

**INITIAL DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS FROM A  
SURVEY OF RECENTLY HIRED SPECIAL  
EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS IN OREGON**

**Conducted by:**

**The Oregon Special Education Recruitment & Retention Project**

funded by:

**The Office of Special Education  
Oregon Department of Education**

**March 8, 2002**

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# INITIAL SURVEY RESULTS

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## Section 1. Background

Over the past three years staff of the Oregon Special Education Recruitment and Retention Project have shared the results of national studies on the recruitment and retention of special educators at various workshops, conference presentations and on our website. A frequent question raised by participants, however, has been, “Do these results apply to Oregon?”

To answer this question, and to provide ongoing feedback and direction to the recruitment and retention efforts within Oregon, several studies are being initiated through the Oregon Special Education Recruitment and Retention Project. These studies are designed to address questions that should be useful in improving efforts to recruit and retain special educators into the profession, the state and specific positions.

### Focus of This Study

This initial study focuses on the experiences of special education professionals in their first or second year with a school district or Education Service District. Specifically, questions address:

- How individuals found their current position.
- Factors related to accepting the employment.
- Positive and negative experiences in the application, interview and hiring process.
- The incidence and helpfulness of induction activities.
- The incidence and helpfulness of initial support (transition) activities.
- The incidence and importance of ongoing support activities.
- Factors associated with leaving previous employment.
- Factors related to leaving current employment, Oregon, and the profession.

The population under study is **recently hired** (in their first or second year) special education professionals in Oregon agencies. This population is made up of five subpopulations of interest, including:

1. Newly licensed (first or second year) special educators prepared Oregon.
2. Newly licensed (first or second year) special educators prepared out-of-state.
3. Experienced Oregon special educators (i.e., three or more years of experience in the profession), but new to the agency.
4. Experienced out-of-state special educators (i.e., three or more years of experience in the profession), but new to Oregon.
5. Experienced professionals new to special education (e.g., psychologists, speech & language pathologists, therapists, regular educators) and new to the agency.

## **Developing the Survey**

This study was conducted using a survey containing both “forced-choice” and “open-ended” questions. All of the “forced-choice” items provided opportunities for respondents to add additional items and rate their helpfulness or importance.

The major topics to be addressed in the survey were identified by various stakeholder groups within Oregon. These stakeholder groups included local Special Education Administrators, Human Resource specialists, Special Educators, related service providers and Oregon Department of Education staff. Recruitment and Retention Project staff developed specific questions within each area by reviewing practices used throughout the state and by reviewing the literature related to recruiting and retaining special educators.

A draft instrument was reviewed and edited by the state Cooperative Personnel Planning Council (CPPC) who’s purpose is to advise the State Agency on activities and supports to ensure an adequate supply of qualified personnel including special education and related services personnel and leadership personnel to serve children and students with disabilities. (By authority of IDEA 300.381.)

The resulting draft of the survey was then field tested for content and format at the Oregon Department of Education Summer Institute held in July 2001 with practicing special education professionals. This field test resulted in additional revisions being made to sharpen the meaning of questions and enhance the readability and user friendliness of the final survey. The Associate Superintendent for Special Education conducted a final review of the survey.

## **Recruiting Participants**

In late November 2001 a letter and nomination form was sent to all district and ESD Directors of Special Education/Services in Oregon. This letter explained the purpose of the survey and provided directions for nominating individuals who met the criteria for inclusion in the study (in their first or second year with the agency). This nomination form was filled out and returned to the Recruitment and Retention Project. A total of 657 individuals meeting the criteria for inclusion were nominated by their districts and ESD’s. These 657 nominees were mailed survey packets that included: a Cover Letter describing the survey, the voluntary nature of the survey, informed consent procedures and how anonymity would be assured; the Survey; and, a self-addressed stamped return envelope.

These packets were mailed in mid-December and a total of 265 completed surveys were returned through late January 2002.

This report provides some initial descriptive results for the population of respondents as a whole. More in-depth analyses will be conducted in the coming months with sub-populations that should yield implications for policy and practice at the local level.