ABSTRACT

To investigate novice career education teacher retention as it relates to participation in Missouri’s Career Education Mentoring Program, a multiple methods approach (quantitative and qualitative) to research was applied to this study. The quantitative phase investigated and established retention rates for two groups of career education (CE); those who participated in the two-year program ending the spring of 2006 and the spring of 2007. A baseline retention rate for non-CE teachers and the retention rate for CE teachers who did not participate in the program were used to make comparisons. The qualitative phase consisted of personal interviews with a purposeful sample of twenty (20) CE teachers who volunteered to participate in the study.

The findings for this study revealed that retention rates for the two groups of CE Mentoring Program participants investigated exceeded those for the baseline group, and for CE teachers who did participate in the program. Despite having specified problems with accountability and programmatic considerations, satisfaction with the program was high on measures of classroom usability of the information gleaned from program participation. When posed with the prospect of not having the CE Mentoring Program available to them, 100% of the interviewed CE teachers indentified a need for both the statewide CE Mentoring Program and in-district programs while positioning the CE Mentoring Program as a contributor to increased retention rates and an essential provider of career education program content, expertise, and the mentorship needed by new and returning teachers to be successful in the classroom.