

PRINCIPALS' KNOWLEDGE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICIES AND
PROCEDURES: DOES IT MATTER IN LEADERSHIP?

by

Lindsay Jesteadt

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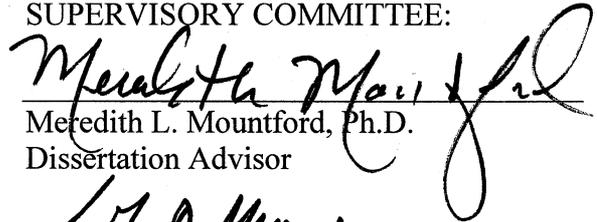
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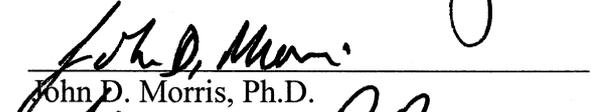
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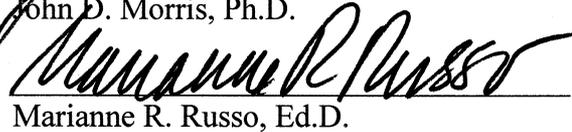
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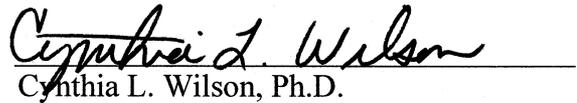
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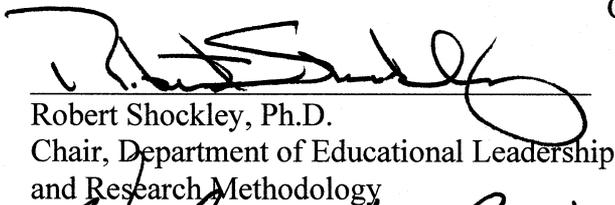
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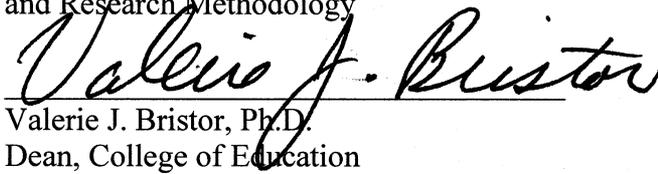

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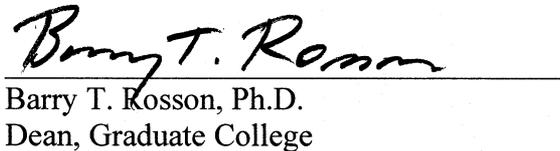

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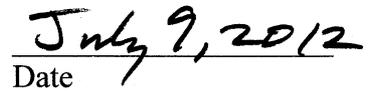

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To my friends: Thank you for reminding me what is important and helping me laugh along the way.

ABSTRACT

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Research has shown that most school leaders lack the knowledge necessary to deal with the many different aspects and issues that special education programs encompass. This lack of knowledge ultimately places special education teachers, programs, and students with disabilities at a clear disadvantage. With The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and the reauthorization of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) in 2004, schools and school leaders are being held accountable for the learning gains of all students, including students with disabilities.

This study sought to assess the knowledge of Florida school principals in the area of special education policies and procedures through survey administration. In addition, the survey was designed to establish the method by which school principals purport to have learned the majority of special education policies and procedures.

Social justice as defined by Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997) and ethical reasoning in educational leadership, developed and defined by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) were chosen as the conceptual framework with which to guide the design and analysis of the study. These underlying sets of ideas were used to help recognize the many inequalities that have hindered education for a variety of students, including those with disabilities (Lashley, 2007). Findings of this study demonstrate the level of knowledge practicing administrators in Florida possess, the methods by which they acquired that knowledge, and the dire need for this knowledge under new state mandated reform initiatives.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving husband and my two amazing children. Joe, you have been my emotional anchor during this entire process. I could never have done this without you. Ella and Noah, you are my world. May you also fulfill your greatest potential and meet success on your terms. I love you always!

“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”

-- Harriet Tubman

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I. INTRODUCTION

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute.”

--- Proverbs 31:8

School leadership has changed considerably over the years, due to federal policies that have been put in place during this era of great public accountability. This new accountability system focuses on the educational performance of all students, including students with disabilities (Lashley, 2007). Keith (2011) affirmed:

Since current mandates assure that the programs and services for children with disabilities are in absolute compliance with the law, building principals absolutely must be knowledgeable and prepared to supervise the array of special education services within their schools and to make decisions regarding best practices. (p. 124)

While the overall objective of principal leadership training programs is to prepare future school leaders, commonly accepted leadership standards such as The National Council for Accreditation in Teacher Education (NCATE) or The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) rarely focus specifically on the knowledge necessary for principals to work effectively with students who exhibit learning or behavioral disabilities, despite the fact most school principals will lead in schools that include a portion of these students in the school population (Crockett, 2002; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Doyle, 2001). In fact, research has suggested

deficits may exist in administrator accreditation programs in regards to diverse learners, exceptionality, and disability (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). With this lack of knowledge specifically related to special education policies and procedures, it is likely many administrators are going into the field unprepared to deal with the everyday realities of educating students with disabilities (Aspedon, 1992; Dickenson, Knopp, & Fauske, 2003; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Doyle, 2001; McClard-Bertrand & Bratberg, 2007; Potter & Hulsey, 2001; Smith & Colon, 1998).

Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to assess the knowledge of school principals in the area of special education policies and procedures through survey administration. In addition, the survey was designed to establish the method (i.e., college coursework, district in-services, self-taught, on the job, or did not learn this) by which school principals purport to have learned the majority of special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 2004. These six principles included: zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment (LRE), free-appropriate public education (FAPE), due process, and parent participation. Data generated from the principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures was then compared by (a) the amount of special education coursework taken during the principal's formal education, (b) the method by which school principals learned the majority of their knowledge of special education policies and procedures, (c) past teaching experience in the field of special education, (d) school enrollment, and (e) types of communities (i.e., rural, suburban, and urban).

Background of the Problem

While few would suggest school leaders must be experts in the area of student disabilities, common knowledge dictates, minimally, they have fundamental knowledge in this area in order to perform essential special education leadership tasks (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). As the instructional leader, this knowledge is critical in ensuring effective instruction and successful learning opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities (Bays & Crockett, 2007). However, research consistently finds most school principals do not have the knowledge in special education, as most of the principal training deals with instructional, operational, and leadership oriented tasks (Aspedon, 1992; Dickenson et al., 2003; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Doyle, 2001; McClard-Bertrand & Bratberg, 2007; Potter & Hulsey, 2001; Smith & Colon, 1998). Principals lack the background and training necessary to understand the legal issues associated with special education and to create programs in which students with disabilities can experience success.

Previous Studies

The findings throughout a series of studies that focused on principals' attitudes toward special education (Dickenson et al., 2003), principals' perceptions of their knowledge of special education (Aspedon, 1992), and what principals know versus what they need to know about special education (McClard-Bertrand & Bratberg, 2007) indicated a lack of educational training and preparation in dealing with students with disabilities. One remarkable finding showed over 72% of principals surveyed had little exposure to persons with disabilities and over 85% of the principals felt formal training in special education was needed (Aspedon, 1992). These findings suggest such a lack of

training and exposure to specific populations of students only hinder the knowledge necessary to be a successful school leader.

Another conclusion from the findings suggests a principal's lack of knowledge is most significant in the understanding of testing and evaluation procedures used to determine eligibility for special education students, in understanding the differences between students served under IDEA and those eligible for services under Section 504 of the 1973 Vocational-Rehabilitation Act, and in the area of data collection and funding sources used to determine special education appropriations (McClard-Bertrand & Bratberg, 2007). Finally, all of these studies concluded more extensive formal training in the special education field is necessary if school leaders are to have the knowledge necessary to operate successful special education programs in their schools.

Data coming from studies on the professional development and/or school leader preparation program show the majority of principals believe they have not received professional development training specifically pertaining to special education from their district and do not feel as though their administrative preparation programs were effective in preparing them with the knowledge needed to deal with special education issues (Dickenson et al., 2003). Finally, nearly all studies confirm "most principals lack the course work and field experience needed to lead local efforts to create learning environments that emphasize academic success for students with disabilities" (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003, p. 11).

Due to the lack of knowledge school leaders possess in the area of special education, many principals are entering the field with feelings of inadequacy and a sense of being overwhelmed by issues associated with special education (Doyle, 2001;

Potter & Hulsey, 2001; Smith & Colon, 1998). Yet with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the reauthorization of IDEA, school leaders are expected to be instructional leaders for all programs, including special education programs. This expectation leads administrators to feel unprepared and inundated (Doyle, 2001). The same sentiment is echoed over and over again in research findings on the topic. Additionally, principals do not consider themselves well equipped for the varied responsibilities that operating a successful special education program entails (Potter & Hulsey, 2001). Some researchers go as far as to suggest one of the most complex and difficult educational tasks for administrators is being able to understand and implement effective special education programs (Smith & Colon, 1998). However, since many administrators feel insufficient with their knowledge in this area they delegate the responsibility to someone else who is likely just as unprepared (Smith & Colon, 1998).

