher

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Alamance Burlington Schools

SELF-ASSESSMENT:   
**A Journey of Change**

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA  
State Board of Education | Department of Public Instruction

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### A few statistics on EC Teachers...

- Special educators leave the profession at a rate of **12.3%**, as compared to 7.6% for general educators.<sup>1</sup>
- Of teachers leaving the field, **36.7%** of special educators report "escape teaching" (change career, seek better salary, or dissatisfaction with teaching) as their reason, as compared to **23.8%** of general educators.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services (2014). Special Education Personnel Shortages Fact Sheet. <http://specialdshortages.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/NCPSSERS-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Boe, E.E., Cook, L.H. & Sunderland, R.J. (2005). Turnover of Special Education Teachers. Presentation.

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## A few statistics on Beginning Teachers...

### In North Carolina in 2014-2015<sup>1</sup>:

- Overall turnover rate was **14.84%**
- Turnover rate of Beginning Teachers was **20.81%**

<sup>1</sup> North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2015). 2014-2015 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina. <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/educator-effectiveness/surveys/leaving/2014-15turnoverreport.pdf>

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## Where Do We Begin?



- Higher education and preparation are both important to the field of teaching special education...Future special education teachers will exit college programs having strong *theoretical foundations* in teaching and learning, but sometimes upon entry into their first teaching assignment, they will feel *overwhelmed* at how to begin putting this practice into play. They are at a loss at how to begin organizing and managing their first classroom setting.
- - Cindy Golden

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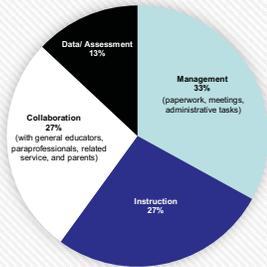
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Breakdown of Time Spent by Special Educators



Mitchell, B.B. (2011). Examining the role of the special educator in a response to intervention model (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from KU Scholarworks.

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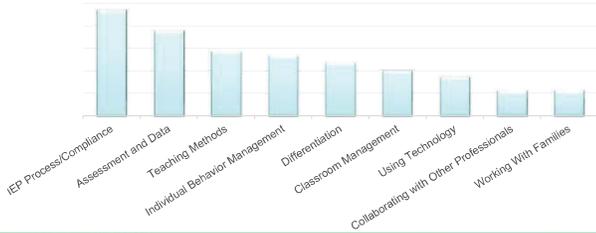
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## In what areas do beginning EC teachers need more support?



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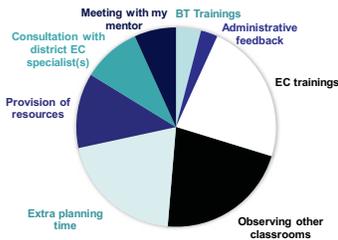
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## What kinds of supports are most beneficial?



Survey results based on 25 EC teachers in years 1-3 in ABSS.

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## Areas of Focus

- **Classroom and Instruction**
  - Instructional methods
  - Assessment
  - Classroom management
  - Routines and procedures
- **Collaboration**
  - With general educators
  - With paraprofessionals
  - With parents
- **Organization**
  - Student information
  - Lesson planning
  - Data
  - Case management
- **IEP Process**
  - Procedures
  - Compliance!
- **Support**
  - Training
  - Mentoring

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## Instructional methods, assessment, & classroom management

- Most likely the titles of college courses you took!
- Find out district and school guidelines
  - Supported instructional programs (Wilson, Corrective Reading, LetterLand, Vmath, TransMath, Unique Learning System, etc.)
  - Required assessments (CORE, Brigance, benchmarking, mClass, progress monitoring tools, etc.)
  - PBIS plan

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## Routines & Procedures: Questions to Consider

- **How is the schedule structured?**
  - How do we arrive and dismiss?
  - How do we transition?
  - What about "housekeeping" like lunch count and attendance?
- **How is the physical space structured?**
  - What will happen in different areas of the classroom?
- **What is our classroom management system?**
  - How do I earn a reward?
  - When will I receive a consequence? What will it be?
- **What are the expectations in different places, groups, etc.?**
  - What specific expectations are there in small groups, hallway, bathroom, cafeteria, etc.?
- **What are the expectations for paraprofessionals?**
  - What instructional groups will they lead?
  - What other tasks will they complete (clerical, medical, personal care, etc.)
  - How should they support behavior?

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## Clarifying Routines & Procedures

- Create a written document of routines/procedures
- Develop and review with all classroom staff
- **TEACH** these to your students in the first 2 weeks of school
- Include in your substitute binder

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## Collaborating with Paraprofessionals

You likely didn't learn **how** in school, but you may have multiple paraprofessionals to direct and supervise all day.

