

2012-01-01

Educational Leaders' Beliefs and Attitudes Regarding Core and Current Issues in Special Education

Josie Lucker Keffer

University of Texas at El Paso, jolucker@sbcglobal.net

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.utep.edu/open_etd



Part of the [Special Education Administration Commons](#), and the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lucker Keffer, Josie, "Educational Leaders' Beliefs and Attitudes Regarding Core and Current Issues in Special Education" (2012).
Open Access Theses & Dissertations. 2128.
https://digitalcommons.utep.edu/open_etd/2128

This is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UTEP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UTEP. For more information, please contact lweber@utep.edu.

EDUCATIONAL LEADERS' BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES REGARDING
CORE AND CURRENT ISSUES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

JOSIE LUCKER

Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations

APPROVED:

Rodolfo Rincones, Ph.D., Chair

John Daresh, Ph.D.

Richard Sorenson, Ed.D.

Helen Hammond, Ph.D.

Benjamin C. Flores, Ph.D.
Interim Dean of the Graduate School

Copyright ©

by

Josie Lucker

2012

EDUCATIONAL LEADERS' BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES REGARDING
CORE AND CURRENT ISSUES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

by

JOSIE LUCKER, B.A., M.P.A.

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

May 2012

Acknowledgements

As I come to the end of this end of this endeavor, it is time to acknowledge and thank all of the wonderful people who offered the encouragement, support and love that carried me along the way. First I would like to thank my parents William and Marie Lucker and the important role they played in my life.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to my committee chairperson, Dr. Rodolfo Rincones, I appreciated all of your patience and guidance every step of the way. I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. John Daresh, Dr. Helen Hammond, Dr. Richard Sorenson for their suggestions and support.

A big thank you to all my family, friends and co-workers who always listened to me, complain and still encouraged me to finish. To Michelle Ontiveros, who I was always contacting, at the last moment and she always managed to take care of any problem. To Athena Fester and Olympia Caudillo, without their help I would not have been able to fathom the methodical rules and regulations required at the beginning and at the end of the dissertation process. To my co-workers from the Homebound Department and Annex 2, with Socorro Independent School District, who were always there with a smile or a hug and told me that one day I would be finished (especially, Carol C). To Michael Ornelas, who patiently explained and demonstrated formatting basics and styles. To all my nephews (Joseph, Jaxon, Harrison, Mason & William) and nieces (Cassie, Alba, and Miriam), who reminded me that the world was still a fun and wonderful place, waiting to be explored.

Finally, I want thank my daughter, Sienna Marie, who was my inspiration throughout the many years of classes, research and writing, and to my husband Mike without whom this would not have come to fruition.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine education leaders' knowledge of core and current issues in special education and how this knowledge is acquired. The study also examined the educational leaders' beliefs and practices regarding collaboration, response-to-intervention, and inclusion. Finally, the study examined the social justice issues that arise with the responsibility to educate "all" students (FAPE).

An on-line survey was answered by 161 principals and assistant principals in an Education Service Center in West Texas. A limited understanding of current issues in special education was found among campus administrators. Especially, in the areas of learning and effective teaching practices such as universally designed lessons and the general education initiative of response-to-intervention. The majority of the respondents had no prior experience in special education, 46% had no experience with RTI; less than 50% reported having completed a course devoted to the administration of special education programs, special education issues and special education law. Almost half of the educational leaders (47.2%) indicated that their certification program "had not" prepared them to deal with special education issues.

Regarding the educational leaders' ethical outlook in dealing with students with disabilities and how they viewed their responsibility to educate students with disabilities, more than 90% believed that educational leaders were responsible for educating all students, included were students with disabilities. Yet only, approximately 60% were in agreement to include test scores of special education students on the campus accountability rating.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Tables	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	18
Chapter 3: Methodology	43
Chapter 4: Discussion of Results.....	48
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations	86
References.....	108
Appendix A.....	120
Appendix B	138
Appendix C.....	144
Vita... ..	149

List of Tables

Table 1: Gender * Title of educational position Crosstabulation	49
Table 2: Ethnicity * Title of educational position Crosstabulation	49
Table 3: Age range * Title of educational position Crosstabulation	50
Table 4: Experience as educational leader.....	51
Table 5: Experience teaching-general educational classroom.....	51
Table 6: Experience special education teacher.....	52
Table 7: Experience as Part of Individual Education Plan Team	52
Table 8: Experience pre-referral intervention team/RTI	53
Table 9: Percentage of Educational Administrators at Each Campus Level	54
Table 10: Percentages of Campus and Incidence Level of Students with Disabilities.....	54
Table 11: Percentage of campus' population with disabilities	55
Table 12: Provide Professional Development on Collaboration for "All" Teachers.....	57
Table 13: Create an Accepting Inclusive School Environment.....	57
Table 14: Program Evaluation Procedures to Assess Special Education Services.....	58
Table 15: Characteristics of Students with Disabilities	59
Table 16: Knowledge in Identifying the Principles of IDEA	60
Table 17: Disciplining Students with Disabilities	61
Table 18: Students with Disabilities are Entitled FAPE - TRUE.....	62
Table 19: Transportation as a Component of a Student's IEP - FALSE	62
Table 20: The Removal of a Student with a Disability - FALSE.....	63
Table 21: Students Do Not Need to Attend IEP Meetings re: Transition Services - FALSE	64
Table 22: Specific Accommodations Being Used During State Assessment. - FALSE	65
Table 23: Train Teachers to Develop Universally Designed Lessons.....	66
Table 24: Training Teachers in Research Based Best Practice Instructional Strategies	67
Table 25: Train Teachers how to Implement the Different Types of Inclusion Programs.....	67
Table 26: Provide Professional Development to Develop Strategies in General Education Setting.....	68
Table 27: Train Teachers in the Development of Alternate Assessments.....	69
Table 28: Evaluate Alternative Assessments for Students with Significant Disabilities	70
Table 29: Plan Transition Services for Students with Disabilities	70
Table 30: Provide Interventions and Monitor Student's Response-to-Interventions	71
Table 31: Train Teachers to Develop Universally Designed Lessons.....	72
Table 32: Train Teachers to Use Data Based Instructional Decisions and Monitoring	72
Table 33: Provide Materials for Pre-referral/RTI Teams	73
Table 34: Train Teachers in the Use of Research Based Instructional Strategies for	74
Table 35: Provide Professional Development to "All" Teachers on Collaboration	75
Table 36: Train SPED Teachers to Use Curriculum Modifications and Accommodations	75
Table 37: Train Teachers How to Implement the Different types of Inclusion.....	76
Table 38: Provide Models of How to Promote Participatory Inclusion	77
Table 39: Statements Regarding Facilitating Collaboration on Pre-referral/RTI Teams	79

Table 40: Courses Taken During Preparation Program.....81

Table 41: Information Received in Certification Program with Regard to Special Education81

Table 42: Principals’ Responses: What is Your Opinion Regarding82

Table 43: Principals’ Responses: Reply Based on Your Experiences.....83

Table 44: Assistant Principals’ Responses: What is Your Opinion Regarding.....84

Table 45: Assistant Principals’ Responses: Reply Based on Your Experiences85

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

The current educational environment is one of legislative, ethical and moral imperatives that states all children shall have a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). With the emphasis on special education inclusion and the responsibilities of educational leaders (principals and assistant principals) in the implementation of site-based special education programs, it becomes difficult to achieve these goals if educational leaders lack the experience or knowledge necessary to understand the needs and demands of students with unique learning styles and the special programs designed to serve them.

The research consistently shows that educators and families hold a strong expectancy that educational leaders have competence, knowledge, and ability to incorporate highly effective special education programs into the traditional educational program (Lake & Billingsley, 2000; Lange & Lehr, 2000; Seery, Davis, & Johnson, 2000; Tulbert, 1999). Furthermore, research (Behar-Horenstein & Ornstein, 1996; Lowe & Brigham, F.J., 2000; Osborne, DiMiatta, & Curan, 1993; Seery, Davis, & Johnson, 2000) has repeatedly substantiated the urgent need for educational leaders or campus administrators who are capable of coping with diverse populations and a ever-increasing range of educational needs. These skills are vital to educational leaders if schools are to ensure a successful learning experience for all students, especially those students with exceptionalities. The educational leader's attitude toward the added responsibility of special education is directly related to the amount of special education knowledge an educational leader has acquired (Elliott & Riddle, 1992; Hirth & Valesky, 1998; Monteith, 1998). Lowe and Brigham (2000) specifically cited that the principal's attitude toward special education would be a major factor in the efficacy of the overall special needs services provided students. These authors, further surmised that the principal's ability to supervise and implement all instructional programs would directly influence the overall quality of student learning as well as substantially affect the district's legal liabilities.

Addressing the need for both general understanding and specific expertise in the domain of students' and special learning needs, three specific areas of significance are noted in the literature (Villa, Thousand, Nevin, Malgeri, 1996; Welch, 1998; Osborne, DiMattia, & Curan, 1993). These included a) the ability to engage in collaborative partnerships, b) to develop collegial relationships between special and regular educators, and c) to support family involvement in the learning programs of students. It may be surmised that experts in the field believe that it is imperative for contemporary educational leaders to have a competent understanding of the special learning needs, instructional processes, and legal applications of the special programs arena. Without these competencies there are significant impacts on the campuses' teachers and students, as well as, the ethical issues that arise with the responsibility to educate all students. There is a growing need for instructional leaders to hold or acquire the skills necessary to supervise, implement, and evaluate all programs within their realm of responsibility. Yet, without adequate preparation, exposure, or formal training of some type, educational leaders are at a great disadvantage in serving special needs students and in meeting the mandated requirements allowing access to the general curriculum (Lake & Billingsley, 2000; Lange & Lehr, 2000; Seery, Davis, & Johnson, 2000; Tulbert, 1999).

Additionally, the Individuals with Disabilities ACT (IDEA) dictates strict compliance with providing appropriate services, following special education procedures and safeguards, and in implementing the instructional program. Failure to comply with special education laws and the proper implementation of programs may result in serious financial sanctions, lawsuits, due process hearings that may place crippling restraints on an educational leaders' administrative authority. These mandated requirements include: (1) Access to the general curriculum as stipulated in the provision of Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). (2) The continuum of services in an appropriate least restrictive environment (LRE). (3) The use of research-based interventions in the process of assisting students with learning difficulties or in determining qualification for special education, and (4) The discipline of students with disabilities. FAPE, LRE, and the discipline of students with disabilities have become daily challenges in the provision of access for educational leaders (Norlin & Gorn, 2006). While taking an active role in providing a full continuum of services for students with disabilities, educational leaders are

additionally charged with proper interpretation of special education law. When the responsibility and interpretation of the law is inaccurately or not assumed by the educational leader with regard to students with disabilities, the repercussions from an extensive lawsuit would then be placed on the school district (Yell, 1998). A deficiency in the knowledge of school law for an educational leader may result in litigious consequences (Doverspike & Cone, 1992). It has become imperative that educational leaders have a conceptual understanding of the current interpretations of special education law with an emphasis on special needs program outcomes (Norlin & Gorn, 2006; Yell, 1998). Educational leaders who lack knowledge of special education law and regulations, exhibit ineffective leadership skills and will often make poor decisions regarding students with disabilities (Smith & Colon, 1998). A study by Clash (2006), of stressors found in duties of school principals, cited that working with students with disabilities within legal guidelines was a high source of stress. Educational leaders' inadequate preparation likely plays a major role in the stress associated with their duties regarding special education. Inadequate preparation also is associated with financial sanctions and increased involvement in lawsuits for school districts.

Statement of the Problem

When discussing the issues of special needs students, the programs designed to serve those students, and the legislative initiatives mandating extensive reports on student progress, the responsibility is placed directly in the hands of educational leaders. Campus administration preparation programs, must include both the interpretation of special education law, as well as, the understanding of the impact it makes on education policy and practice. Yet, research (Kaye, 2002; Valesky & Hirth, 1992) and anecdotal data indicate that campus administrators may not have the experience base or practical knowledge to adequately meet these requirements. Nor do educational leaders traditionally receive combined training in how to implement these shared responsibilities (Cochrane and Westling, 1977; Council for Exceptional Children, 2002; Monteith, 1998). O'Leary (2002) states that discrepancies exist regarding the common body of knowledge and skills that should be addressed in campus administration preparation programs and these discrepancies result in the failure to prepare educational leaders adequately to develop special education knowledge and competencies. This failure

to meet professional expectations and roles manifests itself as a “preparation gap” (Farley, 2002). That is a discrepancy between what is taught in a preparation program and what is needed to actually perform the skills and competencies in a professional role. Johnson & Duffett (2003) have suggested that training programs, professional development curriculum, and field-based learning opportunities should be provided for the aspiring and practicing principals and assistant principals to address the complex and fluid processes associated with special programs and students with specific learning needs.

In order to design appropriate learning opportunities, for all students, it would be extremely beneficial for educational leaders to have a knowledge base of special education law and the ability to analyze the performance of special education teachers and programs on their campus, that could include a pattern of experiences, skill sets, and/or responsibilities that are clearly defined. Being able to identify this definitive pattern of essential responsibilities and attendant expertise would be beneficial to all stakeholders involved in the educational program of students with special learning needs. Burrello (1992) placed a basic knowledge of special education competencies into three domains: (a) basic knowledge of special education, (b) a working knowledge of special education law, and (c) a working knowledge of best special education teaching practices. A principal’s ability to supervise special education programs requires a basic knowledge of special education to include an understanding of (1) professional practice and collaboration, (2) legislation, current issues in special education, and court actions, (3) characteristics of students with disabilities, and (4) educating the school community about how to teach and assess students with learning differences. (Goo, Schwann, and Boyer, 1997; Council for Exceptional Children, 2002; Monteith, 1998) Therefore, the knowledge of special education policies and procedures is necessary to all campus administrators, since non-adherence to these policies and procedures may result in non-program compliance, neglect of the educational needs of students with special needs and legal consequences. Yet, Wakeman, Browder, Flowers, & Ahigrim-Deizel (2006) reported in a study of 362 secondary principals 45.9% of campus administrators reported that they had not taken any special education courses during their preparation program and 27.8% reported that they had taken only one course.

Educational leaders have an increasingly complex role for providing leadership at the school level, requiring them to be more than just operational managers. Shellard (2003) states that research from the past decade have proven that effective educational leaders need to be instructional leaders as well as managers of the school. Research has indicated that educational leaders who focus on instructional issues, provide high quality professional development for teachers and administrative support for special education, produce enhanced outcomes not only for students with disabilities but also for other students at risk for failure according to Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff (2000). Educational leaders create an environment that provides even and consistent openings for the growth and development of all students. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between educational leadership and school environment, indicating an indirect relationship to achievement. Educational leadership does have an indirect effect on school outcomes. Hallinger and Heck (1998) conducted a literature review of the effect of the principal on school outcomes over a 15-year period. Results indicated that educational leadership does have an indirect effect on school outcomes. This effect was positive when the principal was involved in framing the purpose and goals of the school, provided transformational leadership for staff, encouraged parental involvement, was involved in classroom supervision, and established a positive school climate and culture. Overall, these studies show educational leaders do have an effect on student achievement.

Not only does research highlight the importance of the educational leader's role, but also legislation has also mandated changes in their performances expectations. Special education is one area addressed in several key pieces of legislation influencing principal performance. The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Education Act (IDEIA, 2004) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) require educational leaders to analyze the performance of special education students, teachers, and programs at their sites. Another result of limited special education competencies is the educational leader's ability to provide adequate supervision and support of the special education teacher. Special education teachers and teachers serving in inclusion settings often struggle without administrative support with serious behavior management problems especially, with emotionally disturbed students or find it difficult to have enough time to remain in compliance with the paperwork connected to response

to interventions reports and Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Clash (2006) indicates that it is the lack of supervision and assistance from educational leaders that can lead to special education teacher “burnout.” This contributes to the attrition in a field that already experiences a shortage of teachers. DiPiola and Walther-Thomas (2002) state that the shortage of special education teachers is now connected to a principal’s ability to provide instructional leadership. Patterson, Marshall & Bowling (2000) are now emphasize the role of educational leaders’ role in effective special education supervision.

Educational leaders with limited competencies often limit their responsibilities in special education. An example is student misconduct. Education leaders often resort to suspension. The Honig v. Doe Supreme Court decision in 1998 ruled that if misconduct is related to the student’s disability then alternatives to suspension must be used. The process for determining this is “Manifestation Determination.” “Manifestation Determination” is determined by using the Functional Behavior Assessment. This assessment determines the purpose the behavior of a student with disabilities. This concept is one example of the knowledge base that maybe missing in the administration preparation program.

IDEIA introduced several new reforms in the education of students with disabilities by mandating inclusion of students in state and district assessments, the provision of access to the general curriculum and the use of research-based interventions in the process of assisting students with learning difficulties or determining qualification for special education. As written in NCLB (2001), educational leaders are held accountable for the adequate yearly progress of all students within their schools including those with disabilities. However, Farkas, Johnson, and Duffett (2003) found that 48 percent of the principals surveyed in 2001 through 2003 identified the requirement to demonstrate adequate yearly progress by special education and ESL (English as a Second Language) students, as unreasonable. As student annual performance scores are disaggregated by disability status, the impact of the performance of students with disabilities is having serious consequences for students, school, and educational leaders.

These legislative acts have also encouraged a rethinking of what is the least restrictive environment (LRE) for many students with disabilities. In the 25th Annual Report to Congress (2005) the Office of Special Education Programs identified that special education students are more likely to be educated in general education classrooms as a result of IDEA 1997 and even more so with IDEIA 2004. This makes it more critical that educational leaders become knowledgeable about the needs of special education students as more general education teachers will need guidance and support for teaching all students. To provide support for meeting needs of all students, the educational leader should serve as the instructional leader. Several experts have identified the importance of the instructional role of the educational leader (Patterson, Marshall, & Bowling, 2000 and Sage & Burello, 1994.) DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003) stated that while educational leaders do not need to be special education experts, educational leaders do need fundamental knowledge and skills to perform essential special education leadership tasks. The National Association of Elementary School Principals and the Council of Exceptional Children in *Implementing IDEA (2001)* stated that educational leaders are better prepared to provide effective instructional support if they understand IDEA, the needs of students with disabilities, and the difficulties that face teachers who work with these students. This also enables them to help all students be successful and makes them more effective educational leaders.

The need for professional development for educational leaders in special education has also well been established in the literature (Collins & White, 2001; Dipaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Goor, Schween, & Boyer, 1997; Monteith, 2002; Sage & Burrello, 1994; Smith & Colon, 1998; Valente, 2001; Valesky & Hirth, 1992). Competent educational leaders will have a fundamental knowledge of special education and also have knowledge of current issues in special education. Fundamental knowledge is that knowledge which is core to the basic understanding of the functioning and history of special education and the students it serves. Experts have defined what elements that are to be included in the fundamental knowledge of special education (Cochrane and Westling, 1977; Council for Exceptional Children, 2002; Monteith, 1998). When combined, these expert recommendations suggest educational leaders need an understanding of: (a) professional practice and collaboration, (b) characteristics of

students with disabilities, (c) legislation and court actions, and (d) educating the school community about how to teach and assess students with learning differences.

The present practices in education, the writing of policy and the direction of research development as are all driven by current issues. Current issues in special education have identified three themes: (a) accountability that includes the outcomes for students with disabilities; (b) early identification of at-risk students to include research-based instructional interventions; (c) educating the school community in the use of research-based instructional interventions and (d) appropriate access to the general curriculum (Berdine's 2003 and CEC Today 2001-2003).

Therefore, educational leaders do need fundamental knowledge and the knowledge of current issues as part their skill set in order to perform essential special education tasks. Research, (Kaye, 2002; Algozzine, et al, 2001; Monteith, 1998; Valesky & Hirth, 1992) though has demonstrated that many principals are receiving little to no formal pre-service or in-service training. Many states do not require course work in special education to earn a principal's license (Kaye, 2002; Valesky & Hirth, 1992). Valesky and Hirth (1992) found that only five states had a specific course dedicated to special education as a part of their licensing program for administrators. Ten years later, Crockett, (2002) in a survey of college requirements found that only nine states required students meet competencies in special education and principal ship, only a special education introductory course was required by eighteen states, and for twenty states there were no special education course requirements to obtain licensure as a school principal.

Monteith (1998) surveyed 120 administrators in South Carolina and found that while 75% had no formal training in special education, 90% indicated that formal special education training was needed to be an effective leader. DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) surveyed educational leaders in Virginia to obtain a view of what the principal ship entailed and found out that 75% of the principals identified special education law and implementation as the problem area.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the comprehensive knowledge base of educational leaders as related to core and current issues in special education and how this knowledge is acquired. The study also examines the impact of educational leaders' special education preparation and the ethical issues that might arise with the responsibility to educate all students, as well as, the educational leaders' beliefs and practices regarding collaboration, response-to-intervention, and inclusion.

Current issues and fundamental knowledge are two sections of special education knowledge on which this study will focus. Current issues will include the four indicators; (a) accountability that includes the outcomes for students with disabilities; (b) early identification of at-risk students (c) educating the school community in the use of research-based instructional interventions; and (d) appropriate access to the general education curriculum. Fundamental knowledge has four indicators (a) professional practice and collaboration, (b) characteristics of students with disabilities, (c) legislation and court actions, and (d) educating the school community about how to teach and assess students with learning differences.

Another area of significance of this study is the ethical issues that are an educational leaders' responsibility to educate all students on their campuses'. Additionally, are the administration preparation programs structured to provide instruction to educational leaders so that they are able to effectively educate all students. The education of all students is the ultimate goal of education leaders.

The study was designed to contribute to the practical field of administration on several levels. First, educational leaders may be able to use outcome data as a starting point of reflection for their own professional development needs in special education understanding. Administrators may also be able to advocate for change within their system or state for their needs. Second, exceptional children (special education) directors at the state and local levels may be able to design and implement more poignant and relevant professional development to meet the needs of the administrators within their jurisdiction. Results of the study may allow directors to prioritize needs and include educational leaders' in-service as a part of their comprehensive staff development plans. Finally, higher education institutions and state

licensing boards may use results from this study, along with their own program evaluation data, to consider any restructuring is needed for the requirements of becoming an administration.

Research Questions:

1. To what extent do educational leaders understand core or fundamental issues in special education?
2. To what extent do educational leaders understand current issues in special education?
3. What are the beliefs and practices of educational leaders regarding facilitating collaboration, pre-referral intervention/RTI teams and serving students with IEPs in the general education classroom?
4. To what extent do educational leaders feel that their preparation programs adequately prepared them to address special education issues on their campuses?
5. To what extent do educational leaders believe that their responsibility to educate all students, including those students with disabilities is an issue of social equity?

Delimitations

The population of all educational leaders of the independent schools districts in Region 19 in the State of Texas, were sent e-mails invitations to participate in the study. The sample was small for a survey, a 30% response rate (Dillman, 2000). The data allows for generalization in south-west Texas but, may be limited in its application to other areas of the state and country.

Limitations

The study was cross-sectional, which does not allow for in-depth data collection. Surveys provide information that is self reported and not validated by observations. As a self-report, potential for unintentional bias may occur and the data may not be an accurate representation of the educational leaders' actual knowledge (Dillman, 2000.) For example, campus administrators may have less knowledge than they realized. They may also have know more about manifestation determination and

functional behavioral assessments, but were not familiar with the term. Additionally, respondents self-selected whether to complete the survey.

Multiple e-mails were sent with the invitation to participate, a link to the survey, an opt-out link, the actual number of participants is unknown, as filters may have blocked the e-mails or sent them to the “junk” folder without the participants’ knowledge.

Assumptions

There were several assumptions in this study. The first assumption was educational leaders had knowledge of the operational process of e-mails and e-mailing. The next assumption was that most schools have students with IEPs, therefore educational leaders can answer questions about serving students with disabilities in both general and special education settings on their campuses. The final assumption was that campus administrators have knowledge of and influence all campus activities, even if special education supervisors and instructional specialists are involved in the collaborative process.

Definition of Terms

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): It is a measure of the year-to-year class achievement on the state assessment system. States develop target starting goals for AYP and the state must raise the bar in gradual increments so 100% of students in the state are proficient on state assessments by the 2013-14 school year. AYP applies to each district and school in the state. The exception being No Child Left Behind (NCLB) sanctions for schools that do not make AYP for two or more years in a row only apply to those districts and schools that receive Title I funds.

Auditory Impairment: The term used to describe hearing impairments which cause communication problems and other developmental and educational needs (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, p. 68).

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): Teacher activities designed to promote positive behaviors within students. Self-discipline is the goal of behavior in. All activities, being based on each child’s behavioral needs. The objectives of a BIP are to increase appropriate pro-social behaviors and to decrease disruptive and antisocial behaviors.

Collaboration: Two or more people working together towards a common goal. People work together voluntarily, assume equal responsibility, and share decision making (Friend & Cook, 2007).

Competency-Based Training: A set of related knowledge, skills, and attitudes that affect the role of responsibility of one's job and that is measured against standards that can be improved on with training and professional development.

Continuum of Services: Federal regulations state that:

Each public agency shall ensure that a continuum of alternative placements is available for special education and related services to meet the needs of children with disabilities;

The continuum must include the alternative placements listed in the definition of special education for example, instruction in regular, special classes, and instruction in hospitals and institutions; Supplementary services (to include resource rooms and itinerant instruction) must be provided in conjunction with regular class placement (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, p.76).

Due Process: "The legal procedures and requirements of the federal regulations and the state regulations protecting the rights of students with disabilities. It includes the written notices that need to be provided to parents and written consent of the parents to evaluation and services provided for their child." (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, p.103).

Education Foundations: "A cross-disciplinary study of education that includes schooling, or a cultural process grounded in the social institutions, process, and ideas that characterize particular cultures." (Butin, D.W., 2005, p.7).