Administrative support in dealing with special education is crucial for the success of special education programs (Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell, & Capper, 1999). What principals most desperately need is a firm foundation in the knowledge of special education programs, policies, and procedures. Principals must have a broad knowledge base about students with disabilities and develop a school-based plan for success in which the principal is an active member (Krajewski & Krajewski, 2000). Those administrators who obtained special training or professional development related to educating students with disabilities indicated such training and background is beneficial to their leadership role in special education at the school level (Patterson, Marshall, & Bowling, 2000). It appears as though administrators who have a clear understanding of the needs of students' with disabilities, IDEA, and the instructional challenges special

education teachers face are better prepared to provide the support special education teachers need to be successful educators (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003).

In addition, findings from a multi-site case study that looked at principals' behaviors in successful inclusive schools showed the principals considered successful had several factors in common (Guzman, 1997). First, the principals had each developed a system of communication that allowed staff members to have a voice and to make recommendations for change. Second, they worked with the staff to agree collaboratively on building a philosophy of inclusion and the principals attended the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and were personally involved in dialogue with the parents of students with disabilities. Next, the successful principals established policies for dealing with behavior problems of students with disabilities. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, each of the principals followed a personal plan of professional development that included issues associated with inclusion. This professional development was completed through attending conferences, as well as taking additional coursework in the areas of special education and inclusion.

Special education is a major component of public schooling. To truly meet the needs of all children, principals need to understand their responsibilities include a commitment and service to students with disabilities (Potter & Hulsey, 2001). As McKenzie et al. (2008) state, "preparation programs for social justice must teach prospective principals how to recognize structures that pose barriers to students' progress and create proactive structures and systems of support for all students at the macro and micro levels" (p. 126). Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian (2006) call for an increased attention to assessing preparation programs and how they prepare leaders for

social justice. While it is well documented in the research that school leaders need to be prepared to be effective advocates for all students, the research also recognizes many school leaders have not acquired the knowledge necessary to provide leadership to students and teachers in special education (Aspedon, 1992; Dickenson et al., 2003; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Doyle, 2001; McClard-Bertrand & Bratberg, 2007; Potter & Hulsey, 2001; Smith & Colon, 1998). As Arne Duncan (2010) acknowledged in his speech on the 35th Anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, “For all the progress, we can all agree that we haven’t completely fulfilled the promise of IDEA. Our children continue to face prejudices and lingering roadblocks” (para. 1). In order to remove these prejudices and roadblocks from our nation’s schools, school leaders must be at the forefront, creating change and advocating for students with disabilities.

Federal Initiatives

In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (PL 89-10) provided a comprehensive plan for readdressing the inequality of educational opportunity for economically underprivileged children. This became the statutory basis upon which early special education legislation was drafted. Additionally, the 1965 State Schools Act (PL 89-313) provided grant assistance to state institutions and state operated schools devoted to the education of children with disabilities. This was the first federal grant program specifically targeted for children and youth with disabilities. These and other critical federal laws began to open doors of opportunity for children with disabilities and their families. Finally in 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142), which was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in

1990, was authorized. This law guaranteed a free, appropriate public education to each and every child with a disability in every state and locality across the country. It became the catalyst for inclusion of students and people with disabilities into the general society.

The 1997 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) pushed for students with disabilities to be educated to the “maximum extent appropriate” with their non-disabled peers (20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(5)(B)). This means schools have a duty to include students with disabilities in general education classes as often as appropriate. However, many principals are unclear about the meaning of inclusion and the kind of instruction, programs, and supports, students with disabilities in the general education classroom require (Bailey & du Plessis, 1997; Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Dickenson et al., 2003). And, although they are expected to be the instructional leaders in their schools (Glasman, 1984; Heck, Larson, & Marcolouides, 1990), many school principals do not have the knowledge necessary to successfully lead inclusive schools (Crockett, 2002).

Since the inception of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, which was the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), accountability for closing achievement gaps and raising achievement for all students has become the core educational objective in public schools (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6301 et seq., 2002). “While the federal law did not initially point to school leadership as a major factor in achieving these goals, the issue of leadership has gained considerable attention” (National Education Association [NEA], 2008, p. 2). With NCLB requiring schools to make annual progress toward achieving the goal of

100% proficiency for all students in reading and mathematics by 2013-2014, principal leadership has been brought into the spotlight (House & Ip, 2006). Through NCLB, additional provisions were created to ensure that no child, especially one with the greatest learning needs, was overlooked in standards-driven learning environments (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). Requirements for reporting the performance of all students, including those with disabilities, have caused the school leader to become more concerned about the education of students with disabilities (Lashley, 2007).

On December 3, 2004, President George W. Bush signed P.L.108-446, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004), which was a reauthorization of IDEA. As the nation's special education law, IDEA 2004 serves millions of students with disabilities. Most of these students are enrolled in public schools and therefore, under NCLB, are required to take part in state testing and other programs, which NCLB holds school districts accountable for reporting performance back to the state and federal government (Patterson et al., 2000). Having had federal mandates in place since 2002, student performance, at least student performance as measured by federally mandated statewide standardized assessments, suggests the needs of special education students remain largely unaddressed (Lashley, 2007). This raises questions regarding the adequacy of school leadership standards and programs for preparing principals in well-rounded ways, including specific standards and training for working with students with special needs. In a speech to the American Association for People with Disabilities, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2011) declared:

In order to win the future, as President Obama has challenged us, we must enable every single American to reach their potential, and in my book, all means

all. Every child, regardless of income, race, background, or disability can learn and must learn, and our system of education, spread across 50 states, 15,000 school districts, and 95,000 schools, must embrace this core belief every day in every way possible. (para. 1)

State Initiatives

In the face of the changing educational system, it became clear principal leadership standards that would focus on continuous school improvement and student achievement were necessary. In April 2005, new Florida Principal Leadership Standards were adopted by the State Board of Education. These standards became the core of a new framework for certification of Florida school leaders. The Florida Department of Education Regulation 6A-5.080 [see Appendix A) outlines the Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FLDOE, 2005). In an attempt to foster specific knowledge in potential school leaders, ten standards were created in which a person must demonstrate his or her competency levels. These ten standards were split into three broad principles: instructional leadership, operational leadership, and school leadership.

The 2006 Florida Legislature established the William Cecil Golden School Leadership Development Program (see Appendix B). The goal of this program is “to provide a high quality, competency-based, customized, comprehensive and coordinated statewide professional development system for current and emerging school leaders” (Florida Department of Education [FLDOE], 2006, para. 1). The program uses a collaborative network of state and national leadership development organizations to support the needs of current and developing school leaders. In June of 2007, the State Department of Education Regulation 6A-5.081 (see Appendix C) was passed to

ensure pre-service school leadership programs as well as in-service school leaders are of high quality as required in Section 1012.986, F.S.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the knowledge of school principals in the area of special education policies and procedures through survey administration. In addition, the survey was designed to establish the method (i.e., college coursework, district in-services, self-learning, and on the job, or never learned this) by which school principals purport to have learned the majority of special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles of IDEA 2004. These six principles included: zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment (LRE), free-appropriate public education (FAPE), due process, and parent participation. Data generated from the principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures was then compared by (a) the amount of special education coursework taken during the principal's formal education, (b) the method by which school principals learned the majority of their knowledge of special education policies and procedures, (c) past teaching experience in the field of special education, (d) school enrollment, and (e) types of communities (i.e., rural, suburban, and urban).

Significance of Study

The study is significant to the field of education and more specifically to principal preparation programs as the findings may help policy makers recognize the injustices that penetrate the very core of education. Ethical leaders have a social responsibility to recognize the inequalities and social injustices at the center of our organizations (Greenleaf, 1977). The first step in creating an education system that is

entwined with social justice is to recognize the many disparities that face a particular population of students. Society propagates this marginalization through simple neglect in training those who are responsible for leading educators in teaching and caring for students with disabilities. As this study assessed school principals' knowledge in the area of special education and reported the method by which they received that knowledge, the findings could help shape policy for the creation of socially just educational leadership programs in the area of special education and assist in decreasing the marginalization of students with disabilities.

Conceptual Framework

Social justice as defined by Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997) and ethical reasoning in educational leadership, developed and defined by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) were chosen as the conceptual framework with which to guide the design of the study. These underlying sets of ideas were used to help recognize the many inequalities that have hindered education for a variety of students, including those with disabilities (Lashley, 2007). In looking at principal preparation in regards to special education through a combination of conceptual lenses and paradigms, the researcher hoped to identify the levels of equity among the opportunities provided for children with disabilities. The following sections discuss how social justice and ethical reasoning guided the study and assisted in the interpretation of the findings.

Social Justice

The idea of social justice has become little more than rhetoric. The term social justice has been defined as many different ways as there are authors who have written about it! McKenzie et al. (2008) argues for a nonessentialized definition of social

justice, where there is not one meaning, nor can it be universally applied in every situation in the same way. Bogotch (2002a) asserts that social justice is a social construction and there are no fixed or predictable meanings of social justice prior to actually engaging in educational leadership practices. Drawing on the philosophies of John Dewey who contends that a truly democratic society concerns itself essentially with social justice, the research makes it clear that creating equal opportunities and eliminating injustices must become a priority in our communities as well as our schools (Aronson, 2004; Larson & Ovando, 2001; Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005; Rosener, 1990; Young, Mountford, & Skrla, 2006). For the purpose of this research, the researcher utilized the definition of social justice by Adams et al. (1997) as:

Both a process and a goal. It means full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. We envision a society in which individuals are both self determining (able to develop their full capacities), and interdependent (capable of interacting democratically with others). (p. 240)

Unless school leaders are trained in the area of social justice and more specifically special education, the inequalities we see today will most likely remain. As Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) point out:

The emerging social justice discourse calls on school leaders to question the assumptions that drive school policies and practices to create more equitable schooling. To meet this challenge, school leadership programs must prepare new

leaders to critically inquire into the taken-for-granted structures and norms that often pose insurmountable barriers for many students' academic success. (p. 204)

School leaders can no longer sit back and follow the customary structures that have inhabited education for too many years. They must be visionaries and see change as the only possible future. "If school leaders are to carry out this agenda, they themselves must hold a critical consciousness about power, privilege, and inequities in society and in schools" (McKenzie et al., 2008, p. 122).