- Be confident in knowing what you know, but also keep an open dialogue
- Offer training to your paras in areas like instructional methods or data collection
- Have an honest conversation about your working styles
- Clarify expectations and responsibilities
- Meet weekly to address changes in the classroom and discuss any concerns
- Provide ongoing feedback

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## Collaborating with Parents

- What modes will you use to communicate?  
 Phone  Email  Written notes  Class newsletter
- Value parent input
- Communicate for multiple purposes
  - Share information (dates, events, what's being covered in class)
  - Discuss student progress and needs
  - Celebrate the positives!
- Consider your communication boundaries
  - What time can you talk? (e.g. only during planning and after school; not after 5pm)
  - Will you give out your personal cell phone number?

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## Organization is Key!



### Student Information

- Contact info
- Medical info
- IEP at a glance
- Data collection
- Behavior plans



### Classroom Information

- Student Schedules
- Staff Schedule
- Procedures
- Emergency substitute plans



### Lesson Plans

- Template that works for you
- Different templates for whole group, small group, individual, paraprofessionals, etc.
- Include all staff and students

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## Case Management

### Your responsibilities:

- Keep track of **due dates** of annual reviews and reevaluations
- Ensure students receive **services** as documented on IEP
- Ensure students receive classroom **modifications** as documented on IEP
- Maintain **data** on IEP progress

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## Facilitating the IEP Process

- Understand all processes
  - Referral (DEC1) and Permission to Test (DEC2)
  - Eligibility (DEC3) and Consent for Services (DEC6)
  - IEP (DEC4)
  - Prior Written Notice (DEC5—complete in every meeting)
  - Reevaluation Determination (DEC7)
- Plan in advance!
  - 30 days ahead of due date for IEPs
  - 90 days for reevaluations
- Collaborate with team to schedule meetings, complete evaluations, and draft IEP
- Provide 10 days' notice to parent
- Have draft forms accessible by all meeting participants

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## Role of Mentors

- Facilitate the transition to the school
  - School tour
  - Staff introductions
- Logistical support
  - School policies like securing a substitute, duties, field trips, copies, etc.)
- Assist with classroom set-up
- Share/assist with lesson plans
- Answer questions
- Direct to resources
- Help with IEP process
  - Assist with drafting IEPs
  - Sit in on meetings
- Provide emotional support

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## Notes for School & District Professionals

- Be purposeful in assigning **mentors** and other supports
  - Ensure that EC-specific support is in place
- Consider **differentiated PD** to meet the unique needs of EC teachers
- Allow opportunities to **observe** other teachers and classrooms
  - Especially consider this for lateral entry teachers without student teaching experience
- Provide **resources** (templates, forms, books, etc.) whenever possible
- Have an early focus on the IEP process in your district

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## Notes for High Ed Professionals

- Incorporate writing IEPs and understanding the IEP process into coursework
- Provide as many opportunities as possible to observe and participate in a variety of classroom settings
- Offer resources that can be used in classroom practice
- Keep in touch with alumni and connect them with current students

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## Recognize you can't do it all at once

- Don't be afraid to ask for help!
- Utilize district support, mentor, and administration
- Always stay on top of the non-negotiables
- Prioritize and focus!
- Consider a monthly focus to specifically work on
- You will make changes over and over, so don't feel "locked in" to one thing



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## You will Survive...And you can thrive!

### Contact Info:

**Jordan McNeill**

EC Program Specialist

Alamance Burlington School System

Jordan\_McNeill@abss.k12.nc.us

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## Resources

- The Special Educator's Toolkit, by Cindy Golden
- Beginning Teacher Support Case Study, by Bonnie Billingsley, The IRIS Center
  - [https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf\\_case\\_studies/ics\\_begtch.pdf](https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf_case_studies/ics_begtch.pdf)
- Getting Started Binder, Idaho State Department of Education
  - <http://media.idahotc.com/pdf/GSBP.pdf>
- Mentoring New Special Education Teachers, by Mary Lou Duffy & James Forgan

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# SELF-ASSESSMENT: A Journey of Change

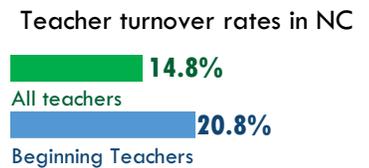
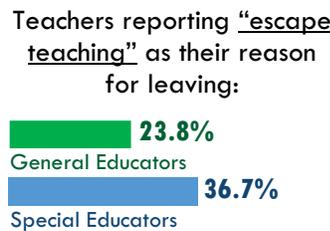
## SURVIVE and THRIVE as a Beginning EC Teacher

### Ask for help!

Utilize your administration, mentor, & district support  
**Prioritize the non-negotiables**  
 Self-check & adjust throughout the year



### Don't become a statistic!



### Getting Started:

#### Questions to Consider

- ✓ How will my *schedule* be structured?
- ✓ How will I set up the *physical environment*?
- ✓ What is my *classroom management* system?
  - ✓ What are the expectations for *students* and *staff*?