Education of all Handicapped Children Act: "The 1975 federal regulation that assured children with disabilities a free and appropriate public education and provided the states with federal funding to assist them in providing that education." (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, p.8).

Emotionally Disturbed (Emotional Disturbance): "The term emotional disturbance is used to describe a condition marked by one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and will, to a significant degree, adversely affect a child's educational performance:

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors;
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression;
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

The term may include a number of psychiatric disorders; however, social maladjustments is not considered emotional disturbance, unless the other symptoms are present as well.” IDEA [300(7)9(c)(5)].

Evaluation Report: “A written report that summarizes the findings of the multidisciplinary evaluation team” (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, p.71).

Free and Appropriate Public Education: “Special education and related services that are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge to the parents, and also that meet the standards of the state education department. Special education and related services must be provided in conformity with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) as required by IDEA.” (National Center for Learning Disabilities, Inc., 2006.)

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA): “A problem solving process for addressing student behavior. FBA relies on a variety techniques and strategies to identify the reasons for a specific behavior and to help IEP teams select interventions that directly address the problem behavior.” (National Center for Learning, Inc., 2006.)

General Education Curriculum: “The same curriculum as that established for students without disabilities.” (Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose and Jackson, p.10, 2002.)

Inclusion: “The meaningful participation of students with disabilities in general education classrooms and programs” (Bateman & Bateman, 2001).

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A written statement for each child with a disability that is developed by parents and school staff to ensure that students with disabilities are provided appropriate special education and related services and is reviewed, and revised according to the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): IDEA, was originally enacted by Congress in 1975, to make sure that children with disabilities had the opportunity to receive a free and appropriate public education. The law has been revised over the years. The most recent amendments were passed in 2004 by Congress, final regulations were published in 2006. National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA): The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act signed by President Bush on December 3, 2004.

Integrated: The merging of special and general education into a single educational system.

Knowledge Base: Specific information that is learned in an educational field.

Least Restrictive Environment: To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are to be educated with children who are not disabled.

Manifestation Determination: A procedure all parties utilize to review events of school infractions or misconduct (cumulative ten day rule) for the purpose of determining whether the infraction is a result of the student's disability.

Mainstreaming: To maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities should be educated with children who have no disabilities.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB): The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) of 1965. NCLB significantly raises the expectations for states and local school districts by requiring that all students will meet or exceed standards in reading and mathematics by the 2013-2014 school year.

Other Health Impairment: “Having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment that is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and adversely affects a child’s educational performance.” United States Department of Education, (2005) (p.2).

Preparation Gap: The gap between what has been taught in a preparation program and the competencies and skills that need to be developed in order to successfully perform the job.

Pre-Referral Intervention: Interventions delivered in the student’s regular classroom to improve learning before the student is referred for a formal special education evaluation.

Procedural Safeguard: Those provisions in the Individuals with Disabilities Act which protect student’s and parent’s rights regard to a free and appropriate education (FAPE).

Professional Development: Education and training implemented during employment to provide additional knowledge or advance existing skills.

Related Services: Support services that are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education. Related services include speech-language pathology and audiology services, physical and occupational services, transportation and health services.

Response-To-Intervention (RTI): It is a three-tiered model of interventions where students are continually monitored for progress. The main features of RTI are high quality research-based instruction and interventions, universal screenings, and progress monitoring (Bradley, Danielson, Doolittle, 2005). The purpose of RTI is to identify students at-risk of failure so that interventions are provided as early as possible (Vaughn & Fuchs, (2003).

Site-Based Management: A strategy to improve education by transferring authority and responsibility for decision-making from the central office to the school site.

Speech or Language Impairment: A communication disorder, such as impaired articulation, a language impairment, or voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. United States Department of Education, (2005) p.2.

Standards(Educational): "Educational standards define the knowledge and skills students should possess at critical points in their education and career. Standards serve as a basis of educational reform across the nation's educators and policy makers respond to a clear definition of desired outcomes of schooling and a way to measure student success in terms of outcomes." (National Research Council, 2001.)

Student with a Disability or Disabled Student: "A properly evaluated child who has 'intellectual challenges', a hearing impairment which includes deafness, a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment that includes blindness, emotional disturbance, an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, or other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, by reason there of needs special education and related services." (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, p.67).

Visual Impairment: The term used to describe visual impairments which cause communication problems and other developmental and educational needs (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, p. 68).

Summary

This chapter introduced the problem of the lack of special education preparation for campus administrators or educational leaders in their administrative preparation programs. Effective educational leaders should have a basic knowledge of special education, a working knowledge of special education law and a working knowledge of special education best teaching practices. This knowledge base is composed of two sections, fundamental knowledge (to include special education law) and current issues in special education. The literature points to the fact that, despite the passage of IDEA more than thirty years ago, preparation programs for campus administrators have not addressed or developed the competencies in special education needed for the graduates to be effective educational leaders (principals or assistant principals) at the campus level. Inadequate preparation programs, has the potential to dramatically affect not only the education of students with disabilities but also in financial

and legal costs to ‘out of compliance’ campuses and their school districts and in the campus administrators’ role as instructional leaders. The chapter ends with the definitions of concepts and specific terms relevant to special education and educational leadership.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter presents empirical literature, theoretical perspectives, and expert opinion from the fields of campus administration and special education. Educational leaders are held accountable for the progress of all students on their campuses, there is a need for campus administrator preparation programs to address both what research indicates as important, as well as, what educational leaders report as lacking in their knowledge base. Also, discussed in this chapter are three sources of professional opinion: 1. Cochrane and Westling (1997), what knowledge and practices are needed by educational leaders to make mainstreaming successful; 2. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) (2002), what the core knowledge and skill areas that are required by beginning special educators and 3. Montheith (1998), that formal training was required in special education for educational leaders to become effective leaders. These three professional perspectives overlap five areas of knowledge for educational leaders. These five areas are: 1.) Professional practice to include collaboration and reflection; 2.) the historic responsibility of educational leaders to provide resources for all teachers the obtain knowledge to teach all students; 3.) characteristics of disabilities that include the understanding of the evolution of definitions, as well as, the implications of being labeled (by your disability); 4.) knowledge of legislation that entails both the historical and recent enactments and 5.) knowledge of learning differences.

Review of History/The Legal Basis for Special Education

Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Act, was enacted in 1975. This is the federal law that guarantees a free and appropriate education for all children. (Education for All Handicapped Act of 1975.) Before this act, children with disabilities were educated in private schools outside of school districts, special education centers, or children with disabilities received no education at all. The responsibility for students with disabilities was given to special education directors and special education principals. This meant that students with disabilities did not attend the neighborhood schools but schools outside of the general school population and therefore the neighborhood campus administrators had little or no contact with them.

Even though the Education for All Handicapped Act of 1975 was law, its' implementation was difficult as many school districts were not equipped to meet the needs of this new school population. Although allowed to attend schools in their neighborhoods, students with disabilities placement did not encourage involvement with the general education population or the general education curriculum.

It was during these early years of the Education for All Handicapped Act that a separate system of special and general education was established. This system took the responsibility for special education administration from the hands of campus level administrators and placed it into the hands of district-level administrators (Lashley, 2007). Since, students with disabilities brought with them a host of problems and needs with which neighborhood principals were not familiar, the principals easily ceded their responsibility for educating this population to district special education supervisors or other educational specialist.

The reauthorization of the Education for All Handicapped Act, Individuals with Disabilities Act Education of 1997 (IDEA), reinforced the legal concept of a free and appropriate education (FAPE) for all students with disabilities, along with rights called procedural safeguards that were designed to protect the rights of students with disabilities and their parents or guardians. Parents now demanded placements (Least Restrictive Environment or LRE) for their children that decreases the isolation of students with disabilities from their non-disabled peers. "This legal concept of providing specially designed instruction for students with disabilities in settings that allowed them to be educated with their non-disabled peers, is referred to as the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)" (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, p.69). A version of this concept was referred to as the "Inclusion Movement." The "Inclusion Movement" indicates it is the limited access to general education curriculum and not the mere presence of the disability that is a reason for the poor outcomes of students with disabilities (Berres, et al., 1996.) This is one reason, proponents of the Inclusion Movement emphasize that specially designed instruction must occur in the general education setting whenever possible.

In the 1980's there is apparent shift toward an emphasis in special education duties for principals. This shift was accelerated by the reauthorization of IDEA in 1997 (DiPaola and Walther-

Thomas, 2003). The educational leader became not only responsible for supervision of special education programs on their campuses but the law also mandated the practice of placing the students with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Patterson et al. (2000) also cites that the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA that required students to participate in state testing and accountability programs. Added to this is the trend towards site-based management in the late 1980's and 1990's all had a direct impact on the campus leader's responsibility for special education programs. Prior to this period, according to Patterson et al. (2000), the special education organization was seen as a district-wide administrative function. Campus administrators must now pay attention to federal and state special education guidelines, as they manage interrelated parts that range from allocating classroom space, responding to parent concerns, hiring and assigning special education personnel to ensuring that accommodations such as grab bar are properly installed.

According to the report of the Council for Exceptional Children (2001), special education is no longer a segregated setting with social isolation of both students and teachers or a "placement option" but should be an integrated system of academic supports designed to help students with disabilities receive their education in the LRE.

Not only has the view of special education changed but the passage of new education laws have also had a significant impact on special education in the public school setting. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) has set new and more rigid educational standards for schools, as well as, accountability standards through standardized testing. NCLB required that students with disabilities scores be included in the standards and accountability measures. Before NCLB many students were exempted from standardized testing or their results were removed from the population. Now students with disabilities must meet educational standards and their results have the same impact as any other student's on the total district and school results. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is now a standard that the entire school population must meet. Students with disabilities are now fully integrated into the assessment of the school's progress. Allbritten et al. (2004) cite No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as law not just for the general education student population but a law that indicates the commitment of the

federal government to ensure that students with disabilities will receive meaningful access to the general education curriculum.

In spite of many years of special education legislation there is evidence of the continued practice of educational leaders to isolate the needs of students with disabilities from the needs of the general school population. In some instances, special education is still not recognized as an important part of the general education process. Recently, there have been attempts to emphasize an integrative relationship between special and general education processes (Board of Education, New York City, 2004). Key to improving special education preparation for campus administrators is collaborative strategies that integrate general and special education. Boscardin (2007) suggests the use of evidence-based practices will help educational leaders develop the needed skills to address the needs of all students on their campuses. An educational practice that includes the inclusive administrative processes is the Response to Intervention Model. Response to Intervention (RTI);

“...integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral problems...schools use data to identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions and adjust the nature of those interventions depending on a student’s responsiveness, and identify students with learning disabilities or other disabilities” (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2010).

Changing Landscape for Educational Leaders/Core and Current Issues in Special Education

Across the United States, more than 20,000 administrators hold the primary responsibility of leading, supervising, and managing the delivery of special education and related services in state departments and local school systems (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). The increased demand for their services exceeds the adequate supply of candidates who are well prepared to lead instruction for diverse students in more effective, supportive, and inclusive ways. Some states have loosened requirements for specialized licensure to increase the supply of educational leaders, and in some school districts, principals or their assistants have been hired as directors of special education (Lashley & Boscardin, 2003).

The landscape of school leadership in general is also changing. Partly, in response to the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), campus administrators are assuming greater responsibility for ensuring that students who have disabilities have access to the general education curriculum with appropriately intensive instruction and supports, and for monitoring their progress in district and state assessments (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2002). New provisions in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) place a premium on the leadership of interdisciplinary, problem-solving teams prior to and during evaluations to determine a student's eligibility for special education. Statutory changes, such as, the re-authorization of IDEA to Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act (IDEIA) and NCLB also pose higher expectations for administrators to build trust and negotiate conflicts as they participate with parents and other professionals in the delivery of special education services. Accountability, becomes more challenging for school leaders who describe the responsibility for administering special education as a vexing concern (Kochan, Jackson, & Duke, 1999).

The practice of special education administration has been described as occurring at the intersection of special education implementation and educational leadership (Lashley & Boscardin, 2003), busy crossroads where traffic rules and lane patterns change frequently. However, instead of being practiced at the crossroads where these disciplines intersect and continue on in different directions, the practice of special education administration, at the campus level might be described as occurring at the interface where these disciplines overlap, using the word interface to mean the space where interactions occur among different processes or systems. Imagined in this way, negotiating interactions at the interface of special education and educational leadership comprises the work of educational leaders who are responsible for ensuring that students who have disabilities get what they need to learn, and that their teachers receive the support they require to do their job (Crockett, 2004). Negotiating these professional interactions is challenging because, educating students who have exceptional needs poses dilemmas about differences in learning styles for which there are no risk-free or uncomplicated solutions (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005).

As the practice of campus administration moved from a compliance model to a locally delivered instructional or site-based model, administrators have wrestled with two questions: “Who is responsible for special education at different levels within a school system?” and “How are leadership tasks and functions accomplished to support successful learning for all students, especially those who have disabilities?” These questions resonate with recent scholarship that conceptualizes leadership as being both the process and the product of engaging in complex social interactions that influence human activities (Watson & Scribner, 2005). The concept of distributed leadership provides a useful perspective in exploring the balance of leadership responsibilities for special education across principals, assistant principals, and teachers within schools, and administrators and supervisors across school districts.

Rather than viewing leadership as vested only in administrators, a distributed perspective views instructional leadership as an interdependent activity engaged in by multiple personnel to improve teaching and learning within their community (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Looking at what people do, rather than emphasizing the roles they play within an organization, focuses attention on how practices supporting special education are enacted by formal and informal leaders, including administrators and teachers (Bays and Crockett, 2007). Although instructional leadership practices might be distributed, administrative authority remains highly influential. According to Spillane et al. (2001), “the way in which school leaders enact leadership tasks may be what is most important when it comes to influencing what teachers do” (p. 24).

To address the changing landscape of leadership, the Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education (COPSSE) at the University of Florida, a project funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, assembled an expert panel to develop research questions that addressed the supply of and demand for campus level administrators, and the role of educational leaders in providing leadership for special education. Stakeholders then rated the practical importance of the research questions and identified several as priorities for future research: (a) how instructional leadership at the district and campus levels affects the performance of teachers and the outcomes of their high and low achieving students? (b) How leadership preparation and professional

development programs affect the capacity of administrators to meet the needs of all students? and (c) How school systems can both attract and retain high quality teachers and administrators? (IDEA Partnership & COPSSE, 2005).

Few studies provide descriptions or explanatory theories for how instructional leadership addressing special education occurs in schools. Bays and Crockett (2007) used grounded theory methods to examine the supervisory practices used by principals, directors of special education, and teachers in providing for the delivery of specially designed instruction, the needs that will be addressed by these practices, and the conditions that caused instructional supervision to be conducted as it will be in elementary schools with limited resources for support.

Billingsley (2005) explored teacher leadership in special education, discussing the emergence of new teacher roles in schools, the roots and meanings of teacher leadership, and possible benefits when teachers engage in school leadership. She described how teachers lead through school-wide collaboration and district-wide professional development; through their work as clinical faculty in Professional Development Schools (PDSs), and as mentors to new colleagues. After providing a personal profile of one special education teacher-leader, Billingsley (2005) explored the barriers to teacher leadership and the ways in which the work of teacher-leaders might be supported.

Lashley and Boscardin (2003) provided a critique of principal leadership for special education and examined a framework for rethinking how educational leaders might become better prepared to address the equity and excellence demands that are inherent in current federal policies. Lashley (2007) reflects on his experiences as a special education director and argues that contemporary principals have an opportunity to address longstanding inequities that have hindered education for a variety of students in subgroups characterized by race, class, gender, ethnicity, and disability. Campus administrators can play a key role, he suggests, by provoking changes in their schools that address these inequities.

Boscardin (2007) explores the “specialness” of special education administration, making the point that this field, which draws from the knowledge base of special education, is historically and philosophically positioned to promote the use of evidence-based practices in schools. The challenge for

administrators, in her view, is to direct system-wide initiatives in ways that redefine leadership as a collaborative effort that supports the use of proven practices to improve the achievement of students with disabilities, as well as, all the students in their charge. Boscardin (2007) argues that administrators, who are able to organize leadership teams, implement effective strategies for system-wide progress monitoring, and foster cultures that support data-based decisions, will be poised to link responsive leadership initiatives to improved instruction and learning outcomes in students with disabilities. The changing landscape of special education administration is addressed in this issue by contributors whose scholarship addresses systemic concerns and complex human interactions that occur at the interface of special education and campus administration.

Given that educational leaders are held accountable for the performance of all students in their schools, a need exists to ground training in both what research indicates as important as well as what educational leaders report as deficit areas in their knowledge base.

Core to the basic understanding of the functioning and history of special education and the students it serves is fundamental knowledge. This type of knowledge for educational leaders is to be well defined in several pieces of seminal and current literature. Cochrane and Wrestling (1977) described ten practical suggestions as to what knowledge and practices are needed by educational leaders to make mainstreaming successful. These suggestions for educational leaders included: (a) being mindful of characteristics of individuals with disabilities, (b) making regular education teachers aware of these characteristics, (c) providing additional information to staff about education exceptional children, (d) utilizing special education teachers as support, (e) considering alternatives for support, (f) utilizing community resources, (g) providing special material funds for regular education teachers, (h) educating normal children about disabilities, (i) advocating on a one-on-one basis as needed for students with disabilities, and (j) providing leadership and support to the teaching staff.

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) (2002) provides guidance to what the core knowledge and skill areas beginning special educators should possess and those include: (a) philosophical, historical, and legal foundations, (b) characteristics of learners, (c) assessment, diagnosis,

and evaluation, (d) instructional content and practice, (e) planning and managing the teaching and learning environment, (f) managing student behavior and social interaction skills, (g) communication and collaborative partnerships, and (h) professionalism and ethical practices.

CEC reports that an understanding of these topics is crucial for educational leaders as they supervise teachers and govern exceptional students. Monteith (1998) surveyed 120 principals, assistant principals, and supervisors, from South Carolina, regarding their formal special education training. As a result, 75% of the respondents indicated they had no formal training in special education and 90% indicated such training was needed to become an effective leader, core knowledge competencies in special education for educational leaders were identified and those are: (a) being able to define characteristics of students with disabilities (b) understanding how to identify and assess students with disabilities, (c) being aware of disability legislation, (d) understanding the technical aspects of the referral and placement process for students with disabilities, and (e) understanding how to support the education needs of students with disabilities.

These three professional opinion perspectives (Cochrane and Westling (1997), the Council for Exceptional Children (2002a), and Monteith (1998)) provide a common knowledge base for educational leaders. Five identified areas for educational leader knowledge overlap across the three sources of professional opinion: professional practice, all teachers teaching all students, characteristics of disabilities, legislation, and learning differences.

The first area of focus is professional practice. Primarily, this will use collaboration and reflection, both concepts have multiple and complex definitions, but for this proposal, collaboration will be defined as a style of direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties willingly engaged in shared decision-making as they work toward a common goal (Friend & Cook, 2007). Reflection will be used to define involving active, persistent, and care consideration of any belief or practice in light of its supporting grounds and its eventual consequences (Dewey, 1933). Stanovich (1996) identified collaboration as one of the most beneficial practices educational leaders can participate in for students, parents, and teachers. Effective collaboration can promote the successful delivery of services for

students, increase the appropriateness of the process of creating and implementing Individualized Education Plans, increase the development and implementing of modifications and behavior plans, and promote a partnership between professionals for instruction. Stanovich (1996) also stated that principals can help teachers be collaborative by communicating effectively, building trust, and investing time for collaboration. The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (1998) proposes that collaboration between general and special education teachers is essential in order to provide students with disabilities access to the general curriculum. McLaughlin (2002) found that schools that were effective in using collaboration had teachers who planned and problem solved together around curricular goals to ensure the opportunity for all students to learn. Evans (1991) conducted a literature review of the practice of collaboration in special education. Studies as early as 1975 looked at the practice of consultation provided to teachers or collaborative efforts between teachers. One overall finding was that the teachers involved with consultation programs were more apt to ask each other for help and were more likely to implement programs when the approach used was collaboration in nature. Literature in the review on collegiality among teachers and with administrators demonstrated that effective staff development and cooperation efforts are strongly supported when staff members treat each other and work as colleagues.

Reflection is a practice that has been promoted across disciplines within education. Han (1995) defined reflection as an ongoing process of critically examining and refining practice. Educational leaders at the campus level should use reflective practice as a way to become aware of their convictions and the consequences of such beliefs on the practice of their teaching. Brownlee and Carrington (2000) investigated the attitudes of regular education student teachers about disabilities by providing them with sustained contact with a teaching assistant with severe physical impairments. The student teachers had a positive perception of the teaching assistant in the past interview. They also noted that the teacher preparation program did not prepare them enough for inclusion or teaching individuals with disabilities. Finally, the student teachers identified the use of the interview in promoting their reflection into their belief systems about disabilities.

The second area concerns the historical responsibility of general education teachers to teach students with exceptionalities. Separate educational systems are not appropriate for all students with disabilities. Educational leaders should understand the staff development needs of general and special education teachers to help them match educational services and instruction to that belief system. Experts have identified this area as critical as educational leaders need to be able to provide support to all teachers about how to teach all students including those with disabilities.

With the implementation of the 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2001) students with disabilities are required to receive access to the general curriculum. This implies that general education teachers are expected to assume responsibility for the instruction of students with disabilities. General education teachers can offer important instructional and age appropriate social opportunities that students with significant disabilities have historically missed (Downing 2001). General education teachers are responsible for the instruction of students now more than ever. With the variations in how they are receiving training to provide that instruction, educational leaders must support the staff development needs of all teachers.

The third area of focuses on the characteristics of disabilities. Understanding the evolution of the definitions for some disability areas as well as the implications of having a label of a disability is crucial for educational leaders to effectively participate in decisions regarding students. As definitions of disabilities are established and changed over time and as consequences of the identification of the students as having disabilities are understood, educational leaders need a basic appreciation of the characteristics of disabilities.

Introductory textbooks on special education typically define and describe the various disabilities recognized in IDEA (Gearheart, Weishahn, & Gearheart, 1996; Heward, 2000; Smith, 2004). The use of characteristics to develop categories or labels for students, however, has been challenged in the conceptual literature. Brinker (1990) has questioned the premise that individuals with certain characteristics benefit more from a specialized educational program than individuals with other characteristics. He proposes that the categorization of children should not influence the content of the

curriculum they receive and the process of their instruction. While the identification of students for special education has historically looked at the deficits or part of the child, Brinker suggests that to meet the education needs of a child, one must first view the whole child to consider not only disability, but the cultural, socioeconomic, and racial characteristics that make up a child.

Benham (1997) examined university faculty attitudes and knowledge of the characteristics of specific disabilities and legislation. There is no data about the understanding of teachers at the school level, therefore educational leaders need to understand their staff and provide information so that general education teachers are better able to identify and address the needs of students with disabilities.

The fourth area concerns legislation. The implications of historical legislative acts as well as recent legislation initiatives define legislative fundamental knowledge. The influence of legislation on special education is a vital element educational leaders must understand so that they may provide students services they need in compliance with the laws. Educational leaders must understand the legal procedures established through court cases and they need to correctly interpret those procedures for implications for their students.

The field of special education in schools was formally established in response to Public Law 94-142 (1975). Each reauthorization of this law and other laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (1990), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973) and NCLB (2001), have dictated changes to how students with disabilities are served instructionally. Some experts have tracked shifts in practices related to the core elements of P.L. 94-142 and IDEA (1997) over time. One example (Crockett, 2002) responded to the changes that IDEA presented society related to providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in a least restrictive environment (LRE). Within each reauthorization of IDEA, changes are mandated about how students with disabilities are identified and served. In response to the 1997 amendments about discipline for students with disabilities, Hartwig and Ruesch (2000) and Yell, Drasgow, and Rozalski (2001) each defined what the major changes entailed for practice. As discipline has become a difficult issue for students, parents, and schools, the provisions for what can and cannot be

legally done related to suspensions, manifestation determinations, intervention plans, and alternatives need to be clearly understood.

Several pieces of legislation have directly addressed providing access and including students with low incidence disabilities in assessments tied to the general curriculum. Thompson, Quenemoen, Thurlow, and Ysseldyke (2001) described how the reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1994 that included Title 1 and in 1997 stressed the use of high standards and expectations for all students and the inclusion of the performance of such students in assessments that appropriately measure their achievement on state content standards. Special education is a major area for litigation for school systems across the nation (Johnson & Duffet, 2003). The basis of such litigation is likely the interpretation of the law and the services provided by systems. The understanding by educational leaders of the elements of the laws that shape special education is critical.

The final area of knowledge is learning differences. Every child is different and has different learning styles. Children with special needs bring additional disparity. Cultural diversity and assessment are two of the global areas of learning differences.

The consideration of cultural implications and the over identification of minorities in special education will be discussed as fundamental knowledge in diversity. Potential biases in assessment and the impact of assessment will also be explored. Recent legislation and reform movements dictate that educational leaders are very aware of the learning differences of all students. This understanding regarding the impact of those differences on classroom climate and instruction is critical for educational leaders.

In reviewing cultural diversity, the disproportionate overrepresentation of minority students in special education has been well documented (Harris, Brown, Ford, & Richardson, 2004; Skiba, Knesting, & Bush, 2002). Gay (2002) purported that students of color were more likely to be placed in special education because educators working with those students lacked knowledge or appreciation for the cultural values and the impact such values has on learning. Other (Sileo & Prater, 1998; Skiba, Knesting, & Bush, 2002) have indicated a cultural bias in testing measures as well as undereducated

staff. Sileo and Prater (1998) indicated that characteristics that contribute to school failure for minority students are the speaking of nonstandard English, the use of inappropriate assessments, inadequate teacher skills in accommodating cultural characteristics, and a disproportionate cultural representation between teachers and students. Gay (2002) suggested that improvements made to instructional programs and practices that embrace cultural heritages, experiences, and perspectives will help all children succeed.