Ethical Reasoning

A second conceptual framework, developed by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) for ethical reasoning in educational leadership, looks at the four approaches to ethical analysis: an ethic of justice, an ethic of care, an ethic of critique, and an ethic of the profession. These four approaches are used "to guide the decision-making of principals as they confront unfamiliar and complex dilemmas in their schools... These perspectives pose different questions for administrators to consider as they make decisions that hold them accountable to stakeholders and responsible for the children they serve" (Lashley, 2007, p. 182).

Viewing ethical dilemmas through an ethic of justice, "one may ask questions related to the rule of law and the more abstract concepts of fairness, equity and justice" (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 12). This area may include the issues of equality and equity, the fairness of rules laws and policies, and rights of individuals versus the greater good. "Overall, the ethic of justice considers questions such as: Is there a law, right, or policy that relates to a particular case? If there is a law, right, or policy, should

it be enforced? And if there is not a law, right, or policy, should there be one?” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 13). A school principal “must understand the rights inherent in IDEA and why they are in place. He or she must also know the legal and policy requirements of the law, as well as understand the historical and educational contexts that have led to these requirements” (Lashley, 2007, p. 184).

Growing out of the ethic of justice, the ethic of care, which is associated with feminist theory, requires leaders to consider the multiple voices in the decision making process (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). “This ethic asks that individuals consider the consequences of their decisions and actions. It asks them to consider questions such as: Who will benefit from what I decide? Who will be hurt by my actions? What are the long-term effects of a decision I make today?” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 16). For example, even a cursory examination of Florida’s Principal Leadership Standards using the “ethic of care” indicates the mere neglect of knowledge required of aspiring school leaders causes one to wonder what the long term effect of the absence of standards might be and how this would impact students with disabilities. Minimally, principals are entering the field without an external agent requiring them to take courses in educating children with disabilities and in understanding the legal ramifications involved with these populations of students. The effects are ominous; really, as it is difficult to imagine such neglect wouldn’t ultimately result in exponentially widening gaps of knowledge in leadership in schools filled with children with disabilities. For instance, a leader without basic knowledge of special education and inclusion practices could actually foster a negative environment that does not lead to inclusion at all, but rather helps to segregate students with disabilities from their non-disabled peers.

The ethic of critique, which is inherent in critical theory, is aimed at awakening educators to inequities in society and, in particular, in the schools (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 16). Educators are asked to deal with the hard questions regarding social class, race, gender, and disabilities. The ethic of critique focuses on questions regarding who makes the laws, rules, or policies; who benefits from the laws, rules, or policies; who holds the power; and who are the silenced voices (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). “The disaggregation of performance data required under NCLB raises issues about students who have been historically under-considered in school decision-making. When principals use data to inform their decisions, they cannot ignore the achievement gaps that they discover” (Lashley, 2007, p. 185). This disaggregation of data also works to bring a voice to students with disabilities and allows school principals the opportunities to begin to address issues of social inequalities present in our education system.

Finally, the ethic of the profession looks at providing training in ethics for school leaders. This preparation could “enable a prospective principal or superintendent to develop attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and skills associated with competence in moral reasoning” (Greenfield, 1993, p. 285). Greenfield believes a failure to develop this competence in school administrators represents a failure to serve the children we are obligated to serve. “In educational administration, we believe that if there is a moral imperative for the profession, it is to serve the ‘best interests of the student [including those with disabilities]” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 26). The ethic of the profession addresses the question, “What should I do based on the best interests of the students who may be diverse in their composition and needs?” (Lashley, 2007, p. 186). In

knowing the current policy, which dictates Florida Principal Leadership Standards, is not based on the best interests of students with disabilities, it would not be professionally ethical to follow the current standards. In choosing not to mandate coursework and training for school leaders in the area of special education, we are acting as though it is no different from the general education; we are in fact being socially unjust. “There can be injustice in treating people the same when in relevant respects they are different, just as much as there can be in treating them differently when in relevant respects they are the same” (Halstead, 1988, as qtd. in AAD Project, 2002, Color-Blind Racism section, para. 1).

The NCATE and ISSLC standards for educational leadership refer to the need for current principals to “advocate for policies and programs that promote equitable learning opportunities and success for all students, regardless of socioeconomic background, ethnicity, gender, disability, or other individual characteristics” (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002, p. 15). For the purpose of this dissertation, the objective of social justice is to ensure every student with a disability participates in a complete and equal educational experience within the public school setting. Working towards true social justice in our educational system means every principal truly believes every student has the potential to learn and every principal accepts responsibility for every student at his or her school. As President George W. Bush (2002) stated with the authorization of NCLB, “Some say it is unfair to hold disadvantaged children to rigorous standards. I say it is discrimination to require anything less. It is the soft bigotry of low expectations” (p. 17). The conceptual frameworks of social justice and ethical reasoning will be used to assess whether

students with disabilities are receiving equitable and socially just educational opportunities based on school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures.

Research Questions

In order to address the purpose of this study, the conceptual framework along with the following overarching research questions and sub questions guided the design of this quantitative study. What knowledge do Florida principals possess in the areas of special education policies and procedures, as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004? Further, what was the primary method (i.e., college coursework, district in-services, self-learning, on the job, or did not learn this) by which principals purport to have learned the majority of special education policies and procedures?

The research questions and null hypotheses were as follows:

1. Do principals who receive formal training (i.e., any level of college coursework in any program area) in special education have a greater level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures than principals who did not receive formal training in special education?

H₀1. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures between principals who received formal training in special education and those who did not receive formal training in special education.

2. Is there a relationship between the principals' knowledge levels in the area of special education policies and procedures, as defined by the six principles

of IDEA 2004, and the method by which they received the majority of their knowledge for each area?

H₀2. There is no significant relationship between principals' knowledge levels in the area of special education policies and procedures, as defined by the six principles of IDEA 2004, and the methods by which they received the majority of their knowledge for each area.

3. Do principals who have prior teaching experience in the field of special education have a greater level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures than principals who did not have prior teaching experience in the field of special education?

H₀3. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures between principals who had prior teaching experience in the field of special education and those who did not have prior teaching experience in the field of special education.

4. Is the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures similar among principals across different school sizes, as measured by school enrollment?

H₀4. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures among principals across different school sizes, as measured by school enrollment.

5. Is the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures similar among principals across community types (i.e., rural, suburban, and urban)?

N_o5. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures among principals across community types.

Limitations

Limitations to research are defined as those elements to which the researcher has no control (Creswell, 2003). They are the characteristics of design or methodology that set parameters on the application or interpretation of the results of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). Major limitations of this study were those associated with survey research. This type of research generally has a low response rate. Further, “a potential limitation of e-mail survey research includes the difficulty in sorting out responders versus nonresponders, especially with a large sample size” (Schmidt, Strachota, & Conceição, 2006). Another limitation of the study was related to the idea of social desirability. There are certain facts or issues participants would rather not report accurately (Fowler, 2008). Therefore, if the principal did not feel he or she had a sufficient level of knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures, he or she may have decided not to complete the survey. Since the hypothetical-scenario based questions can be seen as a test of knowledge, there was no control as to whether the school principals felt comfortable completing a survey that elicited their knowledge of issues dealing with social desirability. Further, for those principals who did respond, social desirability could also have affected what method the participants purported to have received their knowledge for the six principles of IDEA 2004. Additionally, there was no control as to whether they received online or personal assistance in the completion of the survey. Finally, the conclusions from this research may only be

generalized to public school districts in Florida and school principals who have characteristics similar to those found in the sample of the study.

Delimitations

Delimitations are defined as elements in which the researcher can manipulate and control (Creswell, 2003). They are the characteristics that limit the scope of the inquiry as determined by the conscious exclusionary and inclusionary decisions that were made throughout the development of the proposal (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). The first delimitation was the researcher limited the study to Florida public school principals in traditional elementary, middle, and high school settings (K-12). Additionally, the survey was limited to questions regarding the six major principles of special education within IDEA 2004: zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, individualized free-appropriate public education, due process procedures, and parent participation. Finally, attempts to determine the level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures were limited to responses on case scenarios and not on actual practice.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were used:

- Accountability: “NCLB requires states to adopt content and achievement standards, to measure student progress toward those standards, and to implement a series of interventions and sanctions in schools and districts that fail to meet their targets. Together, these standards, assessments, and consequences constitute a [Standards Based Accountability] system” (RAND, 2007, para. 4).

- Child with a disability (also referred to as a student with a disability and students with disabilities): “a child with mental retardation, hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, visual impairments, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities; and who by reason thereof needs special education and related services” (20 U.S.C. 1401(3)(A)(i-ii)).
- Due process procedures: commonly known as the safeguards. These safeguards create checks and balances. They are ways for assuring that the student benefits from being in school and that the school is providing the services and placements required by the other principles. They also assure shared decision-making concerning the student’s education (Turnbull, Wilcox, Turnbull, Sailor, & Wickham, 2001).
- Free-appropriate public education: “special education and related services that (A) have been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; (B) meet standards of the State educational agency; (C) include an appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the State involved; and (D) are provided in conformity with the individualized education program required” (20 U.S.C. 1401 (602)(9)(A-D)).
- Formal training: training received through a College or University in partial fulfillment of a degree or certification.