#### Case Management Responsibilities

- 1) Comply with *due dates* for annual reviews and reevaluations
- 2) Ensure students receive all *services* on their IEP
- 3) Ensure students receive all classroom *modifications* on their IEP
- 4) Maintain *data* on IEP progress

### Collaborating with Paraprofessionals

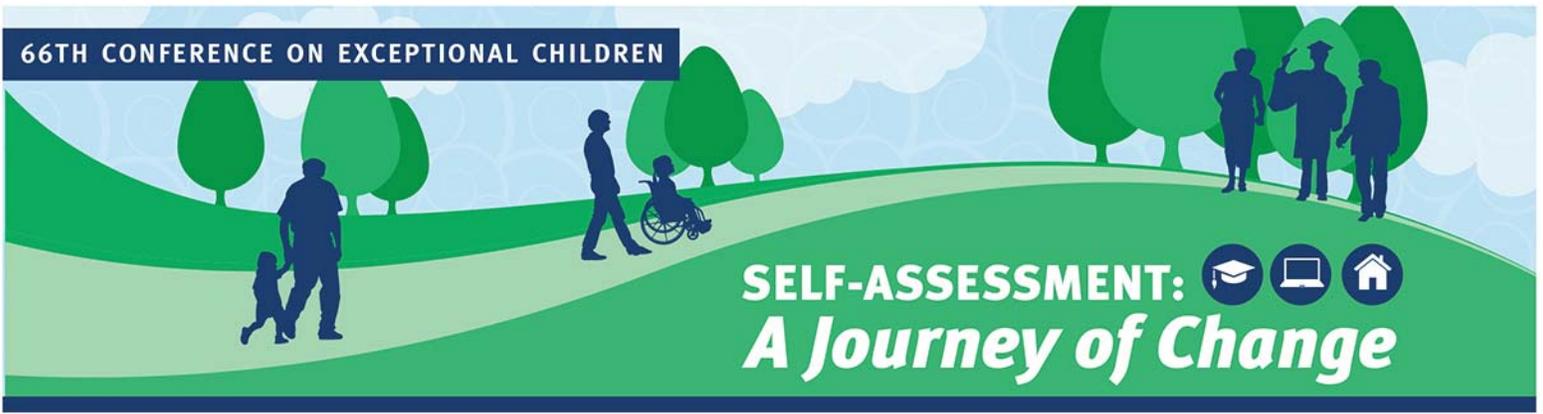
You likely didn't learn how to direct and supervise paraprofessionals in college! Be confident in your role as the teacher, but also keep an open dialogue. Have an honest conversation about your working styles and clarify your expectations for students and staff. Offer training to your paraprofessionals, meet weekly to discuss concerns, and always provide ongoing feedback.



#### Keys to Parent Communication

- ✓ How will you communicate?
  - ✓ Phone
  - ✓ Email
  - ✓ Written notes
  - ✓ Newsletter
- ✓ Value parent input
- ✓ Communicate for multiple purposes
  - Share information
  - Discuss student progress and needs
  - Celebrate the positives!
- ✓ Consider your communication boundaries
  - What time can you take phone calls?
  - How quickly will you respond to email?
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# SELF-ASSESSMENT: *A Journey of Change*

## SURVIVE and THRIVE as a Beginning EC Teacher

### IEP Process Cheat Sheet

- DEC1:** Special Education Referral  
Initial request for testing/services
- DEC2:** Parent Consent for Evaluation  
Completed for testing requested by DEC1 or DEC7
- DEC3:** Evaluation Results/Eligibility  
Completed after DEC1 or DEC7 process
- DEC4:** Individualized Education Program (IEP)  
Reviewed and updated at least annually
- DEC5:** Prior Written Notice  
Details decisions made in every meeting
- DEC6:** Parent Consent for Services  
Signed at initial placement (DEC3)
- DEC7:** Reevaluation  
Completed at least every three years

### Notes to Remember:

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### Resources:

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- ✓ Getting Started Binder, Idaho State Department of Education  
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### Statistic Sources:

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- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2015). 2014-2015 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina. <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/educatoreffectiveness/surveys/leaving/2014-15turnoverreport.pdf>

Presentation and handout created by Jordan McNeill, EC Program Specialist, Alamance Burlington Schools