Researchers at The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt) published recommendations individuals working with minority students (Klinger et al., 2005). These recommendations were presented within three interrelated domains: (a) culturally responsive policy, (b) culturally responsive practice, and (c) culturally responsive people as change agents. Highlights of recommendations from Klinger and colleagues (2005) include a nationwide implementation of early intervention, universal screenings and continuous monitoring. Also recommended was that district administrators should collaborate more with one another rather than work against each other. Currently, general and special education personnel run their programs separately rather than jointly. Educational leaders should disseminate information from both groups allowing the opportunity for all teachers to learn about the others' educational issues and concerns.

Lastly, Klinger et al., (2005) presented the idea that culturally responsive systems change requires the involvement of people who are culturally responsive agents of change. Meaning that, every individual working in education needs to embrace the concept that she or he is a powerful agent of change in the lives of their students. Educational leaders typically have the most influence over school climate, therefore they must insure that their campus personnel use culturally responsive, evidence-based teaching methods. All teachers can implement culturally responsive instruction simply by allowing for the connecting of each student's academic work to his/her family, community, and culture especially since minority students often feel they must choose between academic success and their cultural practices.

Formative and summative evaluation measures for students in special education require the use of fair and valid assessments. IDEA (1997) and NCLB require that students with disabilities be included in End of Grade (EOG) assessments and that these assessments be nondiscriminatory and modified to the extent that the child needs. The lack of valid summative assessment measures has also influenced instruction and assessment for students with disabilities (Browder, et al., 2003; Browder, Fallin, Davis, & Karvonen, 2003; Quenemoen, Lehr, Thurlow, & Massanari, 2001; Thurlow, Quenemoen, Thompson, & Lehr, 2001; Tindal, et al., 2003). Students with significant cognitive disabilities had not been included in an accountability system (Ford, Davern, & Schnorr, 2001; Thompson & Thurlow, 2001) until NCLB. As alternate assessments continue to be revised for better technical quality and alignment with alternate achievement standards, it is important to discover what knowledge educational leaders have about these assessments. While these assessments include measures of reading and math at the current time, these assessments differ in format and content from state to state. Portfolios, checklists, and one-time performance skill assessments are the most frequent formats used by states (Byrnes, 2004). It is vital that educational leaders understand the format used in their state, the content required for assessment, and the requirements of performance by students using those assessments.

In a report to Congress in 2002, the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education identified several issues for consideration. Berdine (2003) summarized the major issues to include (a) the need for a focus on results instead of the process of serving students, (b) the need to embrace a model of prevention rather than a model of failure, and (c) the need to consider children with disabilities as general education children first. Three themes include the issues of accountability, effective and early interventions, and access to the general curriculum.

The educational leaders play a critical role in how students with disabilities are educated academically and socially. Gameros (1995) suggests that the beliefs of the educational leaders are directly related to the quality of services provided for students with disabilities. Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett (2003) surveyed 909 educational leaders around the nation about their perceptions about the daily role of leadership. These educational leaders reported that they believed federal regulation regarding special education have become more imposing in recent years and that they are forced to

spend a disproportionate amount of money on special education. These educational leaders also believed that demonstrating Adequate Yearly Progress with students with disabilities was unreasonable and undoable. As more students are included in regular public schools in self-contained, resource, and regular classrooms (25th Annual Report to Congress, 2002), the impact of the beliefs of educational leaders related to special education is more critical than ever.

The impact of educational leaders beliefs on instruction has received limited attention. Idol (2006) surveyed general education teachers and educational leaders about their inclusive education beliefs and practices. Results indicated that the inclusionary beliefs of the educational leaders highly predict effective teaching behavior including how instruction is presented to students. It is important to determine what variables influence educational leaders beliefs about special education. Recommendations have been made as to what practices educational leaders should perform to be effective leaders for special education programs within their schools. Mainzer, Deshler, Coleman, Kozleski, and Rodriguez-Walling (2003) suggested inclusive educational leaders should be able to conduct meaningful evaluations of special education teachers, communicate the purpose and scope of special education services to community stakeholders, and take an active instructional leader role by visiting classrooms, participating in meetings, and providing information and support about effective interventions. Parker and Day (1997) also identified five actions educational leaders should perform to be the instructional leader in inclusive schools. Communicating the mission, managing the curriculum and instruction, supervising the teaching, monitoring student progress, and promoting a welcoming instructional climate were noted.

McEwan (2003) identified ten traits of effective educational leaders. These included being a communicator, an educator, an visionary, a facilitator, a change master, a culture builder, an activator, a producer, a character builder, and a contributor. O'Hanlon and Clifton (2004) described effective educational leaders as people who can do the job, make a difference, compete, reflect, are positive in thoughts and actions, and are strongly committed to the growth of the people (students and staff) in their schools. Fullan (2007a) described five components of leadership that, when put together, build the foundation of effective practice. These included moral purpose, understanding the change process,

relationship building, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making. Taking all of these descriptions collectively, principals who are effective, change the process of education for the betterment of the stakeholders. Therefore, change is a crucial element of effectiveness. Fullan (2007b) described the three phases of educational change as initiation, implementation, and institutionalization that provides a path to reform.

There is limited data about what information educational leaders are receiving in their training or licensing programs related to special education. Hirth and Valesky (1991) surveyed 123 university department chairs in education administration about their program's requirements for special education. Fifty-four percent of those surveyed responded. The six-item survey inquired about the licenses the program offered, program participants' knowledge of special education, and how students in their programs acquired their knowledge of special education. Outcomes indicated that 28% of programs required principals to have some knowledge of special education law. However, only 7% had a course specific to special education law.

There are, however, many suggestions as to what information educational leaders should be learning in their educational leadership programs related to special education. Collins and White (2001) described a model program for training educational leaders in inclusion of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. Graduates of the program show a proficiency in such competencies as demonstrating knowledge of learning and behavior characteristics of special education students, knowledge and skill in the supervision of staff in inclusive classrooms, knowledge of special education law, and knowledge of the research and best practice on inclusive programs.

Collaboration Between General and Special Education/Pre-referral Intervention and RTI Teams

Educational leaders are recognized as leaders of change (Fullan, 2008; Hall & Hord, 2006). Campus administrators are responsible for keeping up to date of current laws, best practices and trends in education. As the aspects of public schooling become more complex, educational leaders can be effective as facilitators, enabling staff through collaboration to exchange ideas, build relationships,

improve practices and solve problems to improve student achievement (Friend & Cook, 2007; Fullan, 2008).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004 (IDEIA), has created the demand for collaboration between general and special education staff especially those working on pre-referral intervention/RTI teams and serving students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs). Additionally, IDEIA requires that students be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) which means more students with disabilities are included in general education classes (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Fifty-four percent of students with IEPs spend 80% of the school day in general education classes (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Schools are required to administer standardized assessments to their entire school population. The entire population (student with disabilities included) must meet standards. Educational leaders and teachers are looking more closely at students with IEPs and how to improve this population's test scores.

IDEIA 2004 calls for early intervention services that include a multi-tiered response to instruction model. The response-to-intervention (RTI) is an approved model. The purpose RTI is to identify students at-risk for failure so interventions might be provided as early as possible. RTI is a general education initiative, but will play a role in determining eligibility for learning disabilities and placement in special education (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). This is the reason general and special education staff must collaborate in this effort.

Collaboration is a major component of change (Fullan, 2008; Hall & Hord, 2006). There have been a few successful examples of true collaboration but most schools are still struggling with collaboration (Hall & Hord, 2006). Common barriers to collaboration, as cited by teachers, include are time, professional development, resources, and campus administrator support (Scruggs, Mastropieri & McDuffie, 2007). Successful collaboration between general special education requires that educational administrators support their campus staff by providing resources, time, materials, and personally participate in collaborative activities (Hall & Hord, 2006).

Campus administrators' behaviors are related to the success of implementing new initiatives at the site-based level. Fullan's (2008) theory of change focuses on the role that leaders in successful organizations play. Fullan (2008) states that schools are in a continuous cycle of change. Successful leaders therefore are successful facilitators of change. Collaboration is essential component of the change process. Educational leaders who value collaboration will facilitate the process through their behaviors (Fullan, 2008; Hall & Hord, 2006).

Even with IDEIA calling for more students with IEPs to be served for increasing periods time in the LRE, little progress been made in increasing collaboration between general and special education staff to serve students with IEPs. The literature indicates that collaboration between general education and special education to serve students with IEPs has been researched for the last twenty years, but collaboration between these two groups is still limited (Friend & Cook, 2007). Leonard & Leonard (2005) found that although educational leaders at the campus level felt that collaboration practices were very important, implementation of collaboration at their campuses was actually occurring at much lower levels. Current research indicates that campus administrators' behaviors are essential to school wide success (Marzano et al., 2005). Collaboration has been identified as an essential component of campus-wide success and a major component of change (Fullan, 2008; Hall & Hord, 2006). If educational leaders are key to campus success, then they are also key in supporting collaboration.

According to literature, campus administrators support collaboration in two ways. First, educational leaders are actively part of the day-to-day collaborative activities that take place on their campuses, and second they provide resources for their staff that allow them to participate in collaborative activities (Fullan, 2008; Hall & Hord, 2006).

General education and special education staff must also collaborate on pre-referral intervention and RTI teams. The main features of RTI are high quality research-based instruction and interventions, universal screenings and progress monitoring (Bradley et al., 2005). RTI is a three tiered model, the first tier being basic general education modifications that are made for students identified by general education teacher as needing extra support. These are universal interventions that are considered a

component of any high-end general education program. The second tier is small group interventions, and the third tier is individualized interventions. If students receive the appropriate interventions in tier one and are still not progressing; then further interventions are needed. Students are continually monitored for progress during this process (Bradley et al., 2005).

Effective problem solving teams, part of RTI, have clear-cut goals, individual accountability, a group process to guide the team to work collaboratively, and leadership skills among team members (Friend & Cook, 2007). Educational leaders may improve problem-solving teams by supporting collaborative efforts and making collaboration a part of the campus culture through their daily activities (Rafoth and Foriska, 2006).

Educational leaders support collaboration by providing the campus staff with resources like protected time to meet, regularly scheduled meetings, professional development, and materials. Educational leaders must also monitor the collaborative process between general and special education staff through direct participation in day-to-day activities so that any barriers that arise can be quickly resolved. Educational leaders may not be neutral in collaboration. They either support or restrict collaboration by their daily decisions.

Educational Leaders Preparation Programs and Special Education

Educational Leaders' preparation programs have the primary responsibility to develop administrative competencies through the curriculum content. While many of the courses are structured towards developing competencies that a campus administrator needs to function effectively few certification programs require courses that address special education issues comprehensively. According to Levine (2005), the typical course of studies required of educational leaders is largely disconnected from the realities of school management especially as it relates to the administration of special education. Hess and Kelly (2003) state that all but 4% of practicing campus administrators report that it is on-the-job experiences and guidance from colleagues that has been more helpful in preparing them for their current position than their graduate school studies.

Special education is an area in which the administrative preparation programs do not meet the needs of the prospective campus administrator. Despite coursework, that is devoted to educational leadership, all too often, campus administrators graduate from certification programs unprepared to effectively address the needs of students with disabilities. Even though educational leaders have struggled with educating students with disabilities for thirty-five plus years, campus administrator certification programs have not prioritized the educating students with disabilities.

Educational leaders need a broader knowledge base, in order to effectively help students with disabilities. To be included is functional knowledge of Individual Education Plans (IEPs), characteristics of various disabilities, differentiated discipline policies, delivery of related services, least restrictive environment (LRE), inclusive practices, pre-referral intervention/RTI processes, and the role and responsibilities of the educational leader in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) regulations and standards. In traditional certification programs, these issues are usually addressed with a low level of frequency. Lack of exposure to core special education concepts and limited development of competencies that are needed in the role of campus administrator create a “preparation gap.” Farley (2002) describes this as a gap between what faculty is “willing to teach” and what is actually needed in campus administrators’ pre-service training. For too long, educational leaders certification programs tend to reinforce the separation of special education and general education according to Murphy and Vriesenga (2004).

In fact, Murphy and Vriesenga (2004) state that there is a need to re-examine the field of educational leadership and the responsibility to train administrators that are able to effectively administrate to all students on their campuses even those students with disabilities. It is this type of treatment of special education in educational leaders’ preparation programs that contributes to the lack of preparedness and lack of clarity in campus administrators’ experience as they struggle in their role to educate students with disabilities.

The Interstate School Leaders Licensing Consortium (ISLLC) standards have been considered the “state of the art” for educational leadership and leadership preparation. The standards, however, do

not address the needs of students with disabilities directly. An in-depth review of the six ISLLC standards, Council of Chief State school officers (1996) found that there was no specific mention of the scope, breadth, and depth of the special education issues that are considered fundamental for adequate training of educational leaders. Olson (2007) conducted a qualitative study to assess campus leaders' response to the 2007 revision of the 1996 ISLLC Standards. The study found that though the campus administrators' were familiar with the standards, they were also overwhelmed with problems of diversity, discipline, state mandates, accountability and special education that were more concerned about how to deal with these immediate problems irrespective of the ISLLC Standards. Even though the ISLLC standards have been developed there appears to be a discrepancy between development and adoption of said standards. Barnet (2004) indicates that while standards may help to clarify the expectations for leadership activities, the evidence does not support presence of a educational leader preparation program that is designed to meet the professional activities that are represented by the above mentioned, standards.

Ethical Issues and the Role of Educational Leader

According Crooner, Tochsterman, & Garrison-Wade (2005) educational leadership is ranked as one of the key variables associated with effective schools. The leadership role of education leaders is crucial if we are to achieve improved education for students with disabilities. This need to be reflected in our campus administrator preparation programs. If we do not, what does this say about value with place on the education of students with disabilities?

Shapiro and Stefonovich (2005) who developed an ethical framework for administrative leadership, state "Accordingly the focus on ethics for preparation of educational leaders must be meaningful and designed to provide both a theoretical approach and practical knowledge base that will advance ethical leadership." (p.5) When educational leaders fail to assume the role as special education leaders they are abdicating their responsibility to provide a free and appropriate education (FAPE) to students with disabilities. Shapiro and Stefonovich (2005) propose that educational leadership programs have an obligation to prepare campus administrators who can solve real life, complex dilemmas that they face daily on their campuses and communities, using ethical principles.

In addition, IDEA and IDEIA set laws that require the placement of students in the least restrictive environment. Translated this means that students with disabilities are to be educated in general education setting with their non-disabled peers, whenever possible.

The ethical issues associated with NCLB also affect educational leaders' attitudes and willingness to deliver educational services for student with disabilities. Many campus administrators are under pressure to increase student test scores and may see students with disabilities as liabilities that may keep their campus from meeting adequate yearly progress or AYP. This may cause a loss of funding, decreased administrative authority or may even include reconstituted schools.

Even though the laws that protect students with disabilities have been around for over thirty years there are still educational leaders who view students with disabilities and special education programs as “stepchildren” of the educational process. Society has already decided that the practice of unequal treatment of students with disabilities in the school system is unethical and unlawful. Educational leaders' preparation programs must not only teach management competencies but must also expose prospective administrators to ideas and values that will enable them to see their obligation to all students and make both practical and ethical decisions that support the entire student population on their campuses. Does the lack of special education preparation in our educational leaders' certification programs indicate a devaluing of the education of students with disabilities?

In spite of the inadequacy reported by campus administrators regarding their lack of formal training in the special education process, recent studies have indicated that educational leaders support the premise that it is their responsibility to educate all students. Wakeman, Browder, Flowers, and Ahigrim-Deizel (2006) reported that administrators who had adequate knowledge of special education issues and fundamental concepts were more likely to support a belief system that enabled education for all students and they were more likely to implement practices that upheld these beliefs.

Educational leaders must know special education procedures and appropriate disciplinary practices not only to act correctly under IDEIA, but as their ethical, if not moral, obligation as educators. Lashley (2007) states that knowledge of special education laws and practices doesn't just enhance the

campus administrator's ability to comply with special education laws, but it also reaffirms an ethical responsibility to support educational equity in meeting the needs of all student populations.

Summary

Effective leadership and administrative support for special education are critical issues in today's schools. The field of special education administration is gaining attention in the literature as professionals need ways to foster accountability and drive change in ways that support the success of students with disabilities and their teachers. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its' 2004 revision the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) continues to have a profound effect on the role of educational leaders at the campus level. Federal special education procedures like Manifestation Determination require that educational leaders be able to determine if the disciplinary infraction committed by a student with disabilities is related to the students' specific disability. This places the education leader in the difficult role of determining whether the student's disability played a role in the disciplinary infraction and not the gravity of the infraction itself. The educational leader is unable to administer disciplinary consequences (suspension) for violent offenses or safety issues if it is determined that the student's behavior is related to the student's disability. Added to this is the legal requirement that students with disabilities be placed in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), now educational leaders must be able to supervise special education programs and special education teachers. Site-based special education programs include students with serious disabilities that may include significant intellectual challenges, emotional disturbance, and a spectrum of autistic challenges all in the general education classrooms. These situations indicate the dire need for training and preparation to manage special education site-based programs. Educational leaders are being required to provide effective leadership in special education, an area where they have limited skills or preparation. Educational leaders who understand their students with disabilities and the requirements of NCLB, IDEIA, LRE, and RTI requirements, and effective teaching practices are better able to provide all their students and their campus staff with the appropriate classroom support according to Doolittle, Horner, Bradley, Sugui, & Vincent (2007).

There is limited empirical research related to educational leaders' knowledge and competencies of special education. Specific knowledge in areas of special education is typically the focus. There is need for an educational leader survey that reflects the use of the highest standards of survey design - well-grounded in research - and that is comprehensive in its sampling procedures to address the gaps in the literature.

Supporting literature and recent legislation demonstrate that there is a need for all educational leaders to understand special education. Educational leaders are the instructional leaders for all students on their campus. To perform as effective instructional leaders, educational leaders must be competent in application of their knowledge of special education. Understanding the current status of educational leaders' comprehensive knowledge base as related to special education is extremely important. Given the accountability levels educational leaders now face, the documentation of fundamental and current knowledge requirements in special education, and the poor and costly outcomes related to inadequate or nonexistent training for educational leaders in special education, a study is needed to ascertain the knowledge base educational leaders have regarding special education and the variables that influence their knowledge base.

A descriptive assessment of practicing educational leaders, using a current issues and fundamental knowledge framework will be administered. Also, examined are educational leaders' beliefs and practices regarding response-to-intervention (RTI), collaboration, the adequacy of their administrative preparation program and the ethical issues that arise with the responsibility to educate "all" students.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research study was to collect descriptive data to answer the research questions posed. This study examined educational leaders' perceptions of their knowledge base as related to the special education issues of fundamental knowledge, current issues knowledge, collaboration with pre-referral/RTI teams, as an equity issue, skills and program preparation

Research Design

The research was non-experimental and yielded descriptive data. A quantitative study using survey method was used in the collection of data. Participants in the study completed a survey enabling the researcher to obtain descriptive data about their perceptions as related to the research questions. The survey is found in Appendix A. Descriptive statistics was used in the analyses of the survey data. The survey provided descriptive information about educational leaders knowledge regarding; fundamental knowledge of special education, current issues in special education, collaboration, pre-referral intervention/RTI teams, how this knowledge is acquired and special education as an issue of equity. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) reported that surveys are useful to achieve the purpose of descriptive research designs. The survey instrument was written and administered following Dillman's (2000) Tailored Design model.

The Tailored Design is a self-administered survey that is designed in a way that the survey attributes both individually and collectively "create respondent trust and perceptions of increased rewards and reduced costs for being a respondent...and have as their goal the overall reduction of survey error" (Dillman 2000, p. 27). It used the knowledge of a survey population and survey content in a way that helps create an instrument that is extremely effective at increasing rewards and establishing trust (Dillman, 2000). The Tailored Design model of survey development recognizes the need to use different specific strategies to increase respondent cooperation.

The research design was quantitative approach using a post-positivist philosophy. Trochim & Donnell (2008) state that post-positivism is "the rejection of positivism in favor of a position that one

can make reasonable inferences about phenomena based upon theoretical reasoning combined with experience-based evidence.” (p. 19) One of the most common types of quantitative, social research is survey data. Survey research uses questionnaires to gather data about people and information regarding their thoughts and behaviors (Fowler, 1993). The completed survey then becomes the researcher’s “experience-based” data. Based on the responses given by educational leaders, the study addressed the research questions, provided a descriptive statistical analysis, reported similar perceptions with regard to educational leaders’ preparation programs.

Population

The participants were educational leaders (principals and assistant principals) throughout the independent school districts in West Texas, Region XIX Education Service Center. Only educational leaders at the twelve independent school districts in West Texas were surveyed. All potential participants are in a leadership and decision making positions within one of twelve independent school districts. Knowledge of the fundamental and current issues in special education is important to educational leaders not only to meet their administrative responsibilities of their individual campuses but, also for the independent school districts that have hired them especially, in terms of legal issues. There are a total of 253 campuses in the twelve independent schools districts. Thirty-four of the campuses are traditional high schools with an educational leader population of approximately 136. There are twenty-two high alternative and magnet campuses. The educational leader population is approximately 66. At the middle school level there are forty-eight campuses for an approximant 120 educational leaders. The elementary level has approximately 280 administrators on 140 campus. There are seven campuses that serve K-8th grade for approximately 16 administrators. Two k-12 that have 4 educational leaders. The particular sample size of the present study had the potential of 539 respondents.

Data Collection

An online survey was be used to obtain responses from educational leaders regarding their level of knowledge of special education issues of fundamental knowledge, current issues knowledge, collaboration with pre-referral/RTI teams, as an equity issue, skills and program preparation.

Online surveys are able “...to collect a lot of data quickly, and can reduce overall survey error, because the data entry chore is eliminated...” (Ritter & Sue, 2007, pg.5). While online surveys solve some problems that are associated with traditional survey methods, factors need to be considered before using this method. “These factors can be divided into three categories: (1) respondent factors, (2) questionnaire factors and (3) evaluator factors” (Ritter & Sue, 2007, pg.5).

Respondent factors include the requirement of internet access for the respondent, respondent knowledge in navigating the Web, and an e-mail address for the respondent. Questionnaire factors concern the type and nature of questions asked, and the amount of time required to complete the survey (Schonlau et al., 2002). The researcher, is able to ask questions of a more sensitive nature since the Web provides a sense of anonymity for the respondent (Schaefer and Dillman, 1998).

Evaluator factors to be considered are time frame, budget, and technological expertise. An advantage of online surveys is the ability to send out the survey and start receiving completed responses within a day Ritter & Sue (2007). Allowing for a rapid turn around time frame. Expenses for online surveys are considered economical when considered against the costs of other methods of surveys. The primary expense will be either cost of the software or the cost of a web-based host. Technological expertise requires the researcher to have data management skills but, many commercial packages have an interface that can be mastered quickly.

The steps required for an online survey are the same as other survey methods: planning, data collection, data analysis, reporting and application (Ritter & Sue, 2007 pg.15). The survey will be delivered to educational leaders’ e-mail addresses. The researcher will be using an application service provider (ASP). The ASP will give the researcher the option of disseminating, tracking, and the ability to have data entered directly from the returned survey automatically into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), eliminating data entry errors (Ritter & Sue, 2007 pg.18-19). Invitations to participate were e-mailed all campus administrators in the twelve Independent School Districts in West Texas (See Appendix B). A cover letter was the first page of the survey. The cover letter explained the purpose of the survey and provided informed consent information to the respondents.

Instrumentation

The purpose of the survey was to describe the research study respondents and identify patterns related to the research questions. A survey instrument was developed to collect data for this study. The instrument included a Likert-scale type format that asked respondents to assess their levels of preparation, their education and training in the area of special education, their knowledge base and understanding of core and current issues in special education, special education law, to handle special education duties in their schools.

The survey items were developed through a review of literature and existing surveys. The survey design will be a combination of questionnaires used in previous studies combined by the researcher. The demographic, training and experiences section used information from a Praisner (2003) study. The fundamental and current issues knowledge sections were created from the conceptual framework developed by Wakeman (2005). The special education as an equity issues were from Lust (2005).

Reliability and Validity

Internal validity will be achieved to the extent that the survey instrument is valid and reliable, respondents understand the process of answer selection, and respondents answer questions truthfully. In order to have a valid instrument several actions were taken. First, prior to the current research study two assistant principals from another Texas Regional Center, an assistant director of special education and two team leaders from special education reviewed and completed the survey. The feedback from these administrators indicated that they felt the survey was relevant and did not indicate any problems with the survey's content or difficulty understanding or completing the on-line survey. Second, the dissertation chair and a graduate research assistant reviewed the final questionnaire for face validity.

In terms of external validity, the results of the survey were limited to the demographics of educational leaders under auspices of Region XIX Education Service Center. The Region XIX Education Service Center includes twelve independent school districts located in West Texas. The findings of this study will be limited to educational leaders in West Texas. The survey addresses both

federal and Texas Education Agency rules and regulations, since each state has different rules and regulations, the survey population is limited to educational leaders in Texas.

Data Analysis

To describe any trends in the data collected about a population is the objective of survey research (Creswell, 2005). Relationships between the variables will be analyzed and calculated for frequencies from the data collected.

Descriptive statistics describes “what is going on in the data” (Trochim and Donnelly, 2008, pg. 294). Frequencies of responses for all sections of the survey/questionnaire were reported using descriptive statistics. Analyses was conducted with results presented and provided with descriptive statistics in order to provide clarity and immediate review for the study. Data will be entered directly from the ASP (application service provider) into an Excel database then converted to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) database. Data analysis was accomplished through the use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology and procedures used to investigate the research questions, and described the research design, population, instrumentation, data collection and data analysis.

Chapter 4: Discussion of Results

Analysis of Results

The purpose of this study was to examine educational leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues in special education and if their administrative preparation program adequately prepared them for issues regarding special education. The study also examined educational leaders' beliefs and practices regarding facilitating collaboration on their campus, as well as, the underlying ethical issues that surround the educational leaders' responsibility to educate all students.