- Individualized education program or ‘IEP’: “means a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with section 614(d)” (20 U.S.C. 1401(602) (14)).
- Least restrictive environment: “To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (20 U.S.C. 1412 (612) (a) (5) (A)).
- Level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures: assessed by the Principals’ Knowledge of Special Education (PKSE) Survey, which posed twelve survey items to participants asking them to respond to hypothetical scenarios based on the six major principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004). These six principles included: zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment (LRE), free-appropriate public education (FAPE), due process, and parent participation.
- Methods of knowledge acquisition: Method by which a principal received the majority of his or her knowledge for each of the six areas of IDEA 2004 (i.e., college coursework, district in-services, self-learning, on the job, or did not learn this).

- Nondiscriminatory evaluation: “a rule of fair evaluation of the student in order to determine whether the student has a disability and, if so, what special education and related services are required for the student. To carry out a fair evaluation, the school must assess the student inter-disciplinarily, across a variety of domains (cognitive, behavioral, developmental, and physical) and in those specific areas in which the student may have (or is already known to have) a disability. Among other things, this principle also provides that the student’s parents are members of the team that evaluates the student and that they have the right to secure (sometimes at the cost of the school) and to have the school consider any evaluations conducted by qualified individuals who are not employees or contractors of the school” (Turnbull et al., 2001, p. 447).
- Parent participation: a rule of shared decision-making between the school and the student’s parents and, as appropriate, the student. It, too, is part of IDEA’s checks and balances, created to help ensure shared decision-making regarding a student’s education and the provision of legally required services (Turnbull et al., 2001).
- Prior teaching experience in special education: Any experience working for a public school district as a special education teacher.
- Rural schools: Geographically, a school is considered rural if it is located in “an area with a population of 25,000 people or fewer” (Lieske & Swearer, 2010, p. 824).
- School administrators: building level principals.

- School type: rural, suburban, or urban.
- Special education: “specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including (A) instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and (B) instruction in physical education” (20 U.S.C. 1401 (602) (29)(A-B)).
- Suburban schools: Geographically, “suburban schools are those that are located outside a city in a suburban area” (Schneider, 2010, p. 956).
- Urban schools: “Geographically, a school is considered urban if it is located in a densely populated central city, inner-city, or metropolitan area” (West, Reed, Jordan, & Wright, 2010, p. 1019).
- Zero reject: IDEA requires state education agencies to “provide full educational opportunities to all children with disabilities” (20 U.S.C. 1412 (a)(2)).

Chapter Summary

With the increased accountability on school leaders for ensuring all children, even children with disabilities, show learning gains, we can no longer push special education to the backburner. Research has shown most school leaders do not feel prepared to deal with the many different aspects and issues special education programs include (Aspedon, 1992; Dickenson et al., 2003; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Doyle, 2001; Keyes et al., 1999; Krajewski & Krajewski, 2000; McClard-Bertrand & Bratberg, 2007; Patterson et al., 2000; Potter & Hulsey, 2001; Smith & Colon, 1998). This research brings the field a step closer in realizing the lack of special education

training during the principal leadership preparation program is detrimental to the success of students with disabilities.

Chapter one included the background of the problem, the purpose and significance of the study, the conceptual frameworks, the study's research questions, an overview of the design and methodology, limitations and delimitations, and definitions of terms used throughout the study. Chapter two will include a review of relevant literature pertaining to leadership in special education as well as the laws and policies shaping special education over the years. Chapter three will include research methodology, including procedures for data collection and data analysis. Chapter four will provide the analysis of results. Finally, chapter five will include a discussion of findings and recommendations for future research on this topic and implications for leadership preparation programs.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an in-depth understanding of the legal foundation for special education in the United States. This chapter begins at a national level with an overview of the requirement for compulsory education, as well as an intended focus on special education policy and includes a discussion of landmark court cases and Supreme Court rulings significant within the history of special education policy in the United States. After the historical overview, a seminal and historic federal ruling, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as specifically related to several prominent and significant school district policies, including zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, individualized free-appropriate public education, due process, and parent participation, will be discussed. Finally, national and state level principal leadership development, licensure requirements, and related standards, including the ISLLC standards for educational leadership, the Florida principal leadership standards, and principal preparation programs and professional development will be discussed.

Requirements for Compulsory Education

In 1787, the Continental Congress declared in the Northwest Ordinance that “schools and the means for education shall forever be encouraged” (Johnson, 1965, p. 21). By 1918, compulsory attendance education laws were in place in all states; however, these laws were not inclusive of children with disabilities (Yell, 2006). On January 12, 1965 during a speech to Congress, President Lyndon B. Johnson reminded

everyone that “America is strong and prosperous and free because for 178 years we have honored [the] commitment [that education shall be encouraged].” President Johnson went on to affirm:

There is a darker side to Education in America: One student out of every three now in fifth grade will drop out before finishing high school—if the present rate continues. Almost a million young people will continue to quit school each year—if our schools fail to stimulate their desire to learn. (p. 11)

This became the foundation for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (PL. 89-10), which was born out of Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty and became the groundwork for federal education policy. ESEA established high standards and accountability. It emphasized equal access to education through federal assistance to poor schools, communities, and children.

Significant Influences in the History of Special Education Policy

The history of special education is entwined in the civil rights and equal opportunity movements. The following sections will explain the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and how that judgment became instrumental in affording equal rights and protections to people with disabilities. Additionally, two landmark special education cases will be discussed as well as the implications that resulted. Finally the Congressional Investigation of 1972 and subsequent Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 will be explored.

Brown v. Board of Education, 1954

In 1954 the United States Supreme Court issued a landmark civil rights decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (hereafter *Brown*). Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered

the opinion of the Court and concluded in the field of public education, separate but equal has no place and separate is inherently unequal:

In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right that must be made available to all on equal terms. (p. 493)

The precedents set forth in *Brown* resulted in sweeping changes in the schools' policies and approaches to students with disabilities. "The Court maintained that state-required or state-sanctioned segregation solely on the basis of a person's unalterable characteristics (e.g., race or disability) was unconstitutional" (Yell, 2006, p. 66). *Brown* became a catalyst in the efforts to ensure educational rights for children with disabilities. Advocates for this group of children claimed students with disabilities have the same rights as their non-disabled peers; thus, by excluding these children, schools were discriminating based on disability (Wright & Wright, 2007). Disability advocates based their arguments on two separate premises: First, "there was an unacceptable level of differential treatment within the class of children with disabilities. Second...some students with disabilities were not furnished with an education, whereas all students without disabilities were provided an education" (Yell, 2006, p. 67). On the basis of the *Brown* decision, a series of court cases was brought on behalf of children and youth with disabilities seeking rectification for similar inequalities. *Brown* may be considered the most significant education law decision ever written. "Although the U.S. Constitution never once refers to a public education, the principles of equal protection

and due process under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments have a significant effect on public education” (Turnbull, Stowe, & Huerta, 2007, p. 17).

Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1971

In January 1971, the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (hereafter *PARC*) brought a class action suit against the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania due to the exclusion of children with mental retardation from public education and training. *PARC* contested a state law that specifically allowed public schools to deny services to children “who have not attained a mental age of five years” at the time they would ordinarily enroll in first grade (*PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1971). Four critical points were established from witnesses for the plaintiffs: (a) children with mental retardation are capable of benefiting from education and training programs; (b) education cannot be defined as only the provision of academic experiences; (c) the state cannot deny students with mental retardation access to free public education and training, since they provided non-disabled children with this service; and (d) earlier students with mental retardation were provided education (Yell, 2006). *PARC* was resolved by a consent agreement specifying children ages 6-21 with mental retardation must be provided a free appropriate public education and it is most desirable to educate these students in programs most like the programs provided for their non-disabled peers (Yell, 2006).

Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia, 1972

Soon after the *PARC* decision, a class action suit (hereafter *Mills*) was filed against the District of Columbia’s Board of Education on behalf of all students who

were denied or excluded from public education in Washington D.C. These students presented a variety of disabilities, including mental retardation, physical impairments, behavior problems, hyperactivity, and epilepsy. Based on the Fourteenth Amendment, the suit charged that students were improperly excluded from their education without due process of law (Yell, 2006). The Court concluded since segregation was unconstitutional, the total exclusion of students with disabilities had the same ill effect and was therefore deemed unconstitutional as well. The *Mills* court “approved consent decrees that enjoined states from denying education to students who were mentally retarded and students with other disabilities without due process. The *Mills* consent decree went so far as to set out an elaborate framework for what the due process would entail” (Rothstein & Johnson, 2010, p. 10).

The *PARC* and *Mills* decisions set precedent for similar cases around the United States. “In the two and a half years following the *PARC* and *Mills* decisions, 46 right-to-education cases were filed on behalf of children with disabilities in 28 states” (Yell, 2006, p. 68). The outcomes of these cases were similar to the seminal cases of *PARC* and *Mills*. In the early 1970s many states had passed legislation requiring students with disabilities be included in education; however the laws varied according to the state. It became evident that “some degree of federal involvement was necessary” (Yell, 2006, p. 69).

