

Heheman-Ketron, S. (2007). *An examination of career persistence among special education teachers in cross-categorical settings.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Cincinnati, Ohio.

Abstract

This qualitative study investigated reasons that experienced special education teachers of students in cross-categorical settings gave for remaining in the field. In-depth interviews were conducted with ten teachers who had been consecutively teaching special needs students in cross-categorical setting between five and twenty years in an effort to learn about their perceptions and attributes of their experiences and careers. It looked at how relevant factors and attributes had affected their decisions to remain in their positions. Data from these interviews were examined with the intent of discerning patterns, themes, and dispositions that might explain which factors these participants felt were critical to their retention. This study considered how these factors contributed to their overall career decision to remain teaching. The findings of this study indicated that these participants' decisions to remain in the profession of teaching special needs students in cross-categorical settings were strongly influenced by their ability to identify their career goals and objectives and their ability to identify and make personal and professional changes that positively affected not only them but their students. They identified certain personal characteristics that they felt made remain in this field. The study found seventeen dispositions that were consistent in the participant's answers and stories that indicated that the dispositions in combination led to their retention. It was these dispositions that participants indicated were necessary for being appropriately suited to the field of educating special needs students in cross-categorical settings. These dispositions were compared with the existing literature on special education teacher attrition and retention in an effort to establish a conceptual framework regarding the factors that affect a special education teacher's career decisions and retention.