The first section of this chapter presents demographic data regarding the educational leaders' who participated in the study. The second section is the results for each of the research questions. A discussion of the results are presented in Chapter 5.

Results of Demographic Data

The survey was e-mailed to 578 educational leaders (principals and assistant principals). The mailing included all twelve Independent School Districts in the Region 19 of the State of Texas. Thirty-nine of the possible respondents either opted out or the e-mail addresses were not active for a total of 539, of that a total of 161 responded for an overall response rate of 30%.

The position of principal was held by 42.1% of the respondents and 57.9% of the respondents indicated that they were assistant principals. Of the 159 school administrators who responded regarding their gender, ninety were female and sixty-nine were male. See Table 1.

Table 1: Gender * Title of educational position Crosstabulation

			Title of educational position		
			Principal	Assistant Principal	
Gender	Female	Count	42	47	89
		% of Total	26.6%	29.7%	56.3%
	Male	Count	25	44	69
		% of Total	15.8%	27.8%	43.7%
Total		Count	67	91	158
		% of Total	42.4%	57.6%	100.0%

One hundred and forty-nine offered information regarding their ethnicity. The majority, 44.3% were Hispanic, 38.3% were White, 1.3% African American, and 3.4% identified themselves as American Indian and other. See Table 2.

Table 2: Ethnicity * Title of educational position Crosstabulation

			Title of educational position		Total
			Principal	Assistant Principal	
Ethnicity	White	Count	22	35	57
		% of Total	14.9%	23.6%	38.5%
	Hispanic	Count	27	39	66
		% of Total	18.2%	26.4%	44.6%
	Hispanic White	Count	11	8	19
		% of Total	7.4%	5.4%	12.8%
	Hispanic African-American	Count	1	0	1
		% of Total	.7%	.0%	.7%
	American Indian	Count	1	0	1
		% of Total	.7%	.0%	.7%
	Other	Count	1	3	4
		% of Total	.7%	2.0%	2.7%
	% of Total		42.6%	57.4%	100.0%

Their ages ranged from 31 to over 61. 20.3% were between the ages of 31-40, 24% were between 41-45, 17.6% were 46-50, 16.2% identified themselves as between the ages of 51-55, 14.2% were between the ages of 56-60 and 6.8% identified themselves as over 61. Forty-five percent of the population is under 45 years old, indicating a young and possibly inexperienced population of educational administrators. See Table 3.

Table 3: Age range * Title of educational position Crosstabulation

			Title of educational position		Total
			Principal	Assistant Principal	
Age range	31-40	Count	8	22	30
		% of Total	5.4%	15.0%	20.4%
	41-45	Count	15	22	37
		% of Total	10.2%	15.0%	25.2%
	46-50	Count	12	14	26
		% of Total	8.2%	9.5%	17.7%
	51-55	Count	10	14	24
		% of Total	6.8%	9.5%	16.3%
	56-60	Count	10	10	20
		% of Total	6.8%	6.8%	13.6%
	61 or Older	Count	8	2	10
		% of Total	5.4%	1.4%	6.8%
	Total	Count	63	84	147
		% of Total	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%

The next question dealt with number of years of experience the respondents had as education leaders. 1.3% indicated that this was their first year, 27% had two to five years of experience, in the six to ten year range were 36.5%, 15.7% had eleven to fifteen years of experience, 10.7% had sixteen to twenty years of experience and 8.8% had over twenty-one years as an educational leader. See Table 4.

Table 4: Experience as educational leader

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	1 year	2	1.2	1.3
	2-5	43	26.7	27.0
	6-10	58	36.0	36.5
	11-15	25	15.5	15.7
	16-20	17	10.6	10.7
	21 or more	14	8.7	8.8
	Total	159	98.8	100.0
Missing	System	2	1.2	
Total		161	100.0	

Note: Two respondents did not answer

Their experience in teaching the General Education Population; 19.7% had one to five years, 32.2% had six to ten years, the same percentage of 32.2% had eleven to fifteen years, 11.2% had sixteen to twenty years and 4.6% had over twenty-one years in the general education setting. See Table 5.

Table 5: Experience teaching-general educational classroom

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	1-5	30	18.6	19.7
	6-10	49	30.4	32.2
	11-15	49	30.4	32.2
	16-20	17	10.6	11.2
	21 or more	7	4.3	4.6
	Total	152	94.4	100.0
Missing	System	9	5.6	
Total		161	100.0	

Note: Nine respondents did not answer

With regard to experience in teaching the Special Education, 78% of educational leaders had no experience in teaching Special Education, 9.8% had one to five years, 7.6% had six to ten years, 2.3% had eleven to fifteen years, and 2.3% had sixteen to twenty years experience teaching Special Education.

By a wide margin, 78% of educational leaders have had no experience in teaching a special education population. See Table 6.

Table 6: Experience special education teacher

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	0	103	64.0	78.0
	1-5	13	8.1	9.8
	6-10	10	6.2	7.6
	11-15	3	1.9	2.3
	16-20	3	1.9	2.3
	Total	132	82.0	100.0
Missing	System	29	18.0	
Total		161	100.0	

Note: Twenty-nine respondents did not answer

Before becoming an educational leader 23% of the respondents had no experience with Individual Education Plans (IEPs), 30.9% had one to five years of experience, 20.1% had six to ten years, 15.1% had eleven to fifteen years, 5.8% had sixteen to twenty years, and 5% had over twenty-one years of experience. Indicating that the majority of educational administrators had experience with IEPs. See Table 7.

Table 7: Experience as Part of Individual Education Plan Team

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	0	32	19.9	23.0
	1-5	43	26.7	30.9
	6-10	28	17.4	20.1
	11-15	21	13.0	15.1
	16-20	8	5.0	5.8
	21 or more	7	4.3	5.0
	Total	139	86.3	100.0
Missing	System	22	13.7	
Total		161	100.0	

Note: Twenty-two of the respondents did not answer

Before becoming an educational leader 46.1% of the respondents have had no experience with Response to Intervention teams (RTIs), 27.7% had one to three years, 9.2% had four to six years of experience and 17% had seven or more years of experience with RTI teams. Almost half, 46.1% of educational leaders have had no experience with RTI teams. See Table 8.

Table 8: Experience pre-referral intervention team/RTI

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	0	65	40.4	46.1
	1-3	39	24.2	27.7
	4-6	13	8.1	9.2
	7 or more	24	14.9	17.0
	Total	141	87.6	100.0
Missing	System	20	12.4	
Total		161	100.0	

Note: Twenty respondents did not answer

The next set of questions dealt with campus background information. The first question dealt with campus level identification; 37.9% identified their campus as an elementary campus, 6.2% identified their campus as K through 8th grade campus, 3.1% identified their campus as K through 12th grade (indicating a small school district), 23% identified their campus as a middle school, four or 2.5% identified their campus as alternative middle school, 24.8% identified their campus as a high school, six or 3.7% identified their campus as alternative high school, and two or 1.2% identified their campus as magnet high school. See Table 9.

Table 9: Percentage of Educational Administrators at Each Campus Level

Campus Level	Frequency	Percent
Elementary Schools	61	37.9
Middle & Alternative Middle Schools	41	25.5
High, Alternative, & Magnet High Schools	48	33.4

Next, the study, investigated the disability categories of students being served on the educational leaders' current campus. The High Incidence category was identified as students that were being served for speech impairments and learning disabilities. 86.3% stated that their campus served students in the high incidence category. Moderate Incidence included autism, intellectually challenged and OHI (other health impairments). 83.9% educational leaders indicated that their campus served students in the moderate incidence category. The Low Incidence category was identified as students with orthopedic impairments, visual impairments, auditory impairments, medically fragile and multiple handicapping conditions. 69.6% stated that their campus served students in the low incidence category. See Table 10.

Table 10: Percentages of Campus and Incidence Level of Students with Disabilities

Incidence Levels	Frequency	Percent
High Incidence	139	86.3
Moderate Incidence	135	83.9
Low Incidence	112	69.6

The next question addressed the percentage of the campus' population that were coded as students with disabilities. 32.7% of the educational leaders checked that 0-5% of their student population had disabilities, 46.8% indicated that their campus population of student with disabilities was 6-10% range, while 14.7% said that their campus population of students with disabilities was in the 11-15% range. 4.5% indicated that student with disabilities made up 16-20% of their student population and 1.3% indicated that over 21% of their population were students with disabilities. See Table 11.

Table 11: Percentage of campus' population with disabilities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	0-5%	51	31.7	32.7
	6-10%	73	45.3	46.8
	11-15%	23	14.3	14.7
	16-20%	7	4.3	4.5
	21% or more	2	1.2	1.3
	Total	156	96.9	100.0
Missing	System	5	3.1	
Total		161	100.0	

Note: Five respondents did not answer

Conclusions of Demographic Data

Demographic data indicate the sample of respondents is evenly balanced as far as gender, position and campus level. More women, 56.6%, than men 43.4%, Hispanic was the highest ethnicity at 44.3%, the Hispanic population in the location of the study is approximately 82% (U.S. Census, 2010.) The age range: 58.8% of the respondents were 41 to 55, 20% were under 40 and 21% were 56 and older. More assistant principals 57.9% than principals 42.1% responded to the study. Perhaps the assistant principals have more recently attended a certification program and understand the importance of survey research or they may have more time. The respondents report that 65.8% have the more recent "Principal's Certificate", which corresponds nicely with 63.5% of the respondents having ten years or less experience as an educational leader. This is important because it indicates that there is not a large population of experienced educational leaders so, there is a real possibility that a campus could have

relatively (or at least in this sample) an inexperienced campus administrative personnel. The data indicates that there does exist a “preparation gap”. Without the more experienced educational leaders available to help mentor the newer administrators in special education issues could open districts to more due process cases and additional litigation. In addition to this, 78% of the respondents indicated that they had no experience as a special education teacher. 53.9% of educational leaders had five years or less experience in dealing with IEP’s (Individual Education Plans). 46.1% of the respondents had no previous experience with RTIs (Response to Interventions) and 27.7% had less than three years experience. The fact, that 86.3% of the respondents indicated that their campuses had students with (at least high incidence) disabilities and that 61.5% of their campuses had a “students with disabilities” population range of 6% to 15%, these two facts, point out that all campus level administrators, in order to design appropriate learning opportunities for all their students, must understand the needs and demands of students with disabilities and have a knowledge base of special education law and the ability to analyze the performance of special education teachers and the programs on their campuses.

Educational Leaders’ Understanding of Core (Fundamental) Issues in Special Education

For this study, Fundamental knowledge was divided into four areas (a) professional practice and collaboration, (b) characteristics of students with disabilities, (c) legislation, court actions and special education law, and (d) educating the school community about how to teach and assess students with learning differences.

In terms of professional practice and collaboration, a survey question inquired regarding the frequency in which campus administrators “Provided professional development to general and special education teachers on collaboration.” There were 142 respondents to this statement, 62 were principals and 80 were assistant principals. Of the principals 53.2% responded they “Always”, 29% responded they “Almost Always”, and 17.7% responded that they “Sometimes” provided professional development on collaboration for general and special education teachers on their campuses. The assistant principals indicated that 32.5% “Always”, 28.8% “Almost Always”, 23.8% “Sometimes Did”, 10% “Rarely” did and 5% “Never” provided professional development on collaboration for general and special education teachers on their campuses. See Table 12.

Table 12: Provide Professional Development on Collaboration for “All” Teachers

Camus Administrator	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Principals	53.2%	29%	17.7%		
Assistant Principals	32.5%	28.8%	23.8%	10%	5%

Next, the survey inquired as to the campus administrators’ knowledge level of “Creating an accepting inclusive school climate.” The respondents were given directions on the rating system in the survey (Appendix A). One hundred thirty seven campus administrators responded. Of those 60 were principals and 77 were assistant principals. Of the principals 53.3% indicated that they had “Extensive Knowledge”, 38.3% had “Comprehensive Knowledge”, 8.3% had “Basic Knowledge” of creating an inclusive school climate. The assistant principals 28.6% had “Extensive Knowledge”, 49.4% had “Comprehensive Knowledge”, 18.2% had “Basic Knowledge”, 2.6% had “Limited Knowledge”, and 1.3% answered that they “Did Not Know” or have no knowledge of creating an inclusive school climate. See Table 13.

Table 13: Create an Accepting Inclusive School Environment

Campus Administrator	Extensive Knowledge	Comprehensive Knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Limited Knowledge	No Not Know
Principals	53.3%	38.3%	8.3%		
Assistant Principals	28.6%	49.4%	18.2%	2.6%	1.3%

Another survey question inquired as to the campus administrators' knowledge level of "Program evaluation procedures to assess special education services on my campus." Total responses for this statement were 138 of which 61 were principals and 77 were assistant principals. Principals indicated that 24.6% had "Extensive Knowledge", 49.2% had "Comprehensive Knowledge", 21.3% had "Basic Knowledge", 3.3% had "Limited Knowledge" and 1.6% had "No knowledge of program procedures to assess special education services on their campuses." Of the assistant principals, only 13.0% had "Extensive Knowledge", 41.6% had "Comprehensive Knowledge", 26% had "Basic Knowledge", 15.6% had "Limited Knowledge" and 3.9% had "No Knowledge of program procedures to assess special education services." See Table 14.

Table 14: Program Evaluation Procedures to Assess Special Education Services

Campus Administrator	Extensive Knowledge	Comprehensive Knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Limited Knowledge	No Knowledge
Principals	24.6%	49.2%	21.3%	3.3%	1.6%
Assistant Principals	13%	41.6%	26%	15.6%	3.9%

In terms of characteristics of students with disabilities, a survey question inquired as to the campus administrators' knowledge level of being able to "Identify characteristics of disabilities." Total responses numbered 138 of which 61 were principals and 77 were assistant principals. Ten principals indicated that or 16.4% had "Extensive Knowledge", thirty-eight or 62.3% had "Comprehensive Knowledge", twelve or 19.7% had "Basic Knowledge" and 1.6% had "Limited Knowledge" of identifying characteristics of disabilities. The assistant principals responded that 15.6% had "Extensive Knowledge", 48.1% had "Comprehensive Knowledge", 31.2% had "Basic Knowledge", 2.6% had

“Limited Knowledge” and 2.6% had “No knowledge of identifying characteristics of disabilities.” See Table 15.

Table 15: Characteristics of Students with Disabilities

Campus Administrator	Extensive Knowledge	Comprehensive Knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Limited Knowledge	No Knowledge
Principals	16.4%	62.3%	19.7%	1.6%	
Assistant Principals	15.6%	48.1%	31.2%	2.6%	2.6%

In terms of legislation, court actions and special education law, the survey questions inquired as to the campus administrators’ knowledge level of “Making decisions based on key legislation in special education” had 137 responses, 61 were principals and 76 were assistant principals. 21.3% of principals indicated they had “Extensive Knowledge”, 55.7% had “Comprehensive Knowledge”, 19.7% had “Basic Knowledge” and 3.3% had No Knowledge of “making decisions based on key legislation”. Assistant principals had 21.1% with “Extensive Knowledge”, 40.8% had “Comprehensive”, 26.3% had “Basic Knowledge”, 9.2% had “Limited Knowledge” and 2.6% had “No knowledge of making decisions based on key legislation in special education.”

Another survey question inquired as to the campus administrators’ knowledge level of “Identifying the steps in the referral process for special education.” There were 137 responses, sixty were principals and 77 were assistant principals. The principals indicated that 45% had “Extensive Knowledge”, 45% had “Comprehensive Knowledge”, 8.3% had “Basic Knowledge” and 1.7% had “No Knowledge of identifying the steps in the referral process for special education”. Assistant principals indicated that 35.1% had “Extensive Knowledge”, 39.0% had “Comprehensive Knowledge”, 19.5% had

“Basic Knowledge”, 5.2% had “Limited Knowledge” and 1.3% had “No knowledge of identifying the steps in the referral process.”

The next survey question inquired as to the campus administrators’ knowledge level of “Identifying principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.” There were a total of 137 responses, 60 principals and 77 assistant principals. Principals indicated that 38.3% had “Extensive Knowledge”, 43.3% had “Comprehensive Knowledge”, 13.3% had “Basic Knowledge”, 3.3% had “Limited Knowledge” and 1.7% had “No knowledge in identifying principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act”. Assistant principals indicated that 24.7% had “Extensive Knowledge”, 35.1% had “Comprehensive Knowledge”, 29.9% had “Basic Knowledge”, 7.8% had “Limited Knowledge” and 2.6% had “No knowledge in identifying principles of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.” See Table 16.

Table 16: Knowledge in Identifying the Principles of IDEA

Campus Administrator	Extensive Knowledge	Comprehensive Knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Limited Knowledge	No Knowledge
Principals	38.3%	43.3%	13.3%	3.3%	1.7%
Assistant Principals	24.7%	35.1%	29.9%	7.8%	2.6%

A final survey question inquired as to the campus administrators’ knowledge level of “Disciplining students with disabilities in accordance with legislative mandates.” This question had 138 responses, 61 principals and 77 assistant principals. 90.2% of principals indicated that they had “Extensive or Comprehensive Knowledge”, 8.2% had “Basic Knowledge” and 1.6% had “Limited Knowledge” in “Disciplining students with disabilities in accordance with legislative mandates”. 70.2% of assistant principals indicated that they had “Extensive or Comprehensive Knowledge”, 22.1% had

“Basic Knowledge”, 5.2% had “Limited Knowledge” and 2.6% had “No Knowledge” of “disciplining students with disabilities in accordance with legislative mandates”. See Table 17.

Table 17: Disciplining Students with Disabilities

Campus Administrator	Extensive or Comprehensive	Basic	Limited	No Knowledge
Principals	90.2%	8.2%	1.6%	
Assistant Principals	70.2%	22.1%	5.2%	2.6%

In terms of legislation and court actions, the Likert-scale statements were designed to assess education leaders’ knowledge of special education law. Participates’ answers were the analyzed for whether they correctly identified the true or false statements. Respondents’ answers of “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” are correct for all true statements. “Neutral”, “Disagree”, “Strongly Disagree”, and “Not Aware”, are considered incorrect for true statements. Respondents’ answers “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” are correct for all false statements. “Neutral”, “Agree”, “Strongly Agree”, and “Not Aware”, are considered incorrect for all false statements. There are eleven statements in this section.

The first statement inquired if “Students with disabilities are entitled to free and appropriate public education.” This is a true statement. One hundred thirty one of the educational leaders responded to this statement. Of the 131, fifty-nine were principals and seventy-two assistant principals. All the principals (100%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Of the assistant principals; 95.8% agreed or strongly agreed, a correct response. Of the assistant principals 4.2% responded incorrectly. See Table 18.

Table 18: Students with Disabilities are Entitled FAPE - TRUE

Campus Administrator	Correct	Incorrect
Principals	100%	
Assistant Principals	95.8%	4.2%

The next statement inquired if “transportation does not need to be addressed as a component of a student’s IEP (Individual Education Plan.)” The statement is false. Respondents numbered 130 for this statement. Principals numbered 59 and assistant principals totaled 71. Principals had a correct response rate of 77.9% and 22.1% were incorrect. Assistant principals’ correct rate of response was 83.1% and had an incorrect rate of 16.8%. See Table 19.

Table 19: Transportation as a Component of a Student’s IEP - FALSE

Campus Administrator	Correct	Incorrect
Principals	77.9%	22.1%
Assistant Principals	83.1%	16.8%

“The need for assistive technology devices and services should be addressed as a component of a student’s IEP (Individual Education Plan)”, was another statement and was true. The correct response rate for principals was 89.8% correct and the incorrect rate was 10.2%. Assistant principals’ responded correctly with a 90.3% rate, 9.8% were incorrect.

A statement inquired of campus administrators if “the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is the setting that permits a student with a disability to be educated with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate.” This statement was true. Of the 131 respondents, 59 were principals and 72 assistant

principals. All principals (100%) had this statement correctly. Assistant principals' correct response rate was 95.4%.

"Parental consent must be obtained in order to conduct an initial evaluation to determine special education eligibility" was another statement that campus administrators were asked to evaluate. This statement is true. Fifty-eight principals and seventy-eight assistant principals for a total of 130 responses. Principals' correct response rate was 98.3% and assistant principals' correct response rate was 91.7%. The assistant principals' incorrect response rate was 9.4%.

A statement inquired of campus administrators if "the removal of a student with a disability from his or her current placement for more than ten days in the same school year does not constitute a change in special education placement." This statement was false. There were 128 responses, 58 were principals and 70 were assistant principals. The principals' had a correct response rate of 81.0% and an incorrect rate of 18.9%. The assistant principals' correct response rate was 67.2% and an incorrect rate of 32.8%. These rates seem to indicate that education leaders' are lacking in knowledge regarding the regulated safeguards in place, that concern the removal of a student with a disability for more than ten does constitutes a change in that students special education placement. See Table 20.

Table 20: The Removal of a Student with a Disability - FALSE

Campus Administrator	Correct	Incorrect
Principals	81%	18.9%
Assistant Principals	67.2%	32.8%

Campus administrators were questioned regarding the statement "a manifestation determination review establishes the relationship between a student's disability and the behavior that is bases for disciplinary action." This statement is true. Principals' correct response rate was 91% or 51 of 56

respondents. Assistant principals had 91.7% correct response rate or 66 of 72 respondents. Total respondents numbered 128.

The next statement inquired, “Must each school district ensure that a continuum of special education placements is available to meet the needs of students with disabilities.” This statement is true. There were 130 responses to this statement. The number of principal responses was 58 and 72 assistant principals responded. The correct response rate of principal respondents was 94.8% and 5.1% incorrect response rate. Assistant principals’ correct response rate was 90.2% and incorrect rate was 9.8%.

“Students do not need to be invited to attend Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings with transition services are being discussed” was another statement that was asked of campus administrators. This statement is false. There were 129 responses to this statement, 57 were principals and 72 were assistant principals. The principals’ had a correct response rate of 64.9% and an incorrect rate of 35.1%. The assistant principals’ correct response rate was 65.2% and an incorrect rate of 34.7%. These rates seem to indicate that education leaders’ are lacking in knowledge regarding the regulated safeguards in place, that recognize the need for a student with a disability to be present when his or her transition into the community is being discussed. See Table 21.

Table 21: Students Do Not Need to Attend IEP Meetings re: Transition Services - FALSE

Campus Administrator	Correct	Incorrect
Principals	64.9%	35.1%
Assistant Principals	65.2%	34.7%

The next statement inquired of campus administrators if “A student has a specific accommodation on his or her Individual Educational Plan (IEP) but it is not implemented in classroom the student is still allowed to use the accommodation when taking the current state assessment.” This statement is false. This statement had 128 responses, of which 56 were principals and 72 were assistant

principals. The principals' had a correct response rate of 71.4% and an incorrect rate of 28.5%. The assistant principals' correct response rate was 61.1% and an incorrect rate of 38.8%. These rates seem to indicate that education leaders' are lacking in knowledge regarding the regulated safeguards in place, that insure that a student with a disability receives all accommodations stated in Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) not only for state assessments but also during his or her everyday curriculum so the student is able achieve success. See Table 22.

Table 22: Specific Accommodations Being Used During State Assessment. - FALSE

Campus Administrator	Correct	Incorrect
Principals	71.4%	28.5%
Assistant Principals	61.1%	38.8%

In terms of being able to educate the school community about how to teach and assess students with learning differences, the survey question inquired what was the campus administrators' knowledge level regarding "Training teachers to develop universally designed lessons." There were 137 responses to this statement. Of the 137 responses, 60 were principals and 77 were assistant principals. Of the principal responses, 20% felt they had extensive experience, 51.7% felt they had "Comprehensive Knowledge", 23.3% felt they had "Basic Knowledge", and 5% indicated they had "Limited Knowledge" in training teachers in universally designed lesson plans. The assistant principals indicated that 11.7% felt they had "Extensive Knowledge", 36.4% had "Comprehensive Knowledge", 41.6% had "Basic Knowledge", 6.5% had "Limited Knowledge", 3.9% had "No knowledge" of training teachers to develop universally designed lessons. See Table 23.

Table 23: Train Teachers to Develop Universally Designed Lessons

Campus Administrator	Extensive Knowledge	Comprehensive Knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Limited Knowledge	No Knowledge
Principals	20%	51.7%	23.3%	5%	
Assistant Principals	11.7%	36.4%	41.6%	6.5%	3.9%

The next question inquired the knowledge level of campus administrators to “Train teachers in the development of alternative assessments for students with significant disabilities.” There were 138 responses for this statement, 61 were principals and 77 were assistant principals. Of the 61 principal responses 16.4% felt they had “Extensive Knowledge”, 29.5% had “Comprehensive Knowledge”, 29.5% had “Basic Knowledge”, 14.8% felt they had “Limited Knowledge” and 9.8% “Did Not Know.” 10.4% of assistant principals felt they had “Extensive Knowledge”, 26% indicated “Comprehensive Knowledge”, 36.4% had “Basic Knowledge”, 14.3% had “Limited Knowledge” and 13% “Did Not Know.”

The next statement asked educational leaders’ knowledge level regarding “Training teachers in the use of research based best practice instructional strategies for students with disabilities.” Of the 137 responses, 61 were principals and 76 were assistant principals. 26.2% of the principals felt they had “Extensive Knowledge”, 47.5% had “Comprehensive Knowledge”, 21.3% had “Basic Knowledge” and 4.9% responded that they had “Limited Knowledge” in training teachers in using best practice instructional strategies for students with disabilities. Assistant principals responded that 14.5% felt they had extensive knowledge, 42.1% indicated “Comprehensive Knowledge”, 28.9% had “Basic Knowledge”, 6.6% had “Limited Knowledge” and 7.9% “Did Not Know” See Table 24.