Congressional Investigation, 1972

After *PARC* and *Mills*, Congress launched an investigation into the status of students with handicaps and disabilities and found there were millions of children not receiving appropriate education. It was reported, out of an estimated 8 million students

requiring special education and related services, only 3.9 million children were receiving an appropriate education, 1.75 million were receiving no education services, and another 2.5 million were receiving education that was inappropriate based on their disability (Yell, 2006).

During the congressional hearings, a number of issues with the status of special education were revealed through testimony and statements. Some of the most severe cases dealt with children who were institutionalized, rather than educated. Other testimonies spoke to the differences in levels of services from state to state. Some parents indicated they were often required to provide transportation for their children in order to get the appropriate services and supports. In 1974, Congress passed an interim funding bill that “required states, as a condition of receiving federal funds, to adopt goals of providing full educational opportunities to all handicapped children” (Rothstein & Johnson, 2010, p. 19). This interim bill was adopted to allow Congress a year to study the issue of students with disabilities and determine the educational opportunities they should be afforded.

Public Law 94-142: The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975

On November 29, 1975, President Gerald Ford signed into law, P.L. 94-142, known as The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHCA) of 1975. While the overarching purpose of this Act was to enforce the equal protection clause of the Federal Constitution’s Fourteenth Amendment, additional purposes were:

To assure the rights of *all* students with disabilities to a free appropriate public education, to protect the rights of students and their parents in securing such an education, to assist state and local education agencies to provide for the

education of those students, and to assess and assure the effectiveness of state and local efforts to educate those students (Turnbull et al., 2007, p. 34).

The law not only focused on ensuring children with disabilities had access to education and due process, but Congress also created a complex system of checks and balances called “procedural safeguards.” These safeguards were designed to protect the rights of children with disabilities and their parents.

EHCA was the combination of an education bill of rights with the promise of federal financial incentives attached. There were administrative and funding requirements obligating states to develop policies to assure all qualified students with disabilities receive special education. The Act “mandated that qualified students with disabilities had the right to (a) nondiscriminatory testing, evaluation, and placement procedures; (b) education in the least restrictive environment; (c) procedural due process, including parent involvement; (d) a free education; and (e) an appropriate education” (Yell, 2006, p. 71). By 1985 all of the states had complied with the provisions of the EHCA.

In 1990, the EHCA was amended and the title was changed to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). At this time some of the language of the Act also changed. For instance, handicap was replaced with disability and the law used “people first” language (person with a disability instead of disabled person). At this time, two additional eligibility principles were added under IDEA: autism and traumatic brain injury. IDEA also required the inclusion of individualized transition planning in the IEPs for students who were 16 years of age or older.

In 1997, IDEA was again reauthorized. Congress felt the “implementation of IDEA had been impeded by low expectations for students with disabilities, an insufficient focus on translating research into practice, and too great an emphasis on paperwork and legal requirements at the expense of teaching and learning” (Yell, 2006, p. 74). With this reauthorization, the new goal was to “improve the effectiveness of special education by requiring demonstrable improvements in the educational achievement of students with disabilities” (Yell, 2006, p. 74).

Finally on December 3, 2004, President George W. Bush signed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004), which is the most recent reauthorization of the law. IDEA 2004 creates significant changes to the law by emphasizing increased accountability on performance of students with disabilities. Additionally, IDEA 2004 made sweeping changes in the IEP, discipline, and identification of students with learning disabilities. This was the first time the response to intervention model was recommended for use to determine eligibility for special education. We have come a long way since the inception of P.L. 94-142 in 1975, but there is still a long road ahead to ensure students with disabilities receive an equitable education, which results in leveling the playing field.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

On January 8, 2002 President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which was the most sweeping reform of the ESEA since 1965. He described this new legislation as the cornerstone of his administration. President Bush exclaimed, “These reforms express my deep belief in our public schools and their mission to build the mind and character of every child, from every

background, in every part of America” (Executive Summary of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2004, p. 1). NCLB is built on four main principles: accountability for results, more choices for parents, greater local control and flexibility, and an emphasis on scientific based research.

Accountability for results. NCLB’s stronger accountability system resulted in the creation of state assessments that measure what children know and learn in reading and math. Student progress and achievement is assessed based on these yearly tests and the data is made public. The passage of NCLB made it clear that all students should be held accountable for their academic achievement. This meant that students with disabilities could not be excluded from district wide or statewide assessments. In the fall of 2002, states were required to begin reporting student achievement at both the district and school level. This data is required to be statistically sound and disaggregated based on the race, social economic status, presence of a disability, and English proficiency of the student (NCLB, 2002). It is used to demonstrate not only how well students are achieving overall but also the progress in closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and other groups of students.

More choices for parents. NCLB has been instrumental in expanding the options for parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. With public school choice, parents with children in failing schools are allowed to transfer their child to a higher-performing school or a local charter school immediately after the home school is identified as failing (NCLB, 2002). (Under the law, “failing” means the school didn’t meet its progress goals that go up each year until the goal is 100% in 2013-2014.) Additionally, the Federal Title I funds can be used to provide supplemental educational

services, such as tutoring, summer school programs, and after school programs for children in these failing schools (NCLB, 2002).

Greater local control and flexibility. NCLB has been significant in reducing the red tape and allowing for greater flexibility at the state and local levels. With NCLB, states and local school districts have been given greater authority and flexibility in the spending of federal dollars (NCLB, 2002). For instance, “all 50 states [were given] the freedom to transfer up to 50% of the non-Title I state activity funds they receive[d] from the federal government among an assortment of ESEA programs without advance[d] approval” (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2003, para. 2).

Emphasis on scientific based research. Part of President Bush’s initiative with NCLB is to ensure every child can read. This Act “authorized an increase in federal funding for reading from \$300 million in [fiscal year] 2001 to more than \$900 [million in fiscal year] 2002” (USDOE, 2003, para. 4). This funding is all linked to using scientifically proven methods of reading instruction in the classroom.

“Under NCLB, schools [are] to ensure that 100% of students achieve at levels identified as ‘proficient’ by the year 2014 and to make mandated progress toward this goal each year” (Keith, 2011, p. 97). The implementation of NCLB is “forcing us to confront the weaknesses of contemporary school leadership and is making it impossible to ignore the escalating need for higher quality principals — individuals who have been prepared to provide the instructional leadership necessary to improve student achievement” (Hale & Moorman, 2003, p. 1). In their review of the NCLB Act, Wakeman, Browder, Meier, and McColl (2007) affirmed:

As NCLB has become a catapult for reform in the field of education, the impact on the field of special education has been extensive. Title I of NCLB holds special education students and teachers to new and higher expectations, which equates to a significant addition to the value of education for these students. These new expectations bring uncharted possibilities for students with disabilities. (p. 23)

Race to the Top

On July 24, 2009, President Barack Obama set forth an unprecedented challenge and opportunity, intended to encourage systemic reform and embrace innovative approaches to teaching and learning in America's schools. He declared:

America will not succeed in the 21st century unless we do a far better job of educating our sons and daughters... and the race starts today. I am issuing a challenge to our nation's governors and school boards, principals and teachers, businesses and non-profits, parents and students: if you set and enforce rigorous and challenging standards and assessments; if you put outstanding teachers at the front of the classroom; if you turn around failing schools – your state can win a Race to the Top grant which will not only help students outcompete workers around the world, but let them fulfill their God-given potential. (2009)

With the commitment to provide every child access to a complete and competitive education, this initiative is backed by a \$4.35 billion investment. Race to the Top emphasizes the following reform areas: designing and implementing rigorous standards and high-quality assessments, attracting and keeping great teachers and leaders in America's classrooms, supporting data systems that inform decisions and improve

instruction, using innovative and effective approaches to turn-around struggling schools, and finally demonstrating and sustaining education reform (Obama, 2009).

Although federal education initiatives have paved the way and helped shape the field of education through federally funded programs, the history of special education is far more controversial, with roots deep in litigation.

History of Additional Supreme Court Cases in Special Education

Law permeates every facet of our society and public education is no exception. Since the time of the *Brown* decree, the field of special education has largely been defined through case law and judicial rulings. The following is an account of special education cases argued at the Supreme Court level and the policies that have been shaped through these decisions.

Board of Education of Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley, 1982

In 1982, the United States Supreme Court rendered its first decision construing the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act, in the *Board of Education of Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley* (hereafter *Rowley*). The case dealt with a first grade student named Amy Rowley. Amy was deaf, and when she entered school her parents requested she be provided with a qualified sign language interpreter. After consulting with various experts, the school refused, based on the fact Amy was achieving academically without the assistance.

When the case came before the Supreme Court, they held that “an ‘appropriate’ education under the EHCA is found when a program of special education and related services is provided such that the child benefits from education and where the due process procedures have been followed in developing the program” (Rothstein &

Johnson, 2010, p. 23). This decision clarified that children with disabilities were entitled access to a program that provided educational benefit; they were not entitled to the best program possible. Justice William Rehnquist wrote “[t]he intent of the Act was more to open the door of public education to handicapped children on appropriate terms than to guarantee any particular level of education once inside” (*Board of Education v. Rowley*, 1982, p. 193). The disagreement between parents and school districts in determining what constitutes an “appropriate” special education program for each individual child is still a battle being fought today.

