

SUPPORTING BEGINNING SPECIAL EDUCATORS: TIPS FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

CHALLENGE

- **Media:** Mr. Monroe recruits qualified special educators each year. He's recruited 50 in all, however 28 of those 50 are still teaching in special education in his district. In his exit interviews he hear about the lack of support that lead a couple of teachers leaving the field. (movie)

INITIAL THOUGHTS

- Anna and Michael—the two teachers who left—both described feeling overwhelmed in their new positions. Are their feelings typical of those experienced by other beginning special education teachers? Why or why not?
- What could administrators like Dr. Monroe be doing to support new hires like Christine, Kevin, and other beginning special educators during their early years?
- What were some of the problems that Anna and Michael experienced that might be unique to special education positions?

PERSPECTIVES AND RESOURCES

🎧 Page 1: The First Year

- **Media:** Lynn Boyer addresses the question of whether new special education teachers typically feel overwhelmed? (audio)

🎧 Page 2: Unrealistic Expectations

- **Media:** The story of Helen, a first-time special educator in a collaborative setting (movie)
- **Activity:** If you were the educational leader for Helen's school, what could you do to provide the appropriate support? (box)

🎧 Page 3: Reluctance to Seek Help

- **Media:** Lynn Boyer discusses another challenge that many beginning special educators face (audio)
- **Media:** Lora Hall explains what school leaders can do when beginning teachers are reluctant to seek help (audio)

🎧 Page 4: Adaptation and Learning

- **Media:** A beginning teacher describes how he entered his first year of teaching, still feeling like he had a lot to learn (audio)
- **Activity:** How do you think he might answer the following questions about his first months of school? (box)

🎧 Page 5: Problems

- Some of the challenges that beginning special educators face (bulleted list)
- *Link:* strategies for assisting beginning special educators
- **Activity:** Use the strategies listed above to brainstorm some ways that effective school leaders might have alleviated or prevented some of those problems (box)

🎧 Page 6: Instruction and Curriculum Issues

- New teachers frequently have major issues with creating effective instructional programs (bulleted list)
- **Media:** Lora Hall offers advice to principals (audio)

🎧 Page 7: Role Issues

- Typical role problems include... (bulleted list)
- **Media:** Coady's statement regarding the role issues he struggled with in his experience (audio)
- **Activity:** Questions (box with bulleted list and link)
 - *Link:* Strategies for Addressing Concerns of Beginning Special Educators
- **Media:** Darwin Mason explains one solution that has helped alleviate this problem at his school (audio)

🎧 Page 8: Collaboration Issues

- The need and desire to collaborate can bring about additional concerns (bulleted list)
- **Media:** Darwin Mason offers insights into initiating collaborative relationships for beginning special educators (audio)
- **Activity:** Questions (box with bulleted list)

🎧 Page 9: Support Issues

- Typical issues include... (bulleted list)
- **Media:** Darwin Mason explains how special educators may feel more isolated than general education teachers and how school leaders can provide support (audio)

🎧 Page 10: Induction Programs

- **Media:** Lynn Boyer discusses the effectiveness of induction programs (audio)

🎧 Page 11: Mentoring

- **Media:** Cynthia Griffin discusses key features of mentoring programs for beginning special education teachers (audio)
- *Link:* Mentoring Induction Principles Implementation Checklist
- **Media:** Lynn Boyer discusses the real Christine and the mentoring she received during her first year (audio)
- **Activity:** Develop a plan that you will use as a principal to support new special educators *or* evaluate your current mentoring program (box with links)
 - *Link:* Mentoring Induction Principles and Guidelines
 - *Link:* Mentoring Induction Principles Implementation Checklist

🎧 Page 12: Administrative Support

- Two major dimensions of administrative support (bulleted list)
- **Media:** Lynn Boyer gives examples of administrative support (audio)
- Ways that principals can support new teachers in their buildings (bulleted list)
- **Activity:** Review the solutions that you brainstormed for Helen (box)

🎧 Page 13: Professional Development

- Content of an induction program should... (bulleted list)
- **Media:** Cynthia Griffin discussed the types of professional development that beginning teachers find

most helpful (audio)

Page 14: References, Additional Resources and Information

- References
- Additional Resources and Information

ASSESSMENT

- List four typical concerns of beginning special educators. What are strategies that you can use to address these concerns in your school or district?
- Induction programs for beginning special education teachers should contain three components. What are they? Explain what should be included within each component. Which of these components are currently available in your district?

WRAP UP

- **Media:** Boyer and Lee describe the success of the real Christine's first year, which summarizes many of the factors needed to support new special educators (audio)
- Think back to your initial responses to the following questions (box)