Table 24: Training Teachers in Research Based Best Practice Instructional Strategies

Campus Administrator	Extensive Knowledge	Comprehensive Knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Limited Knowledge	No Knowledge
Principals	26.2%	47.5%	21.3%	4.9%	
Assistant Principals	14.5%	42.1%	28.9%	6.6%	7.9%

Another survey question inquired as to the campus administrators' knowledge level of "Training teachers how to implement the different types of inclusion programs." Total responses numbered 138, 61 of which were principal responses and 77 were assistant principals. Principals indicated that 26.2% had "Extensive Knowledge", 44.3% had "Comprehensive Knowledge", 24.6% had "Basic Knowledge", 3.3% had "Limited Knowledge" and 1.6% "Did Not Know". Assistant principals responded that 15.6% had extensive knowledge, 33.8% had Comprehensive Knowledge, 33.8% had "Basic Knowledge", 13% had "Limited Knowledge" of how to train teachers in the implementation of different types of inclusion programs and 3.9% did not know. See Table 25.

Table 25: Train Teachers how to Implement the Different Types of Inclusion Programs

Campus Administrator	Extensive Knowledge	Comprehensive Knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Limited Knowledge	No Knowledge
Principals	26.2%	44.3%	24.6%	3.3%	1.6%
Assistant Principals	15.6%	33.8%	33.8%	13%	3.9%

Educational Leaders' Understanding of Current Issues in Special Education

For this study, knowledge of current issues was divided into four areas (a) accountability that includes the outcomes for students with disabilities, (b) early identification of at-risk students, (c) educating the school community in the use of research-based instructional intervention, and (d) appropriate access to the general curriculum.

In terms of accountability, that includes the outcomes for students with disabilities, the first survey question inquired regarding the frequency in which campus administrators “Provided professional development to general and special education teachers that enables them to develop the strategies needed for all students to become successful in the general education classroom.” This statement had 142 responses. Of those 62 were principals and 80 were assistant principals. 90.4% of the principals responded that they “Always” or “Almost Always” provide professional development that enables teachers to develop strategies so the entire student population may become successful in the general education classroom. 9.7% stated that they only “Sometimes” provide this type of professional development. 70% of the assistant principals responded that “Always” or “Almost Always” provide this type of staff development. 20% indicated that they “Sometimes”, 5% responded that they “Rarely” and another 5% responded that they “Never” provide staff development that enables their teachers to develop the strategies necessary for all students to become successful in the general education classroom. See Table 26.

Table 26: Provide Professional Development to Develop Strategies in General Education Setting

Campus Administrator	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Principals	56.5%	33.9%	9.7%		
Assistant Principals	32.5%	37.5%	20%	5%	5

The next survey question inquired as to the campus administrators' knowledge level of "Training teachers in the development of alternate assessments for students with significant disabilities." There were 138 responses to this statement, of that 61 were principals and 77 were assistant principals. Principals indicated that 16.4% had "Extensive Knowledge", 29.5% had "Comprehensive Knowledge", 29.5% had "Basic Knowledge", 14.8% had "Limited knowledge" and 9.8% "Did Not Know." Assistant principals responded that 10.4% had "Extensive Knowledge", 26.0% had "Comprehensive Knowledge", 36.4% had "Basic Knowledge", 14.3% had "Limited Knowledge" and 13% "Did Not Know".

See Table 27.

Table 27: Train Teachers in the Development of Alternate Assessments

Campus Administrator	Extensive	Comprehensive	Basic	Limited	No Knowledge
Principals	16.4%	29.5%	29.5%	14.8%	9.8%
Assistant Principals	10.4%	26%	36.4%	14.3%	13%

Another survey question inquired as to the campus administrators' knowledge level of "Evaluating alternative assessments for students with significant disabilities." There were 137 responses to this statement, 61 were principals and 76 were assistant principals. 23.0% of the principals responded that they had "Extensive Knowledge", 44.3% had "Comprehensive Knowledge", 19.7% had "Basic Knowledge" and 6.6% each had "Limited" or "Did Not Know". Assistant principals indicated that 17.1% had "Extensive" knowledge, 30.3% had "Comprehensive" knowledge, 31.6% had "Basic" knowledge, 14.5% had "Limited" and 6.6% indicated that "Did Not Know". See Table 28.

Table 28: Evaluate Alternative Assessments for Students with Significant Disabilities

Campus Administrator	Extensive Knowledge	Comprehensive Knowledge	Basic	Limited	No Knowledge
Principals	23%	44.3%	19.7%	6.6%	6.6%
Assistant Principals	17.1%	30.3%	31.6%	14.5%	6.6%

The next survey question inquired as to the campus administrators' knowledge level "Planning transition services for students with disabilities." There 135 responses to this statement, 60 were principals and 75 were assistant principals. 20% of the principals indicated they had "Extensive" knowledge, 36.7% had "Comprehensive" knowledge, 23.3% had "Basic" knowledge, 13.3% had "Limited" knowledge and 6.7% "Did Not Know." The assistant principal responded that 12% had "Extensive" knowledge, 22.7% had "Comprehensive" knowledge, 37.3% had "Basic" knowledge, 16% had "Limited" knowledge, and 12% "Did Not Know." See Table 29.

Table 29: Plan Transition Services for Students with Disabilities

Campus Administrator	Extensive	Comprehensive	Basic	Limited	No
Principals	20%	36.7%	23.3%	13.3%	6.7%
Assistant Principals	12%	22.7%	37.3%	16%	12%

In terms of "Early identification of at-risk student." Educational leaders responded by indicating the frequency with which they "Make sure that the general education teachers provide interventions and monitor the struggling student's response to the interventions." This statement had 142 responses, 62

principals and 80 assistant principals. 100% of principals and 91.3% of assistant principals indicated that they “always” or “almost always” make sure general education teachers provide and monitor a struggling student’s response to interventions. See Table 30.

Table 30: Provide Interventions and Monitor Student’s Response-to-Interventions

Campus Administrator	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Principals	75.8%	24.2%			
Assistant Principals	56.3%	35%	5%	1.3%	2.5%

The two next inquiries requested that educational leaders indicate their level of knowledge with regard to each statement. The first statement was “Training teachers to develop universally designed lessons.” There were 137 respondents to this statement, 60 were principles and 77 were assistant principals. 20% of principals and 11.7% of assistant principals indicated they had “extensive knowledge, 51.7% of principals and 36.4% of assistant principals indicated a “comprehensive” knowledge, 23.3% of principal and 41.6% of assistant principals indicated a “basic” knowledge in training teachers to develop universally designed lessons. See Table 31.

Table 31: Train Teachers to Develop Universally Designed Lessons

Campus Administrator	Extensive Knowledge	Comprehensive Knowledge	Basic	Limited	No Knowledge
Principals	20%	51.7%	23.3%	5%	
Assistant Principals	11.7%	36.4%	41.6%	6.5%	3.9%

The second statement was “Training teachers to use data based instructional decisions and monitoring” and had 138 respondents. Of the 138 responses, 61 were principals and 77 were assistant principals. 90.2% of the principals and 62.4% of the assistant principals indicate that they had “extensive” or “comprehensive” knowledge, and 24.7% of assistant principals had “basic” knowledge of training teachers to use data based instructional decisions and monitoring. See Table 32.

Table 32: Train Teachers to Use Data Based Instructional Decisions and Monitoring

Campus Administrator	Extensive Knowledge	Comprehensive Knowledge	Basic	Limited	No Knowledge
Principals	37.7%	52.5%	4.9%	4.9%	
Assistant Principals	28.6%	33.8%	24.7%	6.5%	6.5%

In terms of “educating the school community in the use of research-based instructional interventions (RTI).” Educational leaders responded to one statement by indicating the frequency with which they “provide materials for pre-referral/RTI teams to include progress monitoring and intervention supplies.” There were 142 responses to this statement, 62 principals and 80 assistant principals. 85.5% of principals and 65.1% of assistant principals responded that they “always” or

“almost always” provide materials for pre-referral/RTI teams and intervention supplies. 12.9% of principals and 22.5 of assistant principals indicated that “sometimes” they provide materials.

See Table 33.

Table 33: Provide Materials for Pre-referral/RTI Teams

Campus Administrator	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Principals	61.3%	24.2%	12.9%	1.6%	
Assistant Principals	33.8%	31.3%	22.5%	7.5%	5.0%

The next three statements requested that respondents indicate their level of knowledge in “Training teachers in the use of research based best practice instructional strategies for students with disabilities, different learning styles and different cultural backgrounds.” Principals averaged 73.7% and assistant principals averaged 56.6% for “Extensive” and “Comprehensive” knowledge of “Training teachers in the use of research based best practice instructional strategies for students with disabilities.” Principals averaged 83.6% and assistant principals averaged 61.1% for “Extensive” and “Comprehensive” knowledge of “Training teachers in the use of research based best practice instructional strategies for students with different learning styles.” Principals averaged 82% and assistant principals averaged 55.9% for “Extensive” and “Comprehensive” knowledge of “Training teachers in the use of research based best practice instructional strategies for students with different cultural backgrounds.” See Table 34.

Table 34: Train Teachers in the Use of Research Based Instructional Strategies for

Campus Administrators	Students with Disabilities	Students with Different Learning Styles	Students with Different Cultural Backgrounds
Principals	73.7%	83.6%	82%
Assistant Principals	56.6%	61.1%	55.9%

The survey question indentified knowledge of special education law. A true statement is correct if the educational leader responds “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”. A false statement is correct if the educational leader responds “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree”. The statement inquired if, “The 2004 Amendments to the Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act required schools to use research-based interventions in the process of assisting students with learning difficulties or determining qualification for special education.” This statement is true. 85.7% of principals and 78.8% of assistant principals answered this statement correctly.

In terms of “Appropriate access to the general education curriculum”, the first statement requests that educational leaders respond to the statement by indicating the frequency use of the statement. The statement is “Providing professional development to general and special education teachers on collaboration.” 82.2% of principals and 61.3% of assistant principals indicated that they “Always” or “Almost Always” provide profession development on collaboration to both general and special education teachers. 17.7% of principals and 23.8% of assistant principals “Sometimes” provide professional development on collaboration. 15% of assistant principals “Rarely” or “Never” provide professional development on collaboration. See Table 35.

Table 35: Provide Professional Development to “All” Teachers on Collaboration

Campus Administrator	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Principals	53.2%	29%	17.7%		
Assistant Principals	32.5%	28.8%	23.8%	10%	5%

The next set of statements requests that the educational leaders indicate their level of knowledge for the stated strategies. The first statement is “Training special education teachers to use curriculum modifications and accommodations.” There were 138 responses to this statement. Of the 138 respondents, 61 were principals and 77 were assistant principals. 77.1% of the principals and 55.9% of assistant principals responded that they had “Extensive” or “Comprehensive” knowledge in training special education teachers on curriculum modifications and accommodations. 16.4% of principals and 26% of assistant principals have “Basic” knowledge, 6.6% of principals and 11.7% have “Limited” knowledge in training special education teachers on curriculum modifications. See Table 36.

Table 36: Train SPED Teachers to Use Curriculum Modifications and Accommodations

Campus Administrator	Extensive Knowledge	Comprehensive Knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Limited Knowledge	No Knowledge
Principals	27.9%	49.2%	16.4%	6.6%	
Assistant Principals	22.1%	33.8%	26%	11.7%	6.5%

The next statement inquires the knowledge level with regard to “Training teachers how to implement the different types of inclusion programs.” There were 138 responses to this statement, 61 of the respondents were principals and 77 were assistant principals. 70.5% of the principals and 49.4% of the assistant principals responded that they had “Extensive” or “Comprehensive” knowledge in the implementation of inclusion programs. “Basic” knowledge of inclusion programs was indicated by 24.6% of principals and 33.8% of assistant principals. 13% of assistant principals and 3.3% of principals responded that they had “Limited” knowledge of training teachers in the implementation of different types of inclusion programs. See Table 37.

Table 37: Train Teachers How to Implement the Different types of Inclusion

Campus Administrator	Extensive Knowledge	Comprehensive Knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Limited Knowledge	No Knowledge
Principals	26.2%	44.3%	24.6%	3.3%	1.6%
Assistant Principals	15.6%	33.8%	33.8%	13%	3.9%

“Providing models of how to promote participatory inclusion in general education classrooms for students with disabilities” was another statement. There were 138 responses to this statement. “Extensive” or “Comprehensive” knowledge of the promotion of participatory inclusion was indicated by 72.1% of the principals and 54.6% of the assistant principals. 23% of the principals and 23.4% of the assistant principals responded that they had “Basic” knowledge and 14.3% of assistant principals and 3.3% of principals indicated they had “Limited” knowledge of how to promote participatory inclusion in general education for students with disabilities. See Table 38.

Table 38: Provide Models of How to Promote Participatory Inclusion

Campus Administrator	Extensive Knowledge	Comprehensive Knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Limited Knowledge	No Knowledge
Principals	26.2%	45.9%	23%	3.3%	1.6%
Assistant Principals	18.2%	36.4%	23.4%	14.3%	7.8%

Beliefs and Practices of Educational Leaders Regarding Collaboration on Pre-referral/RTI Teams

The third research question inquired, “What are the beliefs and practices of educational leaders regarding facilitating collaboration on pre-referral intervention/RTI teams and serving students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in the general education classroom?”

The study requested educational leaders “To respond to the following statements based on your experiences as an educational leader facilitating collaboration on pre-referral intervention/RTI team. I” All statements had 142 respondents, 62 were principals and 80 were assistant principals. Statement a, “Am directly involved in the conferences that determine special education eligibility.” 67.7% of the principals and 62.5% of the assistant principals stated that they “Always” or “Almost Always” were directly involved in the determination of special education eligibility. Statement b, “Actively promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes.” 83.8% of the assistant principals and 71.9% of the principals indicated that they “Always” or “Almost Always” promote inclusion. Statement c inquired how often educational leaders “Promote the use of differentiated instructional methods to address the needs of students with diverse abilities.” and statement d asked “Make sure that the general education teachers provide interventions and monitor the struggling student’s response to the interventions.” Both statements had 100% of the principals indicating that they “Always” or “Almost Always” promoted the use of differentiated methods and made sure that teachers’ monitored students’ response to intervention. Of the assistant principals 90.1% of the assistant principals responded to statement c that they “Always” or “Almost Always” promoted the use of differentiated instructional

methods. 91.3% of assistant principals indicated that they “Always” or “Almost Always” made sure that general education teachers monitored students’ responses to interventions. Statement e inquired how often educational leaders “Allowed for protected time for special and general education teachers to attend meetings within the school day.” 88.7% of the principals and 72.6% of the assistant principals responded that they “Always” or “Almost Always” allowed for protected time for all teachers to attend meeting during the school day. Statement f inquired, “Provide professional development to general and special education teachers that enables them to develop the strategies needed for all students to become successful in the general education classroom.” 90.4% of the principals indicated that they “Always” or “Almost Always” provided professional development to develop strategies for success and 70% of the assistant principals indicated the same. Statement g inquired how often educational leaders “Provide professional development to general and special education teachers on collaboration.” 82.2% of principals indicated that they “Always or “Almost Always” provided professional development on collaboration. Of the assistant principals, only 61.3% indicated that they “Always” or “Almost Always” provided professional development on collaboration to all campus teachers. Statement h asked how often educational leaders “Provide materials for pre-referral/RTI teams to include progress monitoring and intervention supplies.” 85.5% of principals and 65.1% of assistant principals indicated that they provided supplies for intervention monitoring “Always” or “Almost Always”. Statement i asked how often educational leaders “Attend meetings with general and special education staff regarding pre-referral interventions/RTI.” 82.3% of principals and 66.3% of assistant principals indicated that they “Always” or “Almost Always” attended staff meetings regarding pre-referral/RTI meetings. See Table 39 for combined scores of “Always” and “Almost Always” for each statement.

Table 39: Statements Regarding Facilitating Collaboration on Pre-referral/RTI Teams

Statements	Principals	Assistant Principals
a. Direct involvement to determine special education eligibility	67.7%	62.5%
b. Promote the inclusion of all students in general education classrooms	71.9%	83.8%
c. Promote the use of differentiated instructional methods to address the needs of students with diverse abilities	100%	90.1%
d. Insure that the general education teachers provide interventions and monitor struggling student's RTI	100%	91.3%
e. Allow for protected time for special and general education teachers to attend meetings within the school day	88.7%	72.6%
f. Provide professional development to all teachers that develop strategies needed for success in the classroom	90.4%	70%
g. Provide professional development to all teachers on collaboration	82.2%	61.3%
h. Provide materials for pre-referral/RTI teams to include monitoring and intervention supplies	85.5%	65.1%
i. Attend meetings with all teachers regarding pre-referral interventions/RTI	82.3%	66.3%

The next statement read; “The 2004 Amendments to the Individual Education Improvement Act, required schools to use research-based interventions in the process of assisting students with learning difficulties or determining qualification for special education.” This statement is correct. 85.7% of principals and 78.8% of assistant principals answered this statement correctly.

The last question inquired that educational leaders indicate “how many years of experience they had being a member of a pre-referral/RTI team before becoming an educational leader.” There were 161 respondents to this question. 46.1% indicated that they “No” prior experience before they became

educational leaders and 27.7% indicated that the 1 to 3 years of experience on pre-referral/RTI teams prior to becoming an educational leader.

Educational Leaders, Their Preparation Programs and Special Education

The fourth research question inquired; “To what extent do educational leaders feel that their preparation program adequately prepared them for issues regarding special education?”

The first set questions request that educational leaders “Answer the following questions based on your educational leadership program.” There were 161 respondents to these questions. The first question asked; “Did you complete a course that was devoted to the curriculum and instruction of special education programs at the campus level?” 27.3% of the educational leaders indicated that they had completed course devoted to the curriculum and instruction of special education programs. The second question inquired; “Did you complete a course that was devoted to special education issues at the campus level?” 32.3% of the educational leaders that they had completed a course that was devoted to special education issues at the campus level. The third question asked; “Did you complete a course that was devoted to special education law?” At 42.2% this was the highest affirmative response rate of education leaders, that they had completed a course that was devoted to special education law. The final question inquired; “Did your educational leadership program prepare you to deal with the special education issues that you currently face?” 39.1% indicated that they felt their principal preparation program prepared them to deal with special education issues that they currently faced. See Table 40.

Table 40: Courses Taken During Preparation Program

Question regarding courses taken as part of the certification program	Percent of Campus Administrators who took the course
Did you complete a course devoted to the curriculum and instruction of special education programs at the campus level	27.3%
Did you complete a course that was devoted to special education issues at the campus level	32.3%
Did you complete a course that was devoted to special education law	42.2%
Did your certification program prepare you to deal with special education issues you currently face	39.1% Affirmative

The last question inquired; “Do you feel the information you received in your Principal’s or Mi-Management certification program regarding special education was...” Only 10.9% of the 161 respondents indicated that their preparation program was “More than adequate”. 37.4% felt that their preparation program was “Adequate” and 49% felt that their preparation program was “Less than adequate.” See Table 41.

Table 41: Information Received in Certification Program with Regard to Special Education

Question	More than Adequate	Adequate	Less than Adequate	None
Do you feel the information you received in your Principal’s or Mid-Management Certification program regarding special education was	10.9%	37.4%	49%	2.7%

Educational Leaders and Their Belief that Special Education is an Issue of Social Equity

The fifth and final research question inquired; “To what extent do educational leaders believe that special education is an issue of equity or social justice?” A set of questions requested that

educational leaders respond by giving their opinions. The rating scale range was “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Neutral”, “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree”. See Tables 42 and 43 for principal’s replies and Tables 44 and 45 for assistant principal’s replies.

Table 42: Principals’ Responses: What is Your Opinion Regarding

Principals’ Responses	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The campus accountability ratings should include all student’s scores	30.6%	30.6%	4.8%	22.6%	11.3%
The educational leaders are responsible for the education of all students on their campus	77.4%	17.7%	1.6%		3.2%
Every teacher on campus should welcome the diversity of students	79%	17.7		1%	3.2%
All teachers on the campus are responsible for the teaching of all students	80.6%	14.5%		1.6%	3.2%
All students on the on the campus are held to high expectations	71%	22.6%		3.2%	3.2%
The general curriculum is accessible	64.5%	29%		3.2%	3.2%
Instruction in the general education classroom is accessible to all students	64.5%	27.4%	1.6%	3.2%	3.2%
Students with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate education	88.1%	11.9%			

Table 43: Principals' Responses: Reply Based on Your Experiences

Principals' Responses	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
Special education is a form of tracking that has been institutional into the educational system through federal and state legislation	10.7%	26.8%	16.1%	32.1%	14.3%
Special education is a form of tracking that has been institutional into the educational system through the current funding systems	10.7%	16.1%	26.8%	33.9%	12.5%
Social justice means an equitable distribution of social goods including education	32.1%	26.8%	28.6%	8.9%	3.6%
Inclusion is an issue of social justice as well as an issue of equity	30.4%	37.5%	23.2%	7.1%	1.8%
The existence of dual systems of education (general and special) conflicts with the principals of social justice	5.5%	9.1%	34.5%	36.4%	14.5%
Placing students with disabilities in separate classrooms communicates that it is acceptable to isolate certain groups of students	11.1%	18.5%	18.5%	38.9%	13%
The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes is a way to achieve social justice for students with disabilities	23.2%	51.8%	19.6%	3.6%	1.8%
The development of an individualized education plan (IEP) is a democratic process	25.5%	38.2%	29.1%	3.6%	3.6%
The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes benefits all students	37.5%	41.1%	10.7%	8.9%	1.8%
Inclusion should be implemented as a school-wide reform effort that blends resources and integrates programs	32.1%	48.2%	14.3%	3.6%	1.8%

Table 44: Assistant Principals' Responses: What is Your Opinion Regarding

Assistant Principals' Responses	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The campus accountability ratings should include all student's scores	46.3%	13.4%	3.7%	1.2%	4.9%
The educational leaders are responsible for the education of all students on their campus	69.5%	20.7%	3.7%	1.2%	4.9%
Every teacher on campus should welcome the diversity of students	67.9%	27.2%			4.9%
All teachers on the campus are responsible for the teaching of all students	64.6%	23.2%	2.4%	3.7%	6.1%
All students on the on the campus are held to high expectations	59.8%	30.5%	1.2%	3.7%	4.9%
The general curriculum is accessible	46.3%	39%	3.7%	4.9%	6.1%
Instruction in the general education classroom is accessible to all students	4.2%	38.3%	4.9%	7.4%	7.4%
Students with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate education	84.7%	11.1%	2.8%		

Table 45: Assistant Principals' Responses: Reply Based on Your Experiences

Assistant Principals' Responses	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
Special education is a form of tracking that has been institutional into the educational system through federal and state legislation	10.6%	28.8%	21.2%	24.2%	15.2%
Special education is a form of tracking that has been institutional into the educational system through the current funding systems	12.1%	25.8%	19.7%	27.3%	15.3%
Social justice means an equitable distribution of social goods including education	21.2%	50%	19.7%	7.6%	1.5%
Inclusion is an issue of social justice as well as an issue of equity	28.4%	43.3%	17.9%	9%	1.5%
The existence of dual systems of education (general and special) conflicts with the principals of social justice	6%	9%	25.4%	47.8%	11.9%
Placing students with disabilities in separate classrooms communicates that it is acceptable to isolate certain groups of students	9%	22.4%	13.4%	37.3%	17.9%
The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes is a way to achieve social justice for students with disabilities	22.4%	49.3%	13.4%	11.9%	3%
The development of an individualized education plan (IEP) is a democratic process	17.9%	37.3%	20.9%	19.4%	4.5%
The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes benefits all students	35.8%	41.8%	6%	13.4%	3%
Inclusion should be implemented as a school-wide reform effort that blends resources and integrates programs	34.8%	45.5%	12.1%	6.1%	1.5%

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion of each research question's conclusions and their implications. A summary of the conclusions and recommendations for educational leaders and campus administrators' certification programs close the chapter.

Research Question One Conclusions

"To what extent do educational leaders understand core (fundamental) issues in special education?" Fundamental knowledge has four indicators (a) professional practice and collaboration, (b) characteristics of students with disabilities, (c) legislation, court actions and special education law, and (d) educating the school community about how to teach and assess students with learning differences.

In terms of "Professional practice and collaboration." Only 82.2% of the principals and 61.3% of the assistant principals indicated that they "Always" or "Almost Always" provided professional development to general and special education teachers on their campuses. With No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), campus administrators are federally mandated to place students with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) additionally, educational leaders have been charged with task of administering interventions to the student population in the general education classrooms. For these initiatives to be successful both special education teachers and general education teachers need skills in collaboration. McLaughlin (2002) found that campuses that were effective in using collaboration had teachers who problem solved and planned together around curricular goals to ensure opportunities for all students to learn.

Campus administrators must also be able to assess special education programs and services on their campuses to make decisions that will produce the most successful outcomes. Yet, only 73.8% of principals and 54.6% of assistant principals indicated that they had extensive or comprehensive knowledge in assessing just such programs on their campuses. The use of effective teaching strategies is vital for both general and special education. Educational leaders must be able to assess strategies that work. NCLB (2001) stresses the use of sound instructional practices validated by research, educational

leaders need to be able to identify and support the practices that are effective, for all students, especially those with disabilities. Mainzer et al., (2003) reported that campus administrators should be able to conduct meaningful evaluations of special education teachers, take an active instructional leader role by visiting classrooms, participating in meetings, and providing information and support about effective interventions.

In terms of “Characteristics of students with disabilities”, 78.7% of principals and 63.7% of the assistant principals indicated that they had “Extensive” or “Comprehensive” knowledge of the characteristics of students with disabilities. While both percentages should be greater, principals indicated a 15% higher ability to identify the characteristics of students with disabilities. This is an example of the “preparation gap” that is the gap between what has been taught in a preparation program and the competencies and skills that need to be developed in order to successfully perform the job. Recent reforms call for educational leaders to respond in a more proactive, preventative measure (Shellard, 2003). It is essential that educational leaders are equipped with the knowledge of how to do so for identified and at-risk students.