Irving Independent School District v. Amber Tatro, 1984

Shortly after the *Rowley* decision, the Supreme Court was faced with another special education case, *Irving School District v. Amber Tatro* (hereafter *Tatro*). This case looked at medical treatment and health services to determine if they are considered related services under the EHCA and required to be provided to the student. The respondent in this case was Amber Tatro, a student who was born with spina bifida. Due to the spina bifida, she had orthopedic and speech impairments as well as a neurogenic bladder. In order to prevent additional injury to her kidneys, Amber had to be catheterized every three to four hours by a clean intermittent catheterization (CIC) procedure. Although the procedure was considered “a simple one that may be performed in a few minutes by a layperson with less than an hour’s training...[the school] refused to administer the CIC because they viewed it as a medical service, not a ‘related service’” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 336).

Chief Justice Warren Burger delivered the opinion of the Court and expressed there are two separate issues posed in this case. “The first is whether the [EHCA]

requires the petitioner to provide CIC services to Amber. The second is whether 504 of the Rehabilitation Act creates such an obligation” (*Irving Independent School District v. Amber Tatro*, 1984, p. 888-889). As free appropriate public education is defined as the provision of special education and related services, two additional questions arise: “first, whether CIC is a ‘supportive service . . . required to assist a handicapped child to benefit from special education’; and second, whether CIC is excluded from this definition as a ‘medical service’ serving purposes other than diagnosis or evaluation (*Irving Independent School District v. Amber Tatro*, 1984, p. 890).

The Supreme Court upheld the ruling of the Court of Appeals in holding that CIC is a “‘supportive [service] . . . required to assist a handicapped child to benefit from special education.’ It is clear on this record that, without having CIC services available during the school day, Amber cannot attend school and thereby ‘benefit from special education. CIC services therefore fall squarely within the definition of a ‘supportive service’” (*Irving Independent School District v. Amber Tatro*, 1984, p. 890).

Additionally, they cited *Rowley* in explaining that the goal of Congress was to “‘make public education available to handicapped children’ and ‘to make such access meaningful’ . . . Services like CIC that permit a child to remain at school during the day are no less related to the effort to educate than are services that enable the child to reach, enter, or exit the school” (*Irving Independent School District v. Amber Tatro*, 1984, p. 891).

Burlington School Committee v. Massachusetts Department of Education, 1985

In 1985, another case was brought before the Supreme Court dealing with the issue of tuition reimbursement. Parents who were dissatisfied with their children’s lack

of progress in the public school programs began to remove their children from these programs and place them into private special education programs. Some of the parents requested reimbursement from the local school districts for the costs associated with the child's private special education programs. This case posed two questions: "Does the potential relief under [EHCA] include reimbursement to parents for private school tuition and related expenses...[and] does [EHCA] bar such reimbursement to parents who reject a proposed IEP and place a child in a private school without the consent of the local school authorities" (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 337). In the unanimous decision, Judge Rehnquist delivered the opinion of the Court:

The first question on which we granted certiorari requires us to decide whether this grant of authority includes the power to order school authorities to reimburse parents for their expenditures on private special education for a child if the court ultimately determines that such placement, rather than a proposed IEP, is proper under the Act... We conclude that the Act authorizes such reimbursement. The statute directs the court to "grant such relief as [it] determines is appropriate. (1985, p. 369)

The Court also contended a parental violation of EHCA does not constitute a waiver of reimbursement.

The Act was intended to give handicapped children both an appropriate education and a free one; it should not be interpreted to defeat one or the other of those objectives...The legislative history supports this interpretation, favoring a proper interim placement pending the resolution of disagreements over the IEP. (1985, p. 372)

Honig, California Superintendent of Public Instruction v. Doe, et al., 1988

In 1988, the Supreme Court heard its first discipline case. The *Honig v. Doe* dispute grew out of the efforts of certain officials to expel two students with emotional disturbances from school indefinitely for violent and disruptive conduct resulting from their disabilities. The students contended the indefinite suspension, in lieu of expulsion, constituted a prohibited “change of placement” under EHCA and its “stay-put” provisions. The case proposed the following questions: “Do expulsions and indefinite suspensions of children for conduct related to their disabilities deprive them of their right to a free appropriate public education [and] [c]an a ‘dangerous exception’ be made to the ‘stay put’ requirements in [EHCA]” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 338).

Justice William Brennan delivered the opinion of the Court and declined the invitation to re-write the statute with the inclusion of a ‘dangerous exception.’ He further explained that when a student poses an immediate threat to the safety of others, officials may temporarily suspend him or her for up to 10 school days without constituting a change of placement.

As the EHA’s legislative history makes clear, one of the evils Congress sought to remedy was the unilateral exclusion of disabled children by *schools*, not courts, and one of the purposes of § 1415(e)(3), therefore, was ‘to prevent *school* officials from removing a child from the regular public school classroom over the parents’ objection pending completion of the review proceedings.’ *Burlington School Committee v. Massachusetts Dept. of Education*, 471 U.S., at 373 (emphasis added). The stay-put provision in no way purports to limit or pre-

empt the authority conferred on courts by § 1415(e)(2); indeed, it says nothing whatever about judicial power. (1988, p. 327)

Florence County School District Four v. Shannon Carter, 1993

The Supreme Court agreed to review the case of *Florence County School District Four v. Shannon Carter*, after a Court of Appeal's ruling in a similar case created a split among circuits (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 338-339). In this case, Shannon Carter was a 9th grade student with a learning disability. After meeting with the school officials to create an individualized education program (IEP), Shannon's parents were dissatisfied and requested a hearing to challenge the appropriateness of the IEP. At that time, Shannon's parents placed her in Trident Academy, a private school that specialized in educating students with disabilities. Shannon's parents filed a suit seeking reimbursement for her tuition and other costs incurred while she was at Trident. Florence County took the stance that because Trident was a self-contained school, Shannon was not being educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and they should not have to reimburse the parents.

The question that arose from this argument was whether a court could "order reimbursement for parents who withdrew their child from a public school that did not provide an appropriate education under the [IDEA] and put the child in a private school that is in substantial—but not complete—compliance with the act" (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 339). In a unanimous opinion written by Justice Sandra Day O' Connor, the Supreme Court held that parents can still receive reimbursement although the private school did not meet the IDEA definition of "free appropriate public education," as those

requirements do not apply to parental placements. Justice O'Connor went on to exclaim:

[T]he school district's emphasis on state standards is somewhat ironic...it hardly seems consistent with the Act's goals to forbid parents from educating their child at a school that provides an appropriate education simply because that school lacks the stamp of approval of the same public school system that failed to meet the child's needs in the first place. (1993, p. 14)

Cedar Rapids Community School District v. Garret F., 1999

The Supreme Court revisited the “*Tatro*” issue of related services in *Cedar Rapids Community School District v. Garret F.* Garret was paralyzed from neck down at the age of four due to a motorcycle accident that severed his spinal column. However, his mental capacities were unaffected, and he could speak and operate his wheelchair using a puff and suck straw. His academic performance had been successful and he attended regular classes in a typical school. However, due to his ventilator dependence, Garret required a responsible individual to attend to his physical needs while at school.

This case brought up the question as to whether “schools that receive federal funding under IDEA have to pay for one-on-one nursing assistance for certain of their disabled students” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 340). Justice John Stevens delivered the opinion of the Court:

This case is about whether meaningful access to the public schools will be assured, not the level of education that a school must finance once access is attained. It is undisputed that the services at issue must be provided if Garret is to remain in school. Under the statute, our precedent, and the purposes of the

IDEA, the District must fund such “related services” in order to help guarantee that students like Garret are integrated into the public schools. (1999, p. 79)

Brian Schaffer v. Jerry Weast, Superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools, 2005

The case of *Brian Schaffer v. Weast* dealt with the procedural issue of who had the burden of proof in special education due process hearings. Brian, who had learning disabilities and speech and language impairments, was educated in a private school from kindergarten to seventh grade. His parents contacted the local public school system when school officials from the private school advised them that Brian needed a different school to meet his needs. The school district offered a program that was not sufficiently intensive, so Brian’s parents enrolled him in a private special education school and requested a due process hearing. “The case bounced between the U.S. District Court, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, and the Administrative Law Judge on the burden of proof issue... finally, the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 340).

In a 6-2 ruling, the Supreme Court held that the party who seeks the relief is the one responsible for bearing the burden of proof. Justice O’Connor wrote:

We hold no more than we must to resolve the case at hand: The burden of proof in an administrative hearing challenging an IEP is properly placed upon the party seeking relief. In this case, that party is Brian, as represented by his parents. But the rule applies with equal effect to school districts: If they seek to challenge an IEP, they will in turn bear the burden of persuasion before an ALJ. (2005, p. 62)

Arlington Central School District Board of Education v. Pearl and Theodore Murphy, 2006

Similar to *Brian Shaffer v. Weast*, this case also dealt with procedural issues at due process hearings but focused on reimbursement for costs incurred during litigation. Pearl and Theodore Murphy requested that the Arlington School District pay for their son's education at a private school that specialized in educating students with learning disabilities. The parents had a lay advocate represent them during the due process hearings and also work as an education consultant "expert." When the parents prevailed, they requested reimbursement for their attorney's fees and costs. These costs included \$29,350 for the lay advocate. The question posed by this case was whether "attorneys' fee-shifting provision authorize[s] a court to award for 'expert' fees to the parents of a child with a disability who is a prevailing party under IDEA" (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 341).

In a 6-3 ruling, the majority held that parents who prevail in due process hearings are not able to recover the costs associated with hiring expert witnesses. The Majority opinion by Justice Samuel Alito acknowledged "whatever weight this legislative history would merit in another context, it is not sufficient here. Putting the legislative history aside, we see virtually no support for respondents' position" (*Arlington Central School District Board of Education v. Pearl and Theodore Murphy*, 2006, p. 304).

