

Voices from the Field:

Recruitment and Retention of Educational Diagnosticians

Michelle Loveless, Prosper ISD



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Agenda


- Introductions
- Describe the problem
- Review the research
- Study and Findings
- Possible Solutions
- Next Steps



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About Me

Middle School Gen Ed
Diagnostician
Special Education
Leadership
Current PhD Student



Who's in the audience?

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The problem

United States: Special Education

- 2009-10 to 2020-21: increased from 6.5 million (13%) to 7.2 million (11%)
- Fall 2020, overall enrollment in public schools was 3% lower while students receiving IDEA services was about 1% lower
- 2020-21, the category of disabilities with the largest reported percentage of students was specific learning disabilities.

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The problem

Texas: Special Education

2012-13

Primary Disability												
SL	ORF	SL	SL	OR	OR	LD	SL	SL	OR	OR	SL	SL
4,277	56,637	7,325	4,388	288	38,314	25,663	167,086	89,515	41,286	1,382	5,249	

2022-23

Primary Disability												
SL	ORF	SL	SL	OR	OR	LD	SL	SL	OR	OR	SL	SL
3,296	95,543	7,226	3,627	428	48,685	39,923	226,244	131,174	189,464	14	12,332	11,892

Texas Education Agency (2023)

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The problem

Teaching

- In the SPP August 2022 survey, 53 percent of public schools reported feeling that their school was understaffed entering the 2022-23 school year. Among these schools:
 - 65 % understaffed in special education teachers;
 - 43 % general elementary teachers an 15 to 33% other subject areas.
- Why?
 - coronavirus pandemic, limited number of candidates
 - Continuing of pre-pandemic trend: fewer entering education

National Center for Education Statistics. (2022)

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The problem

- Fast growth means more students
- Prior to COVID-19 8% attrition rate (Golding et al., 2014)
- October 2020, about one-quarter of respondents said that they were likely to leave the profession (Dilberti and Kaufman, 2020)

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Action Needed: Recruit & Retain	Big Question: How?
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What does research say?

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Diagnosticians

Extremely limited



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Related Educational Professions

Teachers

- Supportive administrator (Anseley et al, 2019; Cardina, 2016; Egnil, 2021)
- Relationships with fellow staff (Anseley et al, 2019; Egnil, 2021; Park et al, 2019; Reeves, 2018)
- Absence of RTW laws (Buckman, 2017)
- Work life balance (Clark et al, 2014)
- Similar race as supervisor (Grissom et al., 2011; Renzulli et al, 2011)
- Performance reviews (Good, 2017)
- Meaningful professional development (Robinson et al, 2019)
- Teaching load (Robinson et al, 2021)
- Autonomy (Booney, 2013)

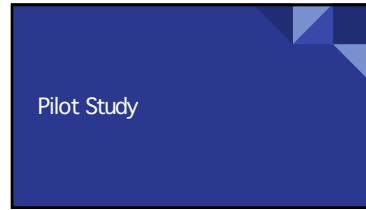
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Related Educational Professions

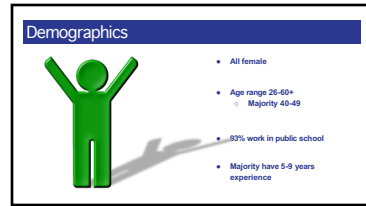
School Psychologists

- Creating the field of school psychology with motivation to work with children. Data indicates the actual time with children is not where the bulk of the work takes place (Werner et al., 2021)
- Possible factors leading to burnout
 - lack of materials and/or resources,
 - insufficient support from leadership
 - job roles that were not clearly defined
 - caseload concerns (both the number of students and the number of schools served).
- Administrative pressure (Bococo et al., 2016).
- Functioning as "typical education gatekeepers" (Bococo et al., 2016)
- Balancing the idea of what the job actually entails versus an idealized view of what they wish it to be will lead to improved job performance and job satisfaction (Werner et al., 2021).

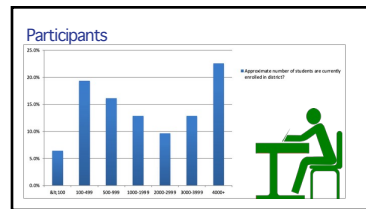
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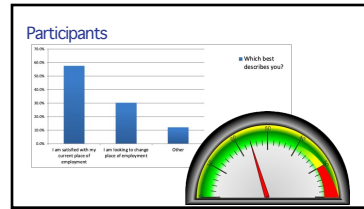
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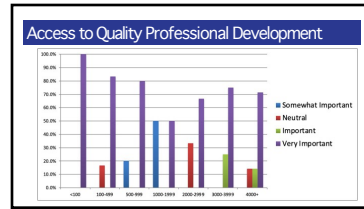
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- Methods**
- Completion of an anonymous online survey
 - Rank factors
 - Not important
 - Somewhat important
 - Neutral
 - Important
 - Very important
 - Optional open ended questions
- The slide features an icon of a pencil writing on a checklist with three items, the bottom one of which is checked.