In terms of “Knowledge with respect to legislation, court action and special education law”, in all legislation and court action questions in the study principals indicated by 15% to 20% more “Extensive” and “Comprehensive” knowledge than assistant principals. Another example of the “preparation gap” or on-the-job training. Only 77% of principals felt they had “Extensive” or “Comprehensive” knowledge in the area of key legislation in special education, on which they based their decision-making. Assistant principals weighed in at 61.9%. Only 81% of principals indicated that they could identify the principles of IDEA and only 59.8% of the assistant principals felt comfortable with principles of IDEA. These educational leaders are making decisions daily regarding these very issues and in an area that is known for its’ litigious nature. Educational leaders have to understand not only the laws themselves but also the policies derived from such laws (Crockett 2002). Campus administrators must also understand the legal precedents that have been established through court cases and correctly interpret those precedents for implications for their students (Yell et al., 2001).

Principals did feel comfortable (90%) with identifying the steps of the referral process and assistant principals lagged at 74.1% (preparation gap.) Another area that principals indicated a large knowledge base was in disciplining students in accordance with legislative mandates. 90.2% of principals indicated “Extensive or Comprehensive” knowledge in this area. Yet only 81% of the principals answered the question under special education law regarding discipline correctly. 70.2% of assistant principals indicated having “Extensive or Comprehensive” knowledge in disciplining students with a disability. This may indicate, that campus administrators have an inflated margin (10%) of what they perceive they know and being able to transfer that knowledge into everyday administrative decisions. Special education is a leading area for litigation for school districts across the nation. The understanding by campus administrators of the elements of the laws that shape special education is crucial (Johnson & Duffet, 2003).

Under Section VII Special Education Law, principals at 100% and assistant principals at 95.8% agreed or strongly agreed that students with disabilities were entitled to a free and appropriate education. However, another survey question, which asked education leaders to rate their level of agreement with the statement “The campus accountability ratings should include all students’ assessments scores” only 61.2% of principals and 59.7% of assistant principals “Strongly Agreed” or “Agreed” with the statement. When administrators are not held accountable for the progress of one student population then that population is typically placed on low priority since there are no consequences for under performance. Thompson et al., (2001) stated that all students should be included in assessment systems because it avoids exclusion and to promotes high expectations. According to Elliott et al., (2000) it is generally believed that students who are not measured by educational accountability systems tend to be ignored when educational reforms are enacted.

The problem areas, as perceived by educational leaders, under the special education law portion of the study, centered around the IEP process, discipline, and state assessments. With regard to the IEP process, transportation needs were correctly identified by only 77.9% of principals but the assistant principals did better with 83.1% correct. This could be due to the fact that often it is the assistant principals who attend the annual IEP meetings.

Another potential problem area in the IEP process had to do with inviting students to IEP meeting when transition services are being discussed. Only 64.9% of principals and 65.2% of assistant principals indicated that the student should be invited to attend the IEP meeting especially when transition services are being discussed. These are services that deal directly with students' desires, hopes, and dreams regarding their life post secondary education. Would campus administrators every not inquire what general education students wanted to do with their lives after they finish the secondary education? Berdine (2003) summarized effective transition to include student focused planning, vocational development, interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration, family involvement, and efficient delivery of services at school and in the community.

As stated above only 71.4% of the principals and 61.1% of the assistant principals responded correctly to the question regarding accommodations and the state assessment. Now that NCLB has mandated that all students scores will counted to AYP for the campus, it is especially important that educational leaders understand how modifications are integrated into the state assessments to insure that students with disabilities are given the best opportunity to be successful on the state assessments.

In terms of "Educating the school community about how to teach and assess students with learning differences", neither principals or assistant principals ever indicated an "Extensive" or "Comprehensive" knowledge base above 74% on any question.

With relation to "Training teachers in the use of researched-based best practice instructional strategies for students" only 73.7% of principals and 56.6% of assistant principals responded that they had "Extensive or Comprehensive" knowledge in this area. With RTI, and other research-based initiatives now mandated and being used in the general education setting along with the LRE mandate it is now more important than ever that both general and special education teachers have the skills required to implement these types of initiatives. "Universally designed lessons" and "Training teachers in the use of research-based best practice instructional strategies for students" are skills that are valuable and required by all teachers yet less than three-quarters of principals and slightly more than half of assistant principals indicate having "Extensive or Comprehensive" knowledge in this area. Bosardin (2007)

points to the use of evidence-based practices to help principals develop needed skills to help them address the needs of all students on the campus. The Response-to-Intervention Model is an example of an educational practice that is supposed to create new inclusive administrative processes through providing layers of intervention within the school as well as more authentic student progress monitoring.

“Training teachers in how to implement the different types of inclusion programs,” 70.5% of principals and only 49.4% of assistant principals indicated having “Extensive or Comprehensive” knowledge in this area. The future of education has mandated that LRE is the preferred setting for all students. The only way to successfully implement such a mandate is for all campus teachers to be proficient in inclusion. This will be difficult to achieve without the full support the campuses’ educational leaders. Educational leaders must be able assess the programs on their campuses and appraise the teachers as well, they need to know what to look for just to fulfill their responsibilities as campus administrators.

In the area of “Training teachers in the development of alternative assessments for students with significant disabilities” only 45.9% of principals and 36.4% of assistant principals responded that they had “Extensive or Comprehensive” knowledge in this area. To whom are the educational leaders abdicating this responsibility?

Of the four indicators for fundamental or core issues in special education, campus administration indicated average knowledge in the areas of “legislation, court actions and special education law” and “average knowledge regarding characteristics of students with disabilities.” The first “legislation, court actions, and special education law” is probably the most punitive at first glance. But the real cause for concern is “Professional practice and collaboration” and “Educating the school community about how to teach and assess students with learning differences.” The study indicates that these are the weakest of the four indicators. With the mandates from IDEIA, NCLB, LRE, and the general education initiative of research-based interventions (RTI, Response-to-Intervention) that will be used to identify students who are “at-risk” for failure, it is now more important than ever for campus administrators to embrace their role as instructional leaders.

Research Question Two Conclusions

The second research question was “To what extent do educational leaders understand current issues in special education? Current issues included the four indicators; (a) accountability that includes the outcomes for students with disabilities; (b) early identification of at-risk students (c) educating the school community in the use of research-based instructional interventions; and (d) appropriate access to the general curriculum.

In terms of “Accountability that includes the outcomes for students with disabilities”, 90.4% of principals and 70% of assistant principals indicated that they “Always” or “Almost Always”, “Provide professional development to general and special education teachers that enables them to develop strategies needed for all students to become successful in the general education classroom.” This is a positive for principals, especially with the current educational climate towards inclusion and least restrictive environment (LRE). The twenty percent drop between principals and assistant principals is troubling, but this is evidence of the “preparation gap.” If it were perhaps, that principals were the ones that do all scheduling of professional development, then the scores would be closer because the assistant principals would understand “why” principals supported this statement. Thompson et al., (2001) stated that all students should be included in assessment systems because it avoids exclusion and to promotes high expectations. According to Elliott et al., (2000) it is generally believed that students who are not measured by educational accountability systems tend to be ignored when educational reforms are enacted.

Only 45.9% of principals and 34.4% of assistant principals reported that they had “Extensive” or “Comprehensive” knowledge of “Training teachers in the development of alternative assessments for students with disabilities.” Yet, as alternate assessments continue to be revised for better technical quality and alignment with alternate achievement standards, it is vital that educational leaders understand the format used in their state, the content required for assessment, and the requirements of performance by students using those assessments. While these assessments include measures of reading and math at the current time, these assessments differ in format and content from state to state.

Portfolios, checklists, and one-time performance skill assessments are the most frequent formats used by states (Byrnes, 2004).

Higher percentages are seen in the next statement. 67.3% of principals and 47% of assistant principals indicated “Extensive or Comprehensive Knowledge” of “Evaluating alternative assessments for students with significant disabilities.” The results for both these level of knowledge statements are disturbing for several reasons. First, that fact that the percentages are extremely low. Principals and assistant principals are not comfortable with their knowledge of creating assessments for students with significant disabilities and being able to transfer this knowledge to teachers of these students. Then, there are the slightly higher percentages that while they are unable to train teachers in the development of these assessments, they do feel more comfortable in evaluating the alternative assessments. This seems counter-intuitive, how can they evaluate if they do not understand what is involved in the development of the test.

Another area of concern is campus administrators’ knowledge of “Planning transition services for students with disabilities.” 56.7% of principals and 34.4% of assistant principals indicated that their knowledge base was “Extensive or Comprehensive” in the planning of transition services for students with disabilities. While it would be easy to believe, the low percentages are due to the fact that, transition happens only as the students exit the education system that is not factual. In the State of Texas where the study, was administered, transition services for students with disabilities is first considered in middle school. As stated above, Berdine (2003) summarized effective transition to include student focused planning, vocational development, interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration, family involvement, and efficient delivery of services at school and in the community.

The responses to “Accountability that includes outcomes for students with disabilities” demonstrate that campus administrators are struggling with accountability outcomes for students with disabilities. When administrators are not held accountable for the progress of one student population then that population is typically placed on low priority since there are no consequences for under performance. Thompson et al., (2001) stated that all students should be included in assessment systems

because it avoids exclusion and to promotes high expectations. According to Elliott et al., (2000) it is generally believed that students who are not measured by educational accountability systems tend to be ignored when educational reforms are enacted. The question becomes if the educational leaders are not able to adequately fulfill this role, then to whom have they abdicated this responsibility?

In terms of “Early identification of at-risk students”, 100% of the principals and 91.3% of assistant principals indicated that they “Always or Almost Always” to the statement, “Make sure that the general education teachers provide interventions and monitor the struggling student’s response to the intervention.” An excellent rate of response and it is important that teachers in the general education are not only providing interventions but are also monitoring the students’ responses. This is a pro-active approach to early identification. The general education teachers are able to identify students who are struggling, carefully monitor their responses to the different research-based interventions. If the student continues to struggle despite the interventions, the general education is then able to refer the student to special education and already has the documented “failure to respond” to different interventions already available. If the student does respond to an intervention then the general education teacher can continue to apply those interventions to help ensure that the student is successful.

The second statement inquired about the educational administrators’ knowledge of “Training teachers to use data based instructional decisions and monitoring”, 90.2% of the principals and 62.4% of the assistant principals reported that they had “Extensive or Comprehensive” knowledge. The principal response rate is excellent but the assistant principal rate is significantly lower. Raising the question of if there is another area of “preparation gap.” For change to happen campus administrators must not only verbally promote the new initiative but must also be able to demonstrate it, this is not possible if the campus administrators don’t have at least comprehensive knowledge of the subject matter.

Next, educational leaders were asked to rate their knowledge level for the statement “Training teachers to develop universally designed lessons”, only 71.7% of principals and 48.1% of assistant principals reported that they had “Extensive or Comprehensive” knowledge regarding the statement. The percentages are low considering how important universally designed lessons are to the classrooms. It is

especially important now with NCLB, IDEIA (2004), and LRE. Universally designed lessons would enable the teacher to target multiple learning styles and thus help ensure that more students are successful. These types of lessons would also allow for students with disabilities access to not only the grade appropriate curriculum but, also the general education classrooms as well. It is surprising that the response indicated a lack of competency regarding universally designed methods. Of the three statements, it is an older method than the other two statements and considered a best teaching practice. While it is an effective teaching practice it has not been mandated by NCLB and IDEIA like the first two statements regarding early identification and response-to-interventions (RTI). It would be unfortunate if the only methods or best teaching practices educational leaders became proficient with are the ones that are federally mandated.

In terms of “Educating the school community in the use of research-based instructional interventions (RTI)”, research-based instructional interventions are now federally mandated. A popular implementation of is known as RTI or response-to-intervention. The interventions are carefully monitored and response rates are well documented. The main features of RTI are high quality research-based instruction and interventions, universal screening, and progress monitoring (Bradley et al., 2005).

The following statement was “The 2004 Amendments to the Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act required schools to use research-based interventions in the process of assisting students with learning difficulties or determining qualification for special education.” This statement is correct so a correct answer would be “Strongly Agreed or Agreed.” 85.7% of principals and 78.8% of assistant principals indicated that they “Strongly Agreed or Agreed” with this statement. The study did have correct statements (2) where the principals scored a 100% for the correct answer. This is a federal mandate from 2004 and updated in 2006 so it is surprising that only 85.7% of principals answered correctly.

The next statement “Provide materials for pre-referral/RTI teams to include progress monitoring and intervention supplies.” 85.5% of the principals and 65.1% of the assistant principals indicated that they “Always” or “Almost Always” provide these materials. Yet, as previously stated 85.7% of

principals and 78.8% of assistant principals realize that research-based interventions are federally mandated and therefore technically it is “required” that supplies are available for use. Another difference between the principals’ response and the assistant principals’ response is interesting since this is a relatively new initiative and both principals and assistant principals would most probably be accessing this new model through staff development. Friend & Cook (2007) have stated that there are several ways in which campus administrators support RTI teams

- by purchasing materials for intervention and progress monitoring,
- permit staff to meet regularly at intervention meetings
- provide professional development to build capacity
- support the RTI model to resistant stake holders

The next statements refer to campus administrators’ ability to train teachers in the research-based best instructional strategies for students with disabilities, different learning styles, and different cultural backgrounds. For “Students with Disabilities” only 73.7% of principals and 56.6% assistant principals reported that they have “Extensive or Comprehensive” knowledge training teachers to use best instructional strategies for this student population. This is the lowest self-rating for principals of the three statements. Perhaps, one reason is that principals and assistant principals themselves do not have the experience in classrooms that have students with disabilities and their formal training does not address this area sufficiently.

Another statement dealt with different learning styles. 83.6% of principals and 61.1% of assistant principal indicated having “Extensive or Comprehensive” knowledge of “Training teachers in the use of best instructional strategies for different learning styles.” This statement is very relevant because as more students of different abilities gain access to the general education classrooms the general education teachers will need more instructional strategies to address the different learning styles and abilities of all the students. The literature indicates that higher levels of teacher collaboration increases student achievement on high-stakes state testing (Idol, 2006). With the ability to address different learning

styles, the teachers would then be in a position to ensure that their students are successful. Teaching to students with a wide range of abilities has traditionally been the realm of special education teachers but with current policies and mandates in place both general and special education will need to work together and collaborate to ensure success for the entire student population.

The final statement dealt with training teachers to be culturally sensitive to the different cultures of their student population. 82% of principals and 55.9% of the assistant principals reported having “Extensive or Comprehensive” knowledge in “Training teachers to use research-based best instructional strategies for teaching students from different cultural backgrounds.” This was slightly surprising in that sensitivity to different cultures of the student population, has been well documented in literature and can be used to enhance the student’s learning experience. Yet, a fifth of principals and almost half of assistant principals do not feel that they are able to train such strategies to teachers.

In all statements, assistant principals lagged behind principal knowledge by a range of 15% to 20%. Additional evidence that supports the theory of a “preparation gap” in their administrative certification program.

Finally, in terms of “Appropriate access to the general education curriculum”, educational leaders do indicate that they “Provide professional development to general and special education teachers on collaboration” at rate of 82.2% for principals and 61.3% for assistant principals. This is important because all campus teachers need to practice collaboration especially as more students with disabilities will be receiving more and more of their instruction in the general education setting. To ensure success for all students, including students with disabilities, both general and special education teacher will have to integrate their teaching styles. Collaboration will enable all teachers to be better equipped to handle the constantly varying student population and ensure that students have the best opportunity to be successful. With the LRE requirement even if students are placed into the special education program the delivery of these services will now be, for the most, in the general education classroom. “Push-in” services, where the staff serves the students in the classrooms instead of pulling

students out of the classroom, are now considered best practice with general and special education teachers practicing various types of co-teaching (Friend & Cook, 2007).

In terms of training teachers different strategies to be used in the classroom, the first strategy, “Training special education teachers to use curriculum modifications and accommodations.” 77.1% of the principals and 55.9% of the assistant principals indicated they had “Extensive or Comprehensive” knowledge in this strategy. The second strategy was “Training teachers how to implement the different types of inclusion programs. Only 70.5% of principals and a low 49.4% of the assistant principals felt that they had “Extensive or Comprehensive” knowledge of this strategy. The last statement inquired the knowledge level of the statement “Providing models of how to promote participatory inclusion in general education classrooms for students with disabilities.” 72.1% of principals and 54.6% of assistant principals indicated they had “Extensive or Comprehensive” knowledge regarding this statement.

All three of the statements basically deal with the fact the students with disabilities are more and likely to be in a general education setting. As close to total inclusion as possible is where our educational system now is heading. We see this in the “writing on the wall” in the mandates of NCLB, IDEIA, LRE and RTI. Campus administrators have the responsibility of ensuring that federal, state, and district mandates are met. These educational leaders are also responsible for ensuring that the teachers on their campuses are trained and able to initiate these mandates in classroom and are ultimately charged with enabling their student population the best opportunity for success. Yet, more than 20% of the principals and close to 50% of the assistant principals do not feel prepared to train their teachers in some of the very strategies that will help to provide for the opportunity of success for their entire student population. Why does such a large percentage of educational leaders feel so unprepared? Many took certification programs, which were supposed to have taught them the skills they would need to embrace their calling as campus administrator. Unfortunately, there is a gap in their certification programs, that gap being special education. For too long campus administrators, abdicated their role and responsibility to the central office or the special education department and they did not receive adequate training in special education in their certification programs. Now with site-based management, NCLB, IDEIA, LRE, and RTI educational leaders must play catch up or they will not be able to fulfill their obligation to

provide the entire student population with the opportunity of success, as well as, “a free and appropriate education.”

Research Question Three Conclusions

The third research question was “What are the beliefs and practices of educational leaders regarding facilitating collaboration on pre-referral intervention/RTI teams and servicing students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in the general education classroom?”

The highest margin of all educational leaders 46.1% had “no” previous experience being a member of a pre-referral/RTI team prior to becoming a campus administrator. 27.7% indicated that they had only three or less years of experience as a member of such a team. This inexperience with pre-referral/RTI teams could cause a tendency in the campus administrators to be willing to abdicate this responsibility. This would be very detrimental because this is a new initiative and requires change. Permanent change is not possible without the educational leaders’ full support both verbally (beliefs) and via their actions (practices). Change will only happen if teachers have the educational leader’s support (Fullan, 2007b; Hall & Hord, 2006). Schools are constantly changing and in the current climate of public education, campus administrators are the leaders of change (Hall & Hord, 2006). Abdicating this responsibility would send a message to the campus staff that the campus administrator did not support or value “the change” so the campus administrator felt comfortable in giving other personnel the responsibility of over seeing it. When the reality of the situation maybe that the campus administrator is not proficient in the administration of these relatively new programs.

As previously stated, 85.7% of the principals and 78.8% of the assistant principals indicated that the statement. “The 2004 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act requires schools to use research-based interventions, in the process of assisting students with learning difficulties or determining qualification for special education” was a correct statement. It is clear from this, that principals and for the most part assistant principals as well, understand that IDEIA has mandated the use of research-based interventions (RTI) for students in general education classroom as not only a way to a support students with learning difficulties but it is also a determining qualification

for placement in special education. With the LRE requirement even if students are placed into the special education program the delivery of these services will now be, for the most, in the general education classroom. “Push-in” services, when students are served by staff in the classrooms instead of pulling students out of the classroom, are now considered best practice and general and special education teachers practice various types of co-teaching (Friend & Cook, 2007).

Educational leaders were asked to respond to a set of statements by indicating their level of agreement or disagreement. The campus administrators both principals and assistant principals indicated an extremely high level of support for the statements. Principals indicated support at 100% for both statements and assistant principals at 90.1% and 91.3% , respectively; “Promoting the use of differentiated instructional methods to address the needs of students with diverse abilities” and the statement, “Making sure that the general education teachers provide interventions and monitor struggling student’s responses to interventions.” Both these statements speak to the beliefs and practices of educational leaders’ regarding servicing students with IEPs and struggling student in the general education setting. Principals also indicated strong support 80%+ for the statements; “Providing materials for pre-referral/RTI teams to include progress monitoring and intervention materials” and “Attending meetings with general education and special education staff regarding pre-referral interventions/RTI.” Principals indicated support at 85.5% and 82.3% respectively and assistant principals responded with support rates of 65.1% and 66.3%. These statements are important because they indicate strong support for pre-referral/RTI teams in both the beliefs and practices. The campus administrator is willing to financially support these teams and invest their time by attending the meetings. Unfortunately, the assistant principals’ support for these statements is 20+ percent points lower than the principals’ levels. Again, perhaps this is because of the “preparation gap.” According to Wright (2007) campus administrators are very important in supporting RTI because they have the power over resources, and their support is crucial to successful implementation of RTI.

A third statement specifically addresses collaboration “Providing professional development to general and special education teachers on collaboration.” Principals again indicated strong support (82.2%) for this statement, indicating that they are willing to invest in “collaboration” as a tool needed

by the entire campus teaching staff. Again assistant principals lagged (65.1%) by slightly less than twenty percent. There is an increased demand for collaboration between general and special education staff, as more students with IEPs are spending more time in general education classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Resources that support collaboration, in addition to professional development, are regularly scheduled meetings, materials and campus administrators' direct participation in collaborative activities (Friend & Cook, 2007; Hall & Hord, 2006). Collaboration is needed to implement and support change.

The only statements that produced mildly surprising results were "I am directly involved in conferences that determine special education eligibility" (principals at 67.7% and assistant principals at 62.5%) and "I actively promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classrooms." Regarding the first statement, both principals and assistant principals indicated a support level in the sixty percent range. It is mandated in the State of Texas that a campus administrator attend meetings involving IEPs and placement in special education. The second statement had more support from assistant principals (83.8%) than from principals (71.9%). This was very surprising because with NCLB, IDEIA, RTI, and LRE it is now federally mandated that students with disabilities be served in the general education setting when ever possible. Educational leaders, understand that the federal mandates of NCLB, IDEIA, and LRE, require that all their campus teachers be responsible and prepared to educate the entire school population. "By including all students in the calculation of AYP, educators must concern themselves with the treatment and education of students with disabilities" (National Council on Disability, 2004, p. 24). As a result special and general education teachers must work together to make sure that the instruction in special education programs is consistent with state general education curriculum and standards. One of the best ways to ensure that this is attainable is to facilitate collaboration between special and general education teachers, so that all teachers have the skills to promote the servicing all students even those with disabilities, in the general education classrooms. The sharing of ideas through collaboration would not only help develop the skills of the individual teachers it would also raise the skill level of the entire campus. The consistent use of RTI will not only help facilitate this but will also provide the opportunity for all students to achieve success.

Research Question Four Conclusions

In terms of “To what extent do educational leaders feel that their preparation program adequately prepared them for issues regarding special education.” Question 10 of the study inquired “Did you complete a course that was devoted to:

- a) The curriculum and instruction of special education programs at the campus level
- b) Special education issues at the campus level
- c) Special education law and
- d) Did your educational leadership program prepare you to deal with special education issues that you currently face?

Only 27.3% of campus administrators indicated that had taken a course in curriculum and instruction; only 32.3% had a class in special education issues at the campus level; the highest percentage point was 42.2% for a class in special education law; and finally to the question of how well did your preparation program prepare you to deal with special education issues you currently faces only 39.1% felt the program had adequately prepared them. This means over sixty percent of educational leaders “do not” feel adequately prepared. Yet, Lashey (2007) states that knowledge of special education laws and practices enhances the campus administrator’s ability to support educational equity. Wakeman, Browder, Flowers, and Ahigrim-Deizel (2006), reported that educational leaders’ knowledge base were related to their ability and desire to implement inclusion programs on their campuses. Farley (2002) states the lack of real exposure to special education concepts and the limited development of competencies which are needed in the role of educational leader creates a “preparation gap.” Farley (2002) also discusses a gap between what faculty is willing to teach and what is actually needed in campus administrators’ pre-service.

To the question, “How adequate was the information you received in your certification program regarding special education?” Only 10.9% of the respondents said it was more than adequate; 37.4% felt

it was adequate and 51.7% felt that information they received in the certification program was less than adequate.

Obviously, the vast majority of educational leaders do not feel that their certification programs properly prepared them to deal with the issues in special education that they face on a daily basis. For too long general education was considered a site-based management issue where as special education was under the auspices of the central office or the department of special education (Allbritten, 2004). With the recent mandates from NCLB, IDEIA, RTI and LRE special education has become a site-based or campus issue and educational leaders at the campus level have to make decisions in a more efficient and expedite ways. According to DiPiola and Walther-Thomas, (2003) the shift in the educational leaders' role from a building manager to an instructional leader creating a child centered learning environment implied that educational leaders expanded roles includes a mission to educate all children as well. This responsibility includes the education of students with disabilities. Educational leaders also feel pressure from parents, advocates, and attorneys who uphold the rights of students with disabilities, sometime at the expense of students and teachers in general education setting (Farley, 2002). When you add in the accountability for improving standardized test scores of students with disabilities, the difficulty of the educational leaders' jobs is more pronounced. Clash (2006) reported that working with students with disabilities under stringent legal demands has become a source of stress for campus administrators.

Although significant responsibility for special education is now placed at the campus level, studies indicate that educational leaders do not have an adequate level of preparation and training in this area (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Praisner, 2003; Valesky & Hirth, 1992). It is more important now than ever before that campus administrators are properly prepared so that they are able to embrace these new challenges and instruct their teaching staff so that all students, even students with disabilities, have the opportunity to receive their education with their peers in a general education setting. In order to achieve success the campus teachers will be looking to their administrators to guide them in their efforts to procure the best possible outcomes for their students. What does the lack of special education

preparation in certification program say about the value we place on educating our students with disabilities?

Research Question Five Conclusions

The fifth and final research question was “To what extent do educational leaders believe that special education is an issue of equity or social justice?”