Jacob Winkelman v. Parma City School District, 2007

"In 2005, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit held that IDEA does not grant parents the right to represent their child in federal court... This decision caused

a split among Circuits on the issue of parental representation” (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 342). The Supreme Court agreed to hear the case and resolve the split among circuits. The question this case presented was to what extent, if any, a non-lawyer parent of a child with a disability could proceed in an IDEA court action.

Justice Anthony Kennedy delivered the opinion of the Court and explained that parents enjoy certain rights at the administrative stage and it would be inconsistent to bar these rights in the federal court. Additionally, he held that:

The Court of Appeals erred when it dismissed the Winkelmans’ appeal for lack of counsel. Parents enjoy rights under IDEA; and they are, as a result, entitled to prosecute IDEA claims on their own behalf. The decision by Congress to grant parents these rights was consistent with the purpose of IDEA and fully in accord with our social and legal traditions. It is beyond dispute that the relationship between a parent and child is sufficient to support a legally cognizable interest in the education of one’s child; and, what is more, Congress has found that ‘the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by . . . strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home.’ (2007, p. 535)

Forest Grove School District v. T.A., 2009

T.A. was enrolled in public schools from kindergarten through the winter of his junior year. At the end of his freshman year, T.A. was evaluated by a school psychologist and it was determined that he did not qualify for special education. T.A.’s parents then sought private professional advice, and T.A. was diagnosed with ADHD

and a number of disabilities related to learning and memory. After the diagnosis, the respondent's parents unilaterally removed him from the public school district and enrolled him in a private academy. They then requested an administrative hearing on his eligibility for special education services under IDEA. The school found him ineligible for such services and did not offer him an IEP. "Concluding that the School District had failed to provide respondent a 'free appropriate public education' as required by IDEA, § 1412(a)(1)(A), and that respondent's private-school placement was appropriate, the hearing officer ordered the School District to reimburse his parents for his private-school tuition" (*Forest Grove School District v. T.A.*, 2009). This case went through the legal channels, until the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case.

The question presented in *Forest Grove v. T.A.* was whether parents who unilaterally enroll their disabled child in a private school are entitled to tuition reimbursement if the child never received special education from the district. In a 6-3 decision, Justice John Stevens delivered the opinion of the Court:

Consistent with our decisions in *Burlington* and *Carter*, we conclude that IDEA authorizes reimbursement for the cost of private special education services when a school district fails to provide a FAPE and the private-school placement is appropriate, regardless of whether the child previously received special education or related services through the public school. (*Forest Grove School District v. T.A.*, 2009)

The above mentioned court cases led to the legislation that significantly affected special education policies and practices. The most significant legislation was PL 94-142 (EHCA), which initially defined and funded special education practices in the United

States and guides its practices today through its current reauthorization as IDEA 2004. IDEA 2004 specifies the six major provisions, which will be described in the next section of this chapter.

Six Major Principles of IDEA 2004

Although case law and judicial interpretations have largely defined the field of special education, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) is the cornerstone of current special education regulation. IDEA 2004 encompasses six major principles relating to the rights of students with disabilities: zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, individualized free-appropriate public education, due process procedures, and parent participation. These six principles are the fundamental framework for the provisions set forth in IDEA 2004.

Zero Reject

The zero reject principle of IDEA 2004 requires state education agencies to “provide full educational opportunities to all children with disabilities” (20 U.S.C. 1412 (a)(2)). Exclusion from educational opportunities can result from an array of causes. “Difficulties with identifying children as having disabilities, the variety of settings in which such children are educated, a lack of resources, questions of educability, and behavior-based challenges can all lead to exclusion” (Turnbull et al., 2007, p. 57).

The zero reject principle supports the identification and education of all students with disabilities, regardless of age, through Child Find, Part B and Part C of IDEA 2004. According to the regulations, Child Find requires a child identification program so planning, program development, and allocation of money for special education can be conducted. The child census must locate children who are suspected of having a

disability as well as highly mobile children with disabilities. In addition to Child Find, IDEA Part C: Early Intervention (zero to three) provides federally assisted programs to infants and toddlers and the families. Finally, IDEA Part B requires that full educational opportunities are provided to children between the ages of 3 and 21 (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1412(a)(1)(A)).

In addition to ensuring that the students are identified and educated, zero reject supports educational opportunities for all students with disabilities, regardless of educational setting. IDEA coverage encompasses any elementary or secondary education system receiving federal funding. “By providing for such comprehensive coverage, Congress obviously intended to prevent ‘service gaps’ or ‘cracks.’ It wanted to reach all children without regard to the nature of the educational system” (Turnbull et al., 2007, p. 64). Children in state custody, prisons or juvenile justice, private schools, religious schools, and charter schools, are required to receive services through the IDEA provisions.

A third zero reject principle relates to the availability of sufficient resources. Since IDEA has never been funded by Congress at the full limit it authorizes, states face huge expenses related to the education of students with disabilities, especially those with the most significant disabilities. Cost shifting and allocation of funds through programs like Medicaid have significantly assisted in providing the resources needed for students with disabilities. Additionally, the qualifications of special education personnel are considered a sufficient resource under the zero reject provision. IDEA 2004 (aligning with NCLB 2002) requires a comprehensive system of personnel

development be put in place, requiring highly qualified personnel (paraprofessionals and teachers) in special education.

The last two zero reject provisions relate to exclusion based on disability and/or discipline. All students, regardless of disability, are to be included in public education. There are no students who are totally uneducable, and therefore not entitled to IDEA's protection in the eyes of Congress. Additionally, contagious disease does not allow for exclusion from educational programs. The determination of least restrictive environment may come into play, but nonetheless, the student will receive free appropriate public education under IDEA. Finally, students with behavioral issues cannot be removed or excluded from public education indefinitely. IDEA 2004 "prohibits exclusion, allows for discipline, addresses the disparate impact of exclusion on students with disabilities, and thereby carries out the zero reject principle" (Turnbull et al., 2007, p. 86).

Nondiscriminatory Evaluation

Previous court decisions agreed that procedures needed to be put in place to protect students from improper evaluations, misclassifications, and improper placement (*Larry P. v. Riles*, 1984; *Parents in Action on Special Education [PASE] v. Hannon*, 1980). IDEA 2004 "addresses both the techniques for classification and the action founded on the classification, which require both procedural safeguards and substantive protection" (Turnbull et al., 2007, p. 120). These safeguards and protections include: no placement without evaluation, standards: the but-for factor, team evaluation, evaluation standards, and the exclusionary criteria.

“IDEA requires a multidisciplinary, multifaceted, nonbiased evaluation of a child before classifying and providing special education for that child” (Turnbull et al., 2007, p. 120). Additionally, a student may not be classified under IDEA unless he or she has one or more of the following disabilities: mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, and/or learning disabilities, and needs special education and related services (20 U.S.C. 1401 (3) (A) (i-ii)). Further, there must be a causal relationship between the service, the classification, and the needs of the student.

The organization and interpretation of the evaluation is conducted by a team of qualified professionals, comprised of the parents, special education teachers, general education teachers, a Local Education Authority (LEA) representative with knowledge of special education resources, professionals who are qualified to interpret the results of the evaluation, and any other members who the parents or the LEA choose to invite. IDEA 2004 specifies standards to which the team must adhere and procedures that must be followed. These include standards relating to the student such as cultural bias; standards relating to the tests’ validity and administration; and standards related to the exclusionary criteria, which states that the team may not determine that a student has a disability if it is determined there is/was a lack of instruction in reading, a lack of instruction in math, or limited English proficiency (Turnbull et al., 2007). All of these elements create the nondiscriminatory evaluation principle under IDEA 2004.

Least Restrictive Environment

IDEA 2004 defines least restrictive environment as:

To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (20 U.S.C. 1412 (612) (a) (5) (A))

It is applicable to both Part B and Part C of IDEA and demonstrates the intention of each to promote integration and normalization.

The majority of students with disabilities are capable of participating in the general education curriculum to varying degrees and with some accommodations and modifications (Turnbull, Turnbull, & Wehmeyer, 2006). Special education, after all, is a service, it is not a place where we look to send students (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1400 (c)(5)(C)). IDEA Part B looks at inclusion through the mix-and-match approach, where the general curriculum consists of the general (academic) curriculum, extracurricular activities (clubs and sports sponsored through the school), and other nonacademic activities (passing time between classes, meals, transportation, assemblies, dances, etc.). Efforts for integration/inclusion need to be made in all three areas (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(IV)). The least restrictive environment principle includes other factors such as:

1. Appropriateness and supplementary aids and services - In the past students were placed in general education classrooms (mainstreamed) without the supports and service to ensure success. It was very much the “take as is”

principle. IDEA requires the IEP teams to identify and provide the supplementary aids and services that would maximize meaningful access to the general education curriculum.

2. Continuum of placements (services) - Each LEA is to provide a continuum of possible placements, including regular class, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals or other types of residential settings. The continuum should represent increasing degrees of separation from the general education curriculum.
3. Neighborhood schools - The child's placement is to be as close as possible to the child's home, unless the parent agrees otherwise. The child is to attend the same school he or she would attend if he or she were a non-disabled student, unless the child's IEP requires other arrangements.
4. Age appropriate placements - Students with disabilities may not be removed from age-appropriate (chronological age) regular education classrooms unless they cannot benefit from such placements (Turnbull et al., 2007).