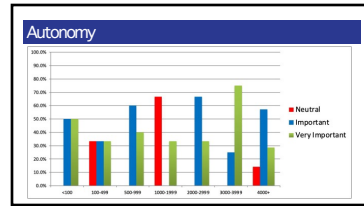
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Survey Responses

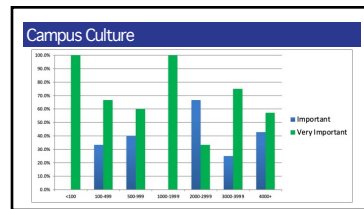
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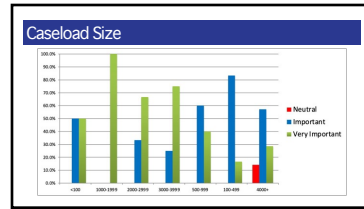
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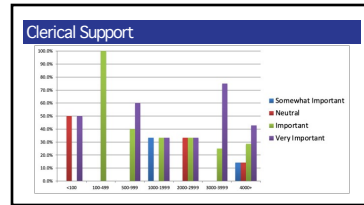
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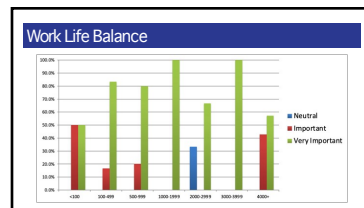
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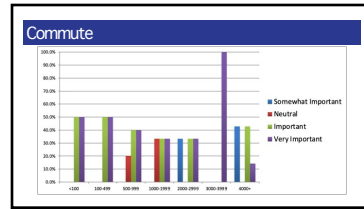
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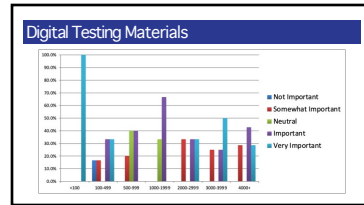
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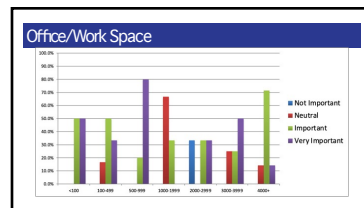
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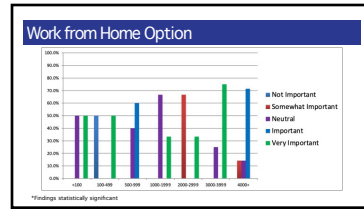
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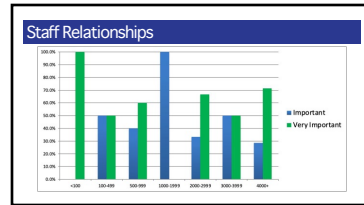
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Open-ended Questions

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Describe your most satisfying job experience

- Watching students achieve milestones through special education intervention that they may have otherwise not achieved
- access to the most updated test kits, and had a reasonable caseload.
- My most satisfying job experience working as an educational diagnostician was the year that I worked so well with my campus IC. We were just in sync and navigated that year, COVID and all, with grace, ease and fun. I felt respected as a professional and my campus colleagues and I were able to do the best for our students and families due to being such a strong team who loved and cared for one another. Additionally, I felt strong support from special education administration that year.
- Being included in school activities

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What do you consider to be most important when it comes to job satisfaction? How does this align with your current district?

- Respect for my work and provision of appropriate supports, materials, and space to practice effectively
- Cohesive team that is willing to learn and grow together
- Digs across the district maintain the same level of skills. It is also very important that things are done the same from campus to campus
- To have good working relationships with my team and to feel supported by my campus administration
- Continued learning and growth

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Times when you lacked job satisfaction

- My first year as a diagnostician I was very overwhelmed
- When I have had to work almost every night and weekend to complete reports and prepare for ARD meetings it is very defeating and causes burnout quickly.
- Inexperienced teachers
- I felt that I was not valued as an employee or a person
- I felt that I was not valued as an employee or a person
- I currently feel like an overpaid ARD facilitator
- Parents
- Misinformation from social media

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Possible Solutions	Campus Based & District Wide
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What advice would you give to	
<p>Campus Administrators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include the diagnostician in campus events • Seek understanding of special education processes • Have teachers complete information for ARDs or testing promptly • Trust and respect their expertise • Provide opportunities for us share our knowledge with the staff 	

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What advice would you give to	
<p>Central Administration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House diagnosticians in their campuses so that staff know who they are • Uniform guidance on procedures for both campus and evaluation staff • Communicate with staff frequently; if you don't know an answer to a question that is ok, just follow up once you have an answer • Please do not forget what it feels like to do this job. • Access to all needed materials • Be open to learn and have honest conversations with your staff, even if they are hard. Support your more experienced staff, not just the new ones. Be respectful and treat them as professionals. • Many times work needs to be done at night and on weekends to meet timelines- using this to count towards work days would be helpful. 	

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Where can we focus our attention

- Professional Development Opportunities
 - Regional Service Centers
 - Free Online Options
 - New to Field
- Campus Culture
- Work Life Balance
 - Time Studies
 - Clarity of duties
- Staff Relationships



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Next Steps

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Interested?

Want to have your district participate in further research?

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SCAN ME

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