Both principals and assistant principals indicated “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” (85% to 100% response range) that educational leaders are and/or teachers are:

- a) responsible for the education of all students
- b) every teacher on campus should welcome diversity
- c) are responsible for teaching all students
- d) all students are held to high expectations
- e) general curriculum is accessible
- f) instruction in general classroom is accessible to all students.

This high response rate is consistent with the mandates required by NCLB and IDEIA. The issue of social justice is specifically addressed in NCLB and IDEIA. During the reauthorization process for NCLB and IDEIA there was close attention paid to how certain groups of individuals failed to attain academic success (Council for Exceptional Children, 2004.) These laws now require public schools to meet high academic standards for all students regardless of their race, socioeconomic status, or disability. “By including all students in the calculation of AYP, educators must concern themselves with the treatment and education of students with disabilities” (National Council on Disability, 2004, p. 24). However, to the statement “The campus accountability rating should include all students’ scores” only 61.2% of the principals and 59.7% of the assistant principals “Strongly Agreed” or “Agreed”. When there are no consequences for lack of progress it becomes very easy for campus administrators to become complacent in the education of students with disabilities.

Educational leaders seemed evenly split across the board to even include the “Neutral” response regarding the statements being a form of tracking. The assistant principals indicated a stronger response rate for “Strongly Disagree” or “Disagree” to these same statements.

Assistant principals by a rate of 71% indicated that they “Strongly Agreed” or “Agreed” with the statements “Social justice means an equitable distribution of social goods including education”, “Inclusion is an issue of social justice as well as an issue of equity”, and “Inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes is a way to achieve social justice.” Principals, on the other hand, indicated that only 58.9% “Strongly Agreed” or “Agreed” with the statements

63.7% of principals and 45.2 of assistant principals felt that “the development of an IEP is a democratic process.” The assistant principals also had 20.9% indicate a “Neutral” response. Initially, included in the IDEA Amendments of 1997 and continued in IDEIA (2004) is the requirement that general education teachers participate on IEP teams. However, results from a longitudinal study of middle, junior high, and high school IEP meetings indicated that general education teachers reported that they helped to make decisions within the meeting less than any other participants (Martin, Marshall, Sale, 2004). As instructional leaders the campus administrators need to make sure that the general education teachers are aware of their roles and responsibilities in the IEP process and should facilitate their meaningful inclusion in IEP meetings (Smith & Colon, 1998).

Educational administration continues to address the instructional implications that are related to special education and social justice. As the result of NCLB and IDEIA, there is now an intensive focus on student achievement at the campus level. Educational leadership certification programs must make sure campus administrators are sufficiently prepared to address campus wide initiatives that will improve all students’ opportunities for success. However many campus administrators do not feel adequately prepared to deal with special education issues. This inadequacy may keep campus administrators from dealing with the underlying social justice issue that all students, including students with disabilities, have the right to a free and appropriate public education. As stated by Lashey (2007), knowledge of the special education law and practices enhances the educational leaders’ ability to

comply with current legislation (NCLB, IDEIA, RTI, and LRE) it also confirms the campus administrators' ethical responsibility to support educational equity in meeting the educational need of all students.

McLaughlin, (2002) has recommended that special education should become a continuum of general education. A natural outgrowth of the inclusive school model beyond its original focus on students with disabilities could reform schools and possibly become the appropriate mechanism to achieve social justice for all students (Lilly, 2000). Working toward true social justice within our educational system means that every educational leader really believes that every student can learn and every educational leader accepts responsibility for every student.

Summary of Conclusions

- Significantly less than 50% (42.2% had a special education law class) of the respondents, reported having completed a course that was devoted to the administration of special education programs, special education issues and special education law.
- Almost half of the educational leaders (47.2%) that responded to this study indicated that their certification program “had not” prepared them to deal with special education issues that they faced on daily basis.
- Overall, educational leaders were informed regarding fundamental issues. Areas of difficulties seemed focused around the IEP process, transition, and discipline.
- A limited understanding of current issues in special education was found among campus administrators. Especially, in the areas of learning and effective teaching practices such as universally designed lessons and the general education initiative of response-to-intervention.

- Educational leaders lacked agreement with the inclusion of students' with disabilities scores in accountability. Only 61.2% indicated that they supported the inclusion of scores of students with disabilities. Respondents also identified alternative assessments as an area of limited knowledge.
- The study also dealt with the underlying aspect of the educational leaders' ethical outlook in dealing with students with disabilities and how they viewed their responsibility to educate students with disabilities. 95.1% of principals and 90.2% of assistant principals indicated that they believed that educational leaders at the campus level were responsible for the education of all students on their campuses, included were students with disabilities

Recommendations for Educational Leaders and Certificate Programs

- 1) Educational leadership programs should integrate information regarding special education issues and law into existing course work.
- 2) Educational leadership programs, as well as, school districts need to provide professional development practice experiences so that campus administrators are exposed to special education issues and knowledge regarding special education law.
- 3) University preparation programs should require coursework in special education as part of the curriculum.
- 4) Special education preparation would be significantly improved upon by practicum and internship experiences.
- 5) Changing the hiring practices of school districts to elevate special education skills as a desired skill set for campus administrators.

- 6) The special education preparation of superintendents should also be considered since superintendents are the ultimate leaders and responsible for developing the visions and missions for their school districts.
- 7) Professional development activities that will add to a campus administrators' special education knowledge base should be developed and supported by school districts. These activities could include a focus on IEP process, the administrator's role in discipline for students with disabilities, special education law with a focus on the campus administrators' responsibilities, inclusion and LRE practices, knowledge of disability categories, and monitoring specially designed instruction to include students with disabilities, as well as, the general education initiative of RTI.
- 8) Educational leaders should have opportunities to collaborate with other educational leaders, in and outside of their districts. Collaboration is a main component of change and it is the campus administrators, who will be facilitating changes on their campuses.
- 9) Consider ways in which a unified system, which combines general and special education might have on improving not only certification programs for educational leaders but also how it may improve teacher preparation programs as well.

References

- Algozzine, B., Browder, D., Karonen, K., Test, D.W., & Wood, W.M. (2001). Effects of interventions to promote self-determination for individuals with disabilities. *Review of Educational Research*, 71, 219-277.
- Allbritten, D., Manizar, . & Zeigler, D. (2004). Will students with disabilities be scapegoats for school failures? *Education Horizons*. 82(2), p.153-160. Retrieved on September 24, 2011, from ERIC Data Base.
- Bateman, D., Bateman, C.F. (2001). *Implementing IDEA: A principal's guide to special education*. Arlington, VA., Council for Exceptional Children, p.144. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Barnet, D. (2004). School leadership preparation programs: Are they preparing tomorrow's leaders? *Education*, v.125, nl, p.121, Fall 2004. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Bays, D. A. & Crockett, J. B. (2007). Investigating instructional leadership for special education. *Exceptionality*, 15(3), p.143-161. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Behar-Horenstein, L. & Ornstein, A.C. (1996). Curriculum, instruction, and supervision: Essential leadership roles for principals. *Focus on Education* (40), p.14-19. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Benham, N.E. (1997). Faculty attitudes and knowledge regarding specific disabilities and the Americans with Disabilities Act. *College Student Journal*, 31, p.124-128. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Benz, M. R., Lindstrom, L., & Yovanoff, P. (2000). Improving graduation and employment outcomes of students with disabilities: Predictive factors and student perspectives. *Exceptional Children*, v66, p.509-520.
- Berdine, W.H. (2003). The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education: Implications for the special education practitioner. *Preventing School Failure*, 47, p.92-95. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Berres, M., Ferguson,D.L., Knoblock, D.S., Woods, C. (1996). *Creating tomorrow's schools today: Stories of inclusion, change, and renewal*. New York: Teacher's College Press.
- Billingsley, B. (2005). *Cultivating and keeping special education teachers: What principals and district administrators can do*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Board of Education of New York City (2004). *Special education services: As a part of unified service delivery system: The continuum of services*. New York City Department of Education. Retrieved from: www.uft.org/files/attachments/unified on September 24, 2011.

- Boscardin, M.L. (2007). What is special about special education administration? Considerations for school leadership. *Exceptionality*, 15(3), p. 189-200. Retrieved September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Bradley, R., Danielson, L., & Doolittle, J. (2005). Response to intervention. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 38(6), p.485-486. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Brinker, R.P. (1990). In search of the foundation of special: Who are the individuals and what are the differences? *Journal of Special Education*, 90, p.174-184. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Browder, D.M., Fallin, K., Davis, S., & Karvonen, M. (2003). Consideration of what may influence student outcomes on alternate assessment. *Exceptional Children*, 70, p.45-61. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Browder, D.M., Spooner, F., Algozzine, R., Ahlgrim-Dezell, L., Flower, C., & Karvonen, M. (2003). What we know and need to know about alternate assessment. *Exceptional Children*, 70, p.45-61. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Brownlee, J., & Carrington, S. (2000). Opportunities for authentic experience and reflection: A teaching program designed to change attitudes towards disability for pre-service teachers. *Support for Learning*, 15, p.99-105. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Burrello, L. C. (1992). The principal as the special education instructional leader. Report Submitted to the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. Washington, D. C. Retrieved from <http://idea.ed.gov> on September 25, 2010.
- Butin, D.W. (2005). *Teaching social foundations of education: Context, theories, and issues*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, N.J.
- Byrnes, M., (2004). Alternate assessment FAQs. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 36, p.58-63. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Clash, (2006). *Perceived levels of elementary principals' stress in relationship to responsibilities and demographics*. (Dissertation, Graduate School of Education and Human Development: George Washington University, Washington, D.C.). Retrieved on October 8, 2011 from Proquest Data Base.
- Cochrane, P.V., & Westling, D.L. (1977). The principal and mainstreaming: Ten suggestions for success. *Educational Leadership*, 34, p.506-510.
- Collins, L., & White, G.P. (2001). *Leading inclusive programs for all special education students: A pre-service training program for principals*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, WA. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.

- Council for Exceptional Children (2001). *Implementing IDEA: A guide for principals*. Alexandria, Virginia, National Association of Elementary Principals. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Council for Exceptional Children. (2001-2003). *CEC Today*, p.8-10. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Council for Exceptional Children. (2002). Professional standards. Retrieved August 21, 2010 from <http://www.cec.sped.org/ps/ps-entry.html>.
- Council for Exceptional Children. (2004). The new IDEA: CEC's summary of significant issues. Retrieved August 6, 2011 from http://www.cec.sped.org/pp/IDEA_120204.pdf.
- Council of Chief of State School Officers (1996). Interstate school leader licensure consortium (ISLLC): Standards for school leaders. Washington D.C. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Crooner, D., Tochtermann, S., Garrison-Wade, D. (2005). Preparing principals for leadership in special education. *Connections: Journal of Principal Preparation and Development*, v.6, 149. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Creswell, J.W. (1994) *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Crockett, J. B. (2002) Special education's role in preparing responsive leaders for inclusive schools. *Remedial and Special Education*, 23(3), p.157-168. Retrieved on September 28, 2010.
- Crockett, J. B. (2004) Taking stock of science in the schoolhouse: Four ideas to foster effective instruction for students with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 37, p.189-199. Retrieved on September 28, 2010.
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: A statement of the relation of reflective thinking to the education process*. Boston:D.C. Heath.
- Dillman, D.A., (2000). *Mail and internet surveys: The tailored design method*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- DiPaola, M. F. and Walther-Thomas, C. (2002). Principals and special education: The critical role of school leaders Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education, University of Florida — Retrieved September 18, 2010 from <http://www.copsse.org>.
- DiPaola, M.F. & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2003, March). The principalship at a crossroads: A study of the condition and concerns of principals. *National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin* (87) p.43-67. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- DiPaola, M.F. & Walther-Thomas, C. (2003). Principals and special education: The critical role of school leaders. (COPSSE Document No IB-7); Arlington, VA; Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.

- Doolittle, J.H., Horner, R.H., Bradley, R., Sugui, G., & Vincent C.G. (2007). Importance of student social behavior in the mission statements, personnel preparation standards, and innovation efforts of state departments of education. *The Journal of Special Education* v.40, n.4, p.229-245. Retrieved on May 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Doverspike, D., & Cone, W., (1992). *The Principal and the Law*. Elementary Series No. 7. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.
- Downing, J.E. (2001). Meeting the communication needs of students with severe and multiple disabilities in general education classrooms. *Exceptionality*, 9, p.147-156. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Education for All Handicapped Act of 1975. Public Law 94-142 (s.6), November 29, 1975. Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office 1975.
- Elliott, B., & Riddle, M. (1992). An effective interface between regular and special education: A synopsis of issues and successful practices. Bloomington, Indiana: Council of Administrators in Special Education Inc.
- Elliott, J., Ysseldyke, J., Thurlow, M. (2000). Understanding student assessments for educational accountability. LEA Online. Retrieved on August 6, 2011. <http://www.lea.org/molibrary.htm>.
- Evans, S.B., (1991). A realistic look at the research base for collaboration in special education. *Preventing School Failure*, 35, p.10-13. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Farkas, S., Johnson, J., & Duffett, A. (2003). *Stand by me: What teachers really think about unions, merit pay, and other professional matters*. New York: Public Agenda. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Farley, G.O. (2002). Barriers and supports affecting the inclusion of special education issues into pre-service training of school principals. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Ford, A., Davern, I., & Schnorr, R. (2001). Learners with significant disabilities. *Remedial & Special Education*, 22, p.214-222. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Fowler, F.J., Jr. *Survey Research Methods*, 1993. 2nd ed., Applied Social Science Research Methods, Vol. 1, Newbury Park, CA.: SAGE Publications.
- Friend, M., & Cook, L. (2007). *Interactions: Collaboration skills for school professionals*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Fullan, M. (2007a). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fullan, M. (2007b). *The new meaning of educational change* (4th). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fullan, M. (2008). *The six secrets of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Gall, D., Gall, J. & Borg, W. (2003). *Educational Research: An introduction*: 7th Edition. Boston, MA. Allyn and Bacon
- Gameros, P. (1995). The visionary principal and inclusion of students with disabilities. *NASSP Bulletin*, 79, p.15-17. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Gay, G. (2002). Culturally responsive teaching in special education for ethnically diverse students: Setting the stage. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15, p.613-629. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Gearheart, B.R., Weishahn, M.W., Gearheart, C.J. (1996). *The exceptional student in the regular classroom* (6th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Merrill.
- Goor, M.B., Schween, J.O., Boyer, L. (1997). Preparing principals for leadership in special education. *Intervention in School and Clinic*. V.32(January, 1997), pp.133-141. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Hall, G.E., & Hord, S.M. (2006). *Implementing change: Patterns, principals, and potholes*. Albany, NY: Pearson Education.
- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R.H. (1998). Exploring the principal's contribution to school effectiveness: 1980-1995. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 9, pp. 157-191. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Han, E.P. (1995). Reflection is essential in teacher education. *Childhood Education*, 71, p.228-230. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Harris, J.J. III, Brown, E. L., Ford, D. Y., & Richardson, J.W. (2004). African American and multicultural education: A proposed remedy for disproportionate special education placement and under-inclusion is gifted education. *Education and Urban Society*, 36, p.304-341. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Hartwig, E.P., & Ruesch, G.M. (2000). Disciplining students in special education. *Journal of Special Education*, 33, p.240-247. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Hess, F.M., & Kelly (2003). *Learning to lead? What gets taught in principal preparation programs*. American Enterprise Institute. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Heward, W.L. (2000). *Exceptional children: An introduction to special education*. (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hirth, M., & Valesky, T. (1998). Principal's knowledge of special education law. *National Forum of Education Administration and Supervision Journal*, 6(3), p.130-141. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Hirth, M., & Valesky, T. (1991). Survey of universities: Special education knowledge requirements in school administrator preparation programs. *Planning and Changing*, 21(3), p.165-172. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.

- Hitchcock, C., Meyer, A., Rose, D., & Jackson, R. (2002). Providing new access to the general education curriculum: Universal design for learning. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 35(2), p.8-17.
- Idol, L. (2006). Toward inclusion of special education students in general education: A program evaluation of eight schools. *Remedial and Special Education*, Volume 27, Number 2. March/April 2006, p.77-94. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- IDEA Partnership and the Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education (March 2005) A living record—using consumer participation to shape research. National Association of State Directors of Special Education , Alexandria, VA — <http://www.ideainfo>. Retrieved March 17, 2011.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA): The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act signed by President Bush on December 3, 2004. (Pub. L. No. 108-446), 20 U.S.C. Sections 1400 et. seq.
- Johnson, J., & Duffett, A. (2003, November). “I’m calling my lawyer”: How litigation, due process, and other regulatory requirements are affecting public education. Retrieved December 29, 2011, from: <http://publicagenda.org/research/researchreports.cfm>
- Kauffman, J. M. and Hallahan, D. P. (2005) Special education: What it is and why we need it. Pearson Education, Boston.
- Kaye, E.K.(Ed.). (2002). *Requirements for certification of teachers, counselors, librarians, administrators for elementary and secondary schools: Sixty-seventh edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Klinger, J.K., Artiles, A.J., Kozleski, E., Harry, B., Zion, S., Tate, W., Duran, G.Z., & Riley, D. (2005). Addressing the disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education through culturally responsive educational systems. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 13(38). Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Kochan, F. K. , Jackson, B. L. and Duke, D. L. (eds) (1999) A thousand voices from the firing line: A study of educational leaders, their jobs, their preparation, and the problems they face. University Council for Educational Administration, Columbia, MO.
- Lake, J.F. & Billingsley, B.S. (2000). An analysis of factors that contribute to parent-school conflict in special education. *Remedial and Special Education*, 21(4), p.240-251. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Lange, C. M. & Lehr, C.A. (2000). Charter schools and students with disabilities: Parent perceptions of reasons for transfer and satisfaction with services. *Remedial and Special Education*, 21(3), p.141-151. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Lashley, C. (2007). Principal leadership for special education: An ethical framework. *Exceptionality*, 15(3), p. 177-187. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.

- Lashley, C. and Boscardin, M. L. (2003). Special education administration at a crossroads: Availability, licensure, and preparation of building level administrators Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education, Gainesville, FL — (COPSSE Document No. IB-8). Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Leonard, L.J., & Leonard, P.E. (2005). Achieving professional community in schools; The administrator challenge. *Planning and Changing*, 36(1&2), p.23-39. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Levine, A. (2005). *Educating school leaders*. New York: Teachers College, The Education School Project.
- Lilly, M. S. (2000). Working toward a common goal. In R. A. Villa & J. S. Thousand (Eds.). *Restructuring for caring and effective education: Piecing the puzzle together*. pp. 1-6. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks.
- Lowe, M.A. & Brigham, F.J. (2000). Supervising special education instruction: Does it deserve a special place in administrative preparatory programs? Information Analyses Evaluative Report, p.22. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Lust, C.J. (2005). Principal preparation, knowledge, of special education and social justice. Bloomington, IL: Illinois State University.
- Mainzer, R.W., Deshler, D., Coleman, M.R., Kozleski, E., & Rodriguez-Walling, M. (2003). To ensure the learning of every child with a disability. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 35, p.1-12. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Martin, J. E., Marshall, L. H., & Sale, P. (2004). A three year study of middle, junior high, and high school IEP meetings. *Exceptional Children*, 70, pp. 285-297.
- Marzano. R.J., McNulty, B.A., & Walters, T. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- McEwan, E.K. (2003). *10 Traits of highly effective principals: From good to great performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- McLaughline, M. J. (2002). Examining special and general education collaborative practices in exemplary schools. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 13, pp. 279-283. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Monteith, D.S. (1998, March). Special education administration training for rural minority school leaders: A funded proposal. A paper presented at the Eighteenth Conference Proceedings of the American Council on Rural Special Education, Charleston, S.C. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.

- Monteith, D.S. (2002). Professional development for administrators in special education: Evaluation of a program for underrepresented personnel. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 23, p.281-289. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Murphy, J., & Vriesenga, M. (2004). Researching preparation programs in education administration: An analysis. Monograph prepared for the university council for education administration. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- National Association of State Directors of Special Education. (1998). Involvement of general education teachers in the IEP process. QTA forum: A brief analysis of critical issues in special education. Washington, D.C.: Department of Education. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- National Center for Learning Disabilities, Inc. (2006). Retrieved on October 11, 2011 from, <http://www.ncld.org>.
- National Center on Response to Intervention. (April, 2010). Essential components of RTI-A closer look at response to intervention. Retrieved from: <http://www.rti4success.org> on August 10, 2011.
- National Council on Disability. (2004). Improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Retrieved on August 10, 2011. from: <http://www.educationalpolicy.org/pdf/NCD.pdf>.
- National Dissemination center for Children with Disabilities, (NICHY). Retrieved on October 11, 2011 from, <http://nichy.org>.
- National Education Goals Panel. 1999. 1999 Goals report. NEGP@ed.gov, Retrieved August 21, 2010 from <http://govinfo.library.uiuc.edu/negp/page3-1.htm>.
- National Research Council (2001). National Academy of Sciences. Retrieved from Educational Social Library on October 11, 2010. <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/edstandards.htm>.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Public Law 107-110 (8 January 2002) Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 2002.
- Norlin, J., & Gorn, S. (2006) *What do I do when...The answer on special education law*. Horsham, Pennsylvania: LRP Publications.
- O'Hanlon, J., & Clifton, D.O. (2004). *Effective principals: Positive principals at work*. Lanham, MD, Scarecrow Education.
- O'Leary, G.F. (2002). Barriers and supports affecting the inclusion of special education into the pre-service training of school principals: Faculty perceptions, Retrieved on October 8, 2011, from Proquest Data Base.
- Olson, L. (2007). Standards for school leaders. *Education Week*, 27(5), p.9-20. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.

- Osborne, A.G., DiMiatta, P., & Curan, F.X. (1993). *Effective management of special education programs: A handbook for school administrators*. New York: Teachers' College Press, Columbia University.
- Parker, S.A., & Day, V.P. (1997). Promoting inclusion through instructional leadership: The roles of the secondary school principal. *NASSP Bulletin*, 81, p.83-89. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Patterson, J., Marshall, C., & Bowling, D.S. (2000). Are principals prepared to manage special education dilemmas? *National Associations of Secondary Principals Bulletin*, 8, 4(613), p.9-20. Retrieved on August 6, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Praisner, C. L. (2003). Attitudes of elementary principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 69, p.135-145. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Quenemoen, R.F., Lehar, C.A., Thurlow, M.L., & Massanari, C.B., (2001). Students with disabilities in standards-based assessment and accountability systems: Emerging issues, strategies, and recommendations. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Rafoth, M.A., & Foriska, T. (2006). Administrator participation in promoting effective problem-solving teams. *Remedial and Special Education*, 27(3), p.130-135. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Ritter, L.A., & Sue, V.M., (2007). Introduction to using online surveys. *New Directions for Evaluation*, Fall 2007. No. 155. Pp. 5-20.
- Sage, D., & Burrello, L. (1994). *Leadership in educational reform: An administrator's guide to changes in special education*. Baltimore: Brookes.
- Schaefer, R., and Dillman, D.A., (1998). "Development of a Standard E-mail Methodology: Results of an experiment." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1998, 62(3), p.378-397. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Schonlau, M., Fricker, R.D., Elliot, M.N. (2002). *Conducting research surveys via e-mail and the web*. Santa Monica: RAND.
- Scruggs, T.E., Mastropieri, M.A., & McDuffie, K.A. (2007). Co-teaching in inclusive classrooms: A metasynthesis of qualitative research, *Exceptional Child*, 73(4), p.392-416. Retrieved on September 17, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Seery, M.E., Davis, P.M., & Johnson, L.J. (2000). Seeing eye-to-eye: Are parents and professionals in agreement about the benefits of preschool inclusion? *Remedial and Special Education*, 21(5), p.268-278.
- Shapiro, J.P. & Stefkovich, J.A. (2005). *Ethical leadership and decision making in education: Applying theoretical perspectives to complex dilemmas*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Ealbaum Associates.

- Shellard, E. (2003). Defining the principalship. *Principal*, 82, pp. 56-60. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Sileo, T.W., & Prater, M.A. (1998) Creating classroom environments that address the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students with disabilities: An Asian Pacific American perspective. *Remedial & Special Education*, 19, p.323-337.
- Skiba, R.J., Knesting, K., & Bush, L.D. (2002). Culturally competent assessment: More than nonbiased tests. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 11, p.61-78. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Smith, D. (2004). Introduction to special education: Teaching in an age of opportunity (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Smith, J.S. & Colon, R.J. (1998). Legal responsibilities toward students with disabilities: What every administrator should know. *NAASP Bulletin*, 82(594), p.40-53. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R. and Diamond, J. B. (2001) Investigating school leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Educational Researcher*. 30, p.23-28. Retrieved on September 17, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Stanovich, P.J., (1996). Collaboration-the key to successful instruction in today's exclusive schools. *Intervention in School & Clinic*, 32, p.39-42. Retrieved on September 18, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Thompson, S.J., Quenemoen, R.F., Thurlow, M.L., & Ysseldyke, J.E. (2001). Alternate assessments for students with disabilities. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Thompson, S., & Thurlow, M.L (2001). Participation of students with disabilities in state assessment systems. *Assessment for Effective Intervention*, 26, p.5-8. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Thurlow, M.L., Quenemoen, R., Thompson, S., & Lehr, C. (2001). Principles and characteristics of inclusive assessment and accountability systems. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Tindal, G., McDonald, M., Tedesco, M., Glasgow, A., Almond, P., Crawford, L., et. al. (2003). Alternate assessments in reading and math; Development and validation for students with significant disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 69, p.481-494. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Trochim, W.M.K., Donnelly, J.P. (2008). *The research methods knowledge*. Mason, OH: Atomic Dog a part of Cengage Learning.
- Tulbert, B. (1999). Creating Collaborative and Inclusive Schools. *Remedial and Special Education*, 20(6), p.379-80. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.