Individualized Free Appropriate Public Education

Justice William Rehnquist delivered the opinion of the Court in the *Board of Education v. Rowley* (1982) when he stated:

Free appropriate public education...evinces a congressional intent to bring previously excluded handicapped children into the public education systems of the states and to require the states to adopt procedures which would result in individualized consideration of and instruction for each child. (p. 188)

IDEA 2004 defines free appropriate public education (FAPE) as “special education and related services that (a) have been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; (b) meet standards of the State educational agency; (c) include an appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the State involved; and (d) are provided in conformity with the individualized education program required” (20 U.S.C. 1401 (602)(9)(A-D)). What constitutes an appropriate education will vary from one child to another, as each child is looked at as an individual.

In an effort to ensure that every student with a disability receives an individualized free appropriate public education, Congress required an individualized education program (IEP) be developed for all students served under IDEA (Yell, 2006). The Supreme Court provided to the lower courts a two-prong test for determining a school’s compliance with the FAPE mandate: (a) the court must determine whether the school has complied with the Act and (b) the court will examine the IEP to determine if it was reasonably developed to enable the child to receive educational benefits.

Eyer (1998) expressed this educational benefit best when he aptly stated:

The IDEA can no longer be fairly perceived as a statute which merely affords children access to education. Today the IDEA is designed to improve the effectiveness of special education and increase the benefits afforded to children with disabilities to the extent such benefits are necessary to achieve measurable progress. (p. 16)

Special education programs must lead to real results. To ensure that each student benefits from special education and related services, IEP teams must “ensure that

programs are (a) based on student needs, (b) meaningful and contain measurable annual goals, (c) grounded in scientifically based practices, and (d) measured on an ongoing basis to ensure that students make progress” (Yell, 2006, p. 243).

Due Process Procedures

IDEA 2004 set forth a more extensive framework for the due process procedures, commonly known as the safeguards. These safeguards create checks and balances and help to guarantee the student benefits from being in school and the school is providing the services and placements required by the other principles. They also assure shared decision-making concerning the student’s education (Turnbull et al., 2001). Due process is a vehicle for enforcing the rights of students with disabilities and their parents and provides remedies for any violation against these rights. Procedural due process falls under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments as a constitutional requirement: No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without the due process of law. In the case of education, no child with a disability can be deprived of an education without the opportunity to exercise due process and protest.

According to the interpretation of the U.S. Supreme Court, Congress established the elaborate system of safeguards to “guarantee parents both an opportunity for meaningful input into all decisions affecting their child’s education and the right to seek review of any decisions they think inappropriate” (*Honig v. Doe*, 1988, p. 598). The primary features of the procedural safeguards afford to parents “the right to notice, the opportunity to participate in team meetings held about the child, and [the right to give] consent” before many special education actions can occur (Rothstein & Johnson, 2010, p. 247). When there are disagreements between the parents and the LEA over any

decisions, either the parents or the school can request an impartial due process hearing, during which the child will remain in the current educational setting under the stay-put clause. However, IDEA 2004 places two limits on the rights of the parents or the LEA to due process: by specifying who can bring forth a suit and by saying when the suit must be filed. When one party (either the parent or the LEA) brings a suit against the other party, the burden of proof lies with the party bringing the suit.

Parent Participation

As an important component of IDEA 2004, parent participation creates a rule of shared decision-making between the school and the student's parents and, as appropriate, the student. It, too, is part of IDEA's checks and balances, created to help ensure shared decision-making regarding a student's education and the provision of legally required services (Turnbull et al., 2001). Parents and professionals are called to be partners and equal participants in educating students with disabilities. Other functions of the parent participation principle include: protecting parent and student rights, requiring parents to be accountable, advancing democratic values, and recognizing the family as the core unit of society (Turnbull et al., 2007).

The IDEA 2004 amendments state that "the education of children with disabilities will be made more effective by 'strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of the children at school and at home'" (Turnbull et al., 2007, p. 291). By making parents and schools equal partners in the education of children, unilateral decision making is prevented, and the team works towards a shared process of decision making. "At the core of these principles is the common-law doctrine

that parents have a duty to support their children and a corollary right to their children's services and earnings for as long as the children have legal status of minors" (Turnbull et al., 2007, p. 292).

The six major principles relating to the rights of students with disabilities contained in IDEA 2004 create the fundamental framework for which school leaders should have basic knowledge in order to perform essential special education leadership tasks. However, the following review of principal leadership development indicates this knowledge to be nonexistent in the leadership standards and training. Although we are at a transformational stage in education, with new leadership standards being created and additional federal mandates and initiatives being passed down, the field of special education is still on the backburner.

Principal Leadership Development

Principal leadership has changed drastically over the years. Throughout the past two decades, much attention has been given to the impact of principal leadership on student achievement (Kruger, Witziers, & Slegers, 2007; Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003). With the implementation of NCLB and standards driven assessments, school leadership is at the forefront of school reform. Research has taught us that school leaders are crucial to improving instruction and raising student achievement. With this, it became clear that consistent standards in educational leadership were needed to ensure that school principals had the necessary background and training to be successful instructional leaders for all students in their schools.

ISLLC Standards for Educational Leadership

“Since the release of the 1987 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration, *Leaders for America’s Schools*, considerable attention has been devoted to finding ways to improve the quality of leadership in our schools and school systems” (Murphy, Yff, & Shipman, 2000, p. 17). In 1996, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), which comprises state and professional associations, published a comprehensive set of standards for school leaders. The standards were designed to eliminate the confusion and create conformity among educational leadership programs (Green, 2001). These standards “provide[d] the means to shift the metric of school administration from management to educational leadership and from administration to learning while linking management and behavioral science knowledge to the larger goal of student learning” (Murphy, 2005, p. 166).

Through the years, there has been much criticism of the ISLLC Standards for School Leaders (Boeckmann & Dickinson, 2001; Bogotch, 2002b; Creighton, 2002; English, 2001; Foster, 2003; Hess, 2003; Leithwood & Steinbach, 2005). Some critics feel the ISLLC standards face the imminent possibility of extinction (Leithwood & Steinbach, 2005), while others believe they will only add to the predictable pattern of failed reform efforts (Bogotch, 2002b). Murphy (2005) has responded to these and additional criticisms by exclaiming, “the standards are exactly what they claim to be-- what practitioners and researchers have told us are critical aspects of effective leadership” (p. 41).

In 2008, the ISLLC Standards were revised “to provide a framework for policy creation, training program performance, life-long career development and system

support” (The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 11). The following principles set the direction and priorities during the development of the Educational Leadership Policy Standards, ISLLC 2008:

1. Reflect the centrality of student learning;
2. Acknowledge the changing role of the school leader;
3. Recognize the collaborative nature of school leadership;
4. Improve the quality of the profession;
5. Inform performance-based systems of assessment and evaluation for school leaders;
6. Demonstrate integration and coherence; and
7. Advance access, opportunity, and empowerment for all members of the school community. (The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 8)

On December 12, 2007, the Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008 was adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration. The ISLLC Standards read as follows:

1. An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.
2. An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

3. An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
4. An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
5. An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
6. An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. (p. 14)

ISLLC standards have created the framework that assisted in the development of the Florida principal leadership standards, William Cecil Golden school leadership development program, and programs for both pre-service school leadership and in-service school leaders.

Florida Principal Leadership Standards

Prior to the induction of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards, the Florida Legislature had established the Management Training Act (MTA). This act worked to create a tri-level support system: state, regional and district, to guarantee that principals have the skills and background that are crucial in providing effective leadership (Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability [OPPAGA], 2000). The MTA specified 19 competencies for school principals, which were acquired through university and district programs. These competency areas were (a) proactive orientation,

(b) decisiveness, (c) commitment to school mission, (d) interpersonal search, (e) information search, (f) concept formation, (g) conceptual flexibility, (h) managing interaction, (i) persuasiveness, (j) concern for image, (k) tactical adaptability, (l) achievement motivation, (m) management control, (n) developmental orientation, (o) organizational ability, (p) delegation, (q) self presentation, (r) written communication, and (s) organizational sensitivity. In 1999, the Florida Legislature was unsure if the act was successful in providing the necessary skills and knowledge base for school leaders. They directed that the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, in consultation with the Department of Education, “conduct a comprehensive review of the MTA by January 1, 2000, and make recommendations for the act’s repeal, revision, or reauthorization” (OPPAGA, 2000, p. 1).

In the face of the changing educational system, it became clear that new principal leadership standards that would focus on continuous school improvement and student achievement were necessary. In April 2005, new Florida Principal Leadership Standards were adopted by the State Board of Education. These standards became the core of a new framework for certification of Florida school leaders.

The Florida Department of Education Regulation 6A-5.080 (see Appendix A), outlines the Florida Principal Leadership Standards that were approved in April of 2005. In an attempt to foster specific abilities and skills in our potential school leaders, ten standards were created in which a person must demonstrate his or her competency levels. These ten standards were split into three broad categories: instructional leadership, operational leadership, and school leadership. The instructional leadership standards were (a) instructional leadership, (b) managing the learning environment, and

(c) learning, accountability, and assessment. The operational leadership standards were (a) decision making strategies, (b) technology, (c) human resource development, and (d) ethical leadership. The school leadership standards were (a) vision, (b) community and stakeholder partnerships, and (c) diversity. In addition, each of the ten standards had key indicators/attributes that correlated to three specific levels of school leaders: entry, career, and high performing.

William Cecil Golden School Leadership