

Billingsley, B. (2005). *Cultivating and Keeping Committed Special Educators: What Principals and District Leaders Can Do*. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Corwin Press. 230 pp. \$32.95 Paperback.

For decades, school districts all over the country have struggled with a shortage of special education teachers. Many reasons have been suggested for the problem, but few solutions have been offered. The unique challenges special education teachers confront are frequently minimized by administrators and those in general education. It is thought that because special education teachers have smaller caseloads their work is easier. Contrary to this belief, special education teachers face intense pressure from a variety of sources; which if not adequately addressed leads to burnout. Ultimately, burnout results in special education teacher attrition which is not good for schools or students. As a response to the special education teacher shortage, *Cultivating and Keeping Committed Special Educators: What Principals and District Leaders Can Do* (Billingsley, 2005) provides sensible information on what can be done by school leaders to fight the hemorrhaging of special education teachers leaving the field.

Cultivating and Keeping Committed Special Educators: What Principals and District Leaders Can Do is a joint publication of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and Corwin Press. CEC has been in existence for over eighty years. Recognized internationally, CEC roles include “advocates for appropriate governmental policies, sets professional standards, provides continual professional development, advocates for newly and historically underserved individuals with exceptionalities, and helps professionals obtain conditions and resources necessary for effective professional practice” (retrieved July 15, 2006 from <http://www.idea practices.org>).

This book is separated into four sections with nine chapters. Every chapter starts with a quote related to the subject, and a chapter overview. Most chapters conclude with a chapter summary, selected readings germane to the topic, and a list of appropriate websites. The author synthesizes research from numerous sources developing a concise, easy to read guide for education leaders grappling with the special education teacher shortage. Use of realistic education scenarios combined with teacher quotes from previous research, generates reader interest, connecting real problems to real solutions. The author does not arrogantly assume to know everything on the topic, and incorporates mini-articles by scholars and educators in the field throughout the book. Additionally, there are twenty-six figures in the book illustrating such topics as teacher concerns, tips for administrators, and role descriptions. Administrators may find the *Resources* section in Part IV useful as it contains an inventory for teacher concerns, a principal support questionnaire, and other such materials that can be adapted for school use when needed.

Every district leader and school principal needs this book in their office. The format of the book facilitates easy access to information providing additional resources via the selected readings and websites sections. Authentic scenarios give insight into the perceptions of special education teachers associated with attrition, thereby imparting school leaders with pro-active remedies. The only fault that could be found with the book

was that it did not reference Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 when discussing the frequency of IEP meetings required by current law.

Cultivating and Keeping Committed Special Educators: What Principals and District Leaders Can Do is comprehensive and practical. This illustrated guide should be the first resource for any principal or district administrator when attempting to develop special education teacher retention practices, some of which could be generalized to any teacher. This book might be a good primer for special education student teachers preparing to go in the field as well; since it outlines the trials they may face when they are newly employed. To solve the decades old problem of special education teacher shortage, it is to our advantage to think beyond our current paradigms. Creating a committed special education workforce nationwide may require us to take time to reflect and implement the sound advice offered in this text.

Whitney Moores-Abdool, Florida International University
Jorine Voigt, Florida International University
Lydia Vidal, Florida International University