- U.S. Department of Education (2000). To assure the free appropriate public education of all children with disabilities: Seventieth annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act. Washington. DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <http://idea.ed.gov> on June 24, 2011.
- U.S. Department of Education, (2004). *Building the legacy of IDEA 2004*. Washington. DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <http://idea.ed.gov> on June 24, 2011.
- U.S. Department of Education, (2005). *A twenty-five year history of IDEA*. Washington. DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <http://idea.ed.gov> on June 24, 2011.
- U.S. Department of Education (2005) Twenty-fifth annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Office of Special Education Programs, Washington. DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <http://idea.ed.gov> on June 24, 2011.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2007). *The Condition of Education 2007*. Retrieved from <http://idea.ed.gov> on June 24, 2011.
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs' IDEIA (2009), Website. Retrieved from <http://idea.ed.gov> on June 24, 2011.
- Valente, W. D. (2001). *Law in the schools*. (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Valesky, T.C., & Hirth, M.A. (1992). Survey of the states: Special education knowledge requirements for school administrators. *Exceptional Children*, 58, p.399-406. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Vaugh, S., & Fuchs, L.S. (2003). Redefining learning disabilities as inadequate response to instruction: the promise and potential problems, *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 18, p.137-146. Retrieved on June 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Villa, R.A., Thousand, J.S., Nevin, A.I., & Malgeri, C. (1996). Instilling collaboration for inclusive schooling as a way of doing business in public schools. *Remedial and Special Education*, 16, p.16-28. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Wakeman, S. L. (2005). *Principal knowledge of current issues in special education*. Charlotte: University of North Carolina.
- Wakeman, S. L., Browder, D.M., Flowers, C. & Ahigrim-Deizel. (2006) Principals' knowledge of fundamental and current issues in mainstreaming. *NASSP Bulletin*, v90,n.2, p.153-174. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.
- Watson, S. T. and Scribner, J. P. (2005). *Emergent reciprocal influence: Toward a framework for understanding the distribution of leadership within collaborative school activity*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the University Council for Educational Administration Nashville, TN. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from ERIC Data Base.

- Welch, M. (1998). The IDEA of collaboration in special education: An introspective examination of paradigms and promise. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*. 9, p.119-142. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.
- Wright, J. (2007). *RTI toolkit: A practical guide for schools*. New York: Dude Publishing.
- Yell, M. (1998). The law and special education. NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Yell, M.L., Drasgow, E., & Rozalski, M.E. (2001). Disciplining students with disabilities. Focus on Exceptional Children, 33, p.1-19. Retrieved on September 24, 2010 from ERIC Data Base.

Appendix A

SURVEY

Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

Introduction

Dear Educational Leader,

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations at the University of Texas at El Paso. I am requesting your assistance with my research and inviting you to participate in an on-line survey. My dissertation will examine educational leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues in special education. The survey also contains items concerning school characteristics and demographic information about the educational leader. As an educational leader you deal with special education issues on a regular basis, so your input is essential to the outcome of this study.

I do not know of any risks to you if you decide to participate in this survey. Your responses to the electronic survey will not be identified with you personally and your responses and the identity of your school or district will not be identified. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance. Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential.

Please take the time to complete this survey, it should take you no longer than 20 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you choose not to participate. You have the right to not answer any question you do not wish to answer. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty of prejudice.

If you have any concerns about completing this survey or being a part of this study, please contact me, at (915) 261-5477 or via email at jolucker@sbcglobal.net, or you may contact my dissertation supervisor Dr. Rodolfo Rincones, Department Chair, Educational Leadership and Foundations, (915) 747-7614 or via email at rrincones@utep.edu.

Thank you for your assistance in this research effort.

With sincere thanks,

Josie Lucker
Doctoral Student
915-261-5477
jolucker@sbcglobal.net

Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

Informed Consent

I agree to complete a survey being conducted by Josie Lucker from the University of Texas at El Paso, in El Paso Texas. Results of this survey will be shared with the University of Texas at El Paso and will be available from Josie Lucker upon request.

By responding to this survey, I hereby authorize Josie Lucker to include me in the research entitled "Educational Leaders' Beliefs and Attitudes Regarding Core and Current Issues in Special Education". The questions in the survey are focused on educational leaders' beliefs and attitudes toward issues in special education. The survey should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete.

It has been explained to me that survey data collected will be used for research purposes. As an educational leader, over the age of 18, I am being asked to participate since the research is about educational leaders' beliefs and attitudes towards special education. I understand that the investigator will respect my anonymity and I agree that the data shall be retained for research purposes and once the research is finished the data will be deleted and/or destroyed. I understand I have the right to review the data collected as part of the study.

I understand I have the right to refuse to answer any question. I also understand that I have the right to refuse participation in or withdraw from this study at any time without prejudice or penalty. I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study. I understand there are no known risks if I do, or do not participate in the survey. I also understand that I will not receive any money for participating in this survey. I understand the possible benefits of this study may help to understand what supports, professional development, and/or higher education courses might better prepare educational leaders who will be capable of coping with diverse student populations and ever-increasing range of educational needs to ensure a successful learning experience for all students, especially those with exceptionalities. I also understand if the study design or use of the information is to be changed, I will be informed and my consent re-obtained. I understand that Josie Lucker, who can be reached at jolucker@sbcglobal.net or (915- 262-5477) will answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details if the procedures performed as part of the study.

I understand that if I have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact the UTEP Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (915-747-8841) or irb.orsp@utep.edu. In signing this consent form I acknowledge receipt of a copy of this form.

[First question placed on-line with on-line survey.]

1. I consent to my responses being used by Josie Lucker in her doctoral research at the University of Texas at El Paso, on Educational Leaders' Beliefs and Attitudes Regarding Core and Current Issues in Special Education.

Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

Section I. Demographic and work experience

1. Complete the following

	Gender	Your ethnicity	Your age's range
Demographic information:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

2. Title of educational leader position you currently hold

- ☐ Principal
- ☐ Assistant Principal

3. What certification do you have that qualifies you to be an educational leader

- ☐ Mid-Management Certificate
- ☐ Principal's Certificate
- ☐ Superintendent's Certificate

Other (please specify)

4. Experience in leadership and teaching

	Educational leader	Teaching - general education classroom	Special education teacher	Member of an Individual Education Plan team before becoming an educational leader	Member of a pre- referral intervention/RTI (Response to Intervention) team before becoming an educational leader
Complete the information of years of experience on each of the following areas:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Section II. Campus background information

5. Grade levels on your campus

- ☐ Elementary
- ☐ K-8th
- ☐ K-12th
- ☐ Middle School
- ☐ Alternative Middle School
- ☐ High School
- ☐ Alternative High School
- ☐ Magnet High School

Other (please specify)

6. Are you currently at the same campus as you were last year?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. Types of disability categories of students currently being served at your campus. Check all the option(s) that apply:

- ☐ High Incidence (i.e. speech impaired, learning disabilities)
- ☐ Moderate Incidence (i.e. autism, intellectually challenged, other health impaired)
- ☐ Low Incidence (i.e. orthopedic impairments, visual impairments, auditory impairments, multiple handicapping conditions)

Other (please specify)

8. What percentage of your campus' population are students with disabilities?

- ☐ 0-5%
- ☐ 6-10%
- ☐ 11-15%
- ☐ 16-20%
- ☐ 21% or more

Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

9. What was your campus' accountability rating last year?

- ☐ Exemplary
- ☐ Recognized
- ☐ Academically Acceptable
- ☐ Not Rated
- ☐ Not Rated: Data Integrity Issues

Other (please specify)

Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

Section III. Educational leadership preparation program

Answer the following question based on your educational leadership (principal) preparation program

10. Answer the following questions based on your educational leadership (principal) preparation program:

- ☐ Did you complete a course that was devoted to the curriculum and instruction of special education programs at the campus level
- ☐ Did you complete a course that was devoted to special education issues at the campus level
- ☐ Did you complete a course that was devoted to special education law
- ☐ Did your educational leadership (principal preparation) program prepare you to deal with the special education issues that you currently face

11. The information about your preparation program:

	More than adequate	Adequate	Less than adequate	None
Do you feel the information you received in your Principal's or Mid-Management certification program regarding special education was	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Where did you receive your qualification for your Mid-Management Certificate or Principal Certificate

Name of University	<input type="text"/>
Name of qualifying organization	<input type="text"/>
Name of Regional Center	<input type="text"/>

13. If you received your Principal's or Mid-Management Certificate exam through a university how many courses in special education were required

Number of courses required	<input type="text"/>
N/A	<input type="text"/>

14. If you received your Principal's or Mid-Management Certificate exam through a Regional Service Program or a qualifying organization how much of the program was devoted to special education

Percent of program devoted to special education	<input type="text"/>
N/A	<input type="text"/>

Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

15. Since receiving your Principal's or Mid-Management Certification how many in-services and/or conferences completely related to special education have you attended in the last three years

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10 or more

Comments

Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

Section IV. Beliefs

For the purpose of this survey inclusion is defined as a "commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend" (Rodgers, pg. 1. 1993), if the student was not physically and/or intellectually challenged.

16. Given the current accountability ratings and the diversity of student populations, what is your opinion regarding each of the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The campus accountability ratings should include all students' assessment scores	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The educational leaders are responsible for the education of all students on their campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Every teacher on campus should welcome the diversity of students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All teachers on the campus are responsible for the teaching of all students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All students on the campus are held to high expectations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The general curriculum is accessible to all students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Instruction in the general education classroom is accessible to all students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments

Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

Section V. Experience as an educational leader

17. Please respond to the following statements based on your experiences as an educational leader facilitating collaboration on pre-referral intervention/RTI team. I...

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always
Am directly involved in the conferences that determine special education eligibility.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Actively promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promote the use of differentiated instructional methods to address the needs of students with diverse abilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make sure that the general education teachers provide interventions and monitor the struggling student's response to the interventions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allow for protected time for special and general education teachers to attend meetings within the school day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide professional development to general and special education teachers that enables them to develop the strategies needed for all students to become successful in the general education classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide professional development to general and special education teachers on collaboration.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide materials for pre-referral/RTI teams to include progress monitoring and intervention supplies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attend meetings with general education and special education staff regarding pre-referral	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

interventions/RTI.

18. How much time per week do you spend working with staff members who resist collaboration between general and special education

Hours

Minutes

19. Comments:

Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

Section V. Current Issues

Using the following scale, indicate your level of knowledge for each question below:

- Do not know, is not familiar with the term or idea
- Limited knowledge is defined as familiarity with the concept in each statement
- Basic knowledge is a defining understanding of the concept, but inability to affect change using the concept
- Comprehensive knowledge is an understanding of the concept with ability to apply and instructionally support it
- Extensive knowledge is an in-depth understanding of the concept with the ability to teach, apply, and evaluate it

20. Indicate your level of knowledge about each strategy listed below

	Do not know	Limited	Basic	Comprehensive	Extensive
Identify characteristics of disabilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make decisions based on key legislation in special education.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Train teachers to develop universally designed lessons.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Train teachers in the development of alternate assessments (TAKS Alt.) for students with significant disabilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Train teachers in the use of research based best practice instructional strategies for students with disabilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Train teachers in the use of research based instructional strategies for students with different learning styles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Train teachers in the use of research based instructional strategies for students with different cultural backgrounds.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Create an accepting inclusive school climate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evaluate alternate assessments (to include TAKS Alternative assessments) for students with significant disabilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Train special education teachers to use curriculum modifications and	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

accommodations.

Use program evaluation procedures to assess special education services on my campus.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Identify the steps in the referral process for special education.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Identify the principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Act.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Train teachers how to implement the different types of inclusion programs.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Discipline students with disabilities in accordance with legislative mandates.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Train teachers how to conduct functional behavioral assessments.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Plan transition services for students with disabilities.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Train teachers to use data based instructional decisions and monitoring.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Provide models of how to promote participatory inclusion in general education classrooms for students with disabilities.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Comments

Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

Section VII. Special education laws

21. Respond to the following questions based on your experiences with special education laws.

	Not aware	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transportation does not need to be addressed as a component of a student's IEP (Individual Education Plan).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The need for assistive technology devices and services should be addressed as a component of a student's IEP (Individual Education Plan).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The least restrictive environment is the setting that permits a student with a disability to be educated with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parental consent must be obtained in order to conduct an initial evaluation to determine special education eligibility.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The removal of a student with disability from his or her current placement for more than ten days in the same school year does not constitute a change in special education placement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A manifestation determination review establishes the relationship between a student's disability and the behavior that is the basis for a disciplinary action.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Each school district must ensure that a continuum of	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

special education placements is available to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Students do not need to be invited to attend IEP meetings when transition services are going to be discussed.

☐☐☐☐☐☐

If a student has a specific accommodation on his/her IEP but it is not implemented in the classroom the student is still allowed to use the accommodation when taking the current state assessment.

☐☐☐☐☐☐

The 2004 Amendments to the Individual with Disabilities Education Act required schools to use research-based interventions in the process of assisting students with learning difficulties or determining qualification for special education.

☐☐☐☐☐☐

Comments

Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

Section VIII. Special education and equity

22. Complete the following questions based on your experiences regarding special education and equity

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Special education is a form of tracking that has been institutionalized into the educational system through federal and state legislation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special education is a form of tracking that has been institutionalized into the educational system through the current funding systems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social justice means an equitable distribution of social goods including education.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inclusion is an issue of social justice as well as an issue of equity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The existence of dual systems of education, (general and special) conflicts with the principles of social justice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Placing students with disabilities in separate classrooms communicates that it is acceptable to isolate certain groups of students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes is a way to achieve social justice for students with disabilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The development of an individualized education program (IEP) is a democratic process.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms benefits all students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inclusion should be implemented as a school-	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

wide reform effort that
blends resources and
integrates programs.

Comments



Educational Leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues

Thank you for taking the time to answer this survey!

Appendix B

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

ON-LINE PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE CONSENT FORM

FIRST REMINDER COVER LETTER

SECOND REMINDER COVER LETTER

THIRD REMINDER COVER LETTER

Invitation to Participate

Date:

Dear Educational Leader,

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations at the University of Texas at El Paso. I am requesting your assistance with my research and inviting you to participate in an on-line survey. My dissertation will examine educational leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues in special education. The survey also contains items concerning school characteristics and demographic information about the educational leader. As an educational leader you deal with special education issues on a regular basis, so your input is essential to the outcome of this study.

I do not know of any risks to you if you decide to participate in this survey. Your responses to the electronic survey will not be identified with you personally and your responses and the identity of your school or district will not be identified. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance. Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential.

Please take the time to complete this survey, by clicking on the following link or cut and paste the link into your browser [SurveyLink]. It should take you no longer than 20 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty if you choose not to participate. The consent form is on the first page of survey, which can be accessed when you click on the on-line survey link address.

Answering the first question [**I consent to my responses being used by Josie Lucker in her doctoral research at the University of Texas at El Paso, on Educational Leaders' Beliefs and Attitudes Regarding Core and Current Issues in Special Education**] of the on-line questionnaire indicates voluntary consent to participate in the study. You have the right to not answer any question you do not wish to answer. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty of prejudice. I would sincerely appreciate if you could complete the survey by [date].

If you have any concerns about completing this survey or being a part of this study, please contact me, at 915-261-5477 or you may contact UTEP Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (915-747-8841) or irb.orsp@utep.edu.

I appreciate your consideration of my request.

With sincere thanks,

Josie Lucker

915-261-5477

jolucker@sbcglobal.net

On-Line Permission to Participate Consent Form

1. Permission to participate in Survey

Thank you for talking the time to answer the questions in this survey. My dissertation is in pursuit of discovering educational leaders' knowledge of and attitudes regarding core and current issues in special education. The survey also contains items concerning school characteristics and demographic information about the educational leader. Results of this survey will be shared with the University of Texas at El Paso and will be available from Josie Lucker upon request.

[Insert date survey is posted]

By responding to this survey, I hereby authorize Josie Lucker to include me in the research entitled "Educational Leaders' Beliefs and Attitudes Regarding Core and Current Issues in Special Education". The questions in the survey are focused on educational leaders' beliefs and attitudes toward issues in special education. The survey should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete.

It has been explained to me that survey data collected will be used for research purposes. As an educational leader, over the age of 18, I am being asked to participate since the research is about educational leaders' beliefs and attitudes towards special education. I understand that the investigator will respect my anonymity and I agree that the data shall be retained for research purposes and once the research is finished the data will be deleted and/or destroyed. I understand I have the right to review the data collected as part of the study.

I understand I have the right to refuse to answer any question. I also understand that I have the right to refuse participation in or withdraw from this study at any time without prejudice or penalty. I understand that circumstances may arise which might cause the investigator to terminate my participation before the completion of the study. I understand there are no known risks if I do, or do not participate in the survey. I also understand that I will not receive any money for participating in this survey. I understand the possible benefits of this study may help to understand what supports, professional development, and/or higher education courses might better prepare educational leaders who will be capable of coping with diverse student populations and ever-increasing range of educational needs to ensure a successful learning experience for all students, especially those with exceptionalities. I also understand if the study design or use of the information is to be changed, I will be informed and my consent re-obtained. I understand that Josie Lucker, who can be reached at jolucker@sbcbglobal.net or 915- 262-5477 will answer any questions I may have at any time concerning details if the procedures performed as part of the study.

I understand that if I have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact the UTEP Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (915-747-8841) or irb.orsp@utep.edu. In signing this consent form I acknowledge receipt of a copy of this form.

[First question placed on-line with on-line survey.]

1. I consent to my responses being used by Josie Lucker in her doctoral research at the University of Texas at El Paso, on Educational Leaders' Beliefs and Attitudes Regarding Core and Current Issues in Special Education.

_Next, _Stop

First Reminder Cover Letter

Dear Educational Leader,

Last week I sent you a link to complete an on-line survey about educational leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding issues in special education. Your participation will provide the education leaders' perspective regarding issues in special education. Your participation is very important. Will you please complete the survey on-line now?

Click on the following link to access the survey which will take no more than 20 minutes to complete, or cut and paste the link into your browser [SurveyLink].

The consent form is on the first page of survey, which can be accessed when you click on the on-line survey link address. Answering the first question [**I consent to my responses being used by Josie Lucker in her doctoral research at the University of Texas at El Paso, on Educational Leaders' Beliefs and Attitudes Regarding Core and Current Issues in Special Education**] of the on-line questionnaire indicates voluntary consent to participate in the study. You have the right to not answer any question you do not wish to answer. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty of prejudice. I would sincerely appreciate if you could complete the survey by [date].

If you have any questions or concerns about completing this survey or about being a part of this study please contact me, at 915-261-5477 or you may contact UTEP Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 915-747-8841 or irb.orsp@utep.edu.

Thank you so much for your support.

Josie Lucker
915-261-5477
jolucker@sbcglobal.net

Second Reminder Cover Letter

Dear Educational Leader,

I sent you a link to complete an on-line survey about educational leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding issues in special education. Your participation is very important. Although some educational leaders have completed the survey, I really need you to respond. Will you please complete the survey on-line now?

Click on the following link to access the survey which will take no more than 20 minutes to complete, or cut and paste the link into your browser [SurveyLink].

The consent form is on the first page of survey, which can be accessed when you click on the on-line survey link address. Answering the first question [**I consent to my responses being used by Josie Lucker in her doctoral research at the University of Texas at El Paso, on Educational Leaders' Beliefs and Attitudes Regarding Core and Current Issues in Special Education**] of the on-line questionnaire indicates voluntary consent to participate in the study. You have the right to not answer any question you do not wish to answer. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty of prejudice. I would sincerely appreciate if you could complete the survey by [date].

If you have any questions or concerns about completing this survey or about being a part of this study please contact me at 915-261-5477 or you may contact UTEP Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 915-747-8841 or irb.orsp@utep.edu.

Thank you so much for your support.

Josie Lucker
915-261-5477
jolucker@sbcglobal.net

Third Reminder Cover Letter

Dear Educational Leader,

I earnestly request that you complete the confidential on-line survey for my dissertation on educational leaders' knowledge and attitudes regarding issues in special education. Your participation is very important. I need a higher response rate to ensure validity. Although some educational leaders have completed the survey, I really need you to respond. Will you please complete the survey on-line now? Click on the following link to access the survey which will take no more than 20 minutes to complete, or cut and paste the link into your browser [SurveyLink].

The consent form is on the first page of survey, which can be accessed when you click on the on-line survey link address. Answering the first question [**I consent to my responses being used by Josie Lucker in her doctoral research at the University of Texas at El Paso, on Educational Leaders' Beliefs and Attitudes Regarding Core and Current Issues in Special Education**] of the on-line questionnaire indicates voluntary consent to participate in the study. You have the right to not answer any question you do not wish to answer. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty of prejudice. I would sincerely appreciate if you could complete the survey by [date]

If you have any questions or concerns about completing this survey or about being a part of this study please contact me, at 915-261-5477 or you may contact UTEP Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 915-747-8841 or irb.orsp@utep.edu.

I will be extremely grateful for your participation in my study. Thank you so much for your support.

Josie Lucker
915-261-5477
jolucker@sbcglobal.net

Appendix C

UTEP IRB

UTEP IRB REVISED

SOCORRO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT IRB

YSLETA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT IRB



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
Office of the Vice President for Research and Sponsored Projects
Institutional Review Board
El Paso, Texas 79968-0587
phone: 915 747-8841 fax: 915 747-5931

FWA No: 00001224

DATE: July 25, 2011

TO: Josie Lucker

FROM: University of Texas at El Paso IRB

STUDY TITLE: [247045-1] Educational Leaders' Beliefs and Attitudes Regarding Core and Current Issues in Special Education

IRB REFERENCE #: 247045-1

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: July 25, 2011

EXPIRATION DATE: July 25, 2012

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. University of Texas at El Paso IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This study has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after termination of the project.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.

If you have any questions, please contact Athena Fester at (915) 747-8841 or afester@utep.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
Office of the Vice President for Research and Sponsored Projects
Institutional Review Board
El Paso, Texas 79968-0587
phone: 915 747-8841 fax: 915 747-5931
Federal Wide Assurance No: 00001224

DATE: October 18, 2011

TO: Josie Lucker

FROM: University of Texas at El Paso IRB

STUDY TITLE: [247045-2] Educational Leaders' Beliefs and Attitudes Regarding Core and Current Issues in Special Education

IRB REFERENCE #: 247045-2

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: October 17, 2011

EXPIRATION DATE: July 25, 2012

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this research study. University of Texas at El Paso IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This study has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

The following documents were submitted for review and approved:

- Revised Proposal
- IRB Approval Letter from YISD and SISD

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after termination of the project.



SOCORRO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Research and Evaluation

August 15, 2011

Dear Josie Lucker:

This is to inform you that, upon reviewing the submitted documentation for your study titled "Educational leaders' beliefs and attitudes regarding core and current issues in special education", the Office of Research and Evaluation has determined that your project conforms to our District's standards regarding informed consent, privacy issues, and FERPA regulations and has approved your Research Request Proposal. Your IRB number is 134.

Please provide a copy of this form to administrators when soliciting their participation. The school administrator has the right to decline campus participation and any participation in this research is entirely voluntary and may be withdrawn at any point. If you will be visiting the campuses a background check is required. Please stop by the District Main office and pick up the background check form from the receptionist.

We understand that you will not use our District's name, or any other identifying information, when you publish your findings. We ask that you keep our department apprised of your progress through updates throughout your project's duration, and provide this office with a copy of your results upon completion.

If you require additional information, please feel free to call me at 915-937-0311 or e-mail me at kmendo05@sisd.net.

Sincerely,

Kelly Mendoza
Director of Research and Evaluation
Socorro Independent School District
12440 Rojas Drive
El Paso, TX 79928

A New Era of Excellence

District Service Center • 12440 Rojas Drive • El Paso, Texas 79928-5200 • Phone 915-937-0307 • Fax 915-937-0333 • www.sisd.net

The Socorro Independent School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs, activities or employment.



Ysleta Independent School District

Office of Assessment, Research, Evaluation and Accountability

Division of Academics

9600 Sims Dr.

El Paso, Texas 79925-7225

915-434-0710

www.yisd.net

September 21, 2011

Josie Lucker
1364 Vista Granada
El Paso, TX 79936

Dear Ms. Lucker:

This is to inform you that the Office of Assessment, Research, Evaluation and Accountability (A.R.E.A) at the Ysleta Independent School District has approved the project titled ***Educational Leaders' Beliefs and Attitudes Regarding Core and Current Issues in Special Education***. We have determined that this project conforms to the district's standards regarding informed consent and FERPA regulations. Your IRB number for 2011-2012 is **#554**.

Please make this letter available upon your first communication with school principals and District staff as it provides them assurance that the study meets the district's research policy. District approval does not ensure research participation from the faculty given that research subjects have the right not to participate and withdraw from the research study at any point. If you will require District data, please submit all data requests through the A.R.E.A. office.

Also, please keep the office apprised of your progress and when the project is complete provide our office with a copy of your final report. The District's name cannot be used when you publish your findings without previous consent in writing.

If you require additional assistance, you may contact me at (915) 434-0718 or e-mail me at eherrera14@yisd.net.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elea Herrera", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Elea U. Herrera
YISD Program Evaluator

Ysleta ISD Vision Statement

All students who enroll in our schools will graduate from high school, fluent in two or more languages, prepared and inspired to continue their education in a four-year college, university or institution of higher education so that they become successful citizens in their community.

Vita

Josie Lucker earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from the University of Texas at El Paso in 1985. She was awarded the Patricia Roberts Fellowship in 1994. Ms. Lucker completed her Master of Arts in Public Administration from the University of Texas at El Paso in 1995. She joined the doctoral program in Education Leadership and Administration.

While pursuing her degree, Dr. Lucker has worked for Clint Independent School District and the Socorro Independent School District as a Special Education teacher. She currently works for the Socorro Independent School District as a Special Education Homebound teacher.

Permanent address: 1911 North Stanton
El Paso, Texas, 79902

This thesis/dissertation was typed by Josie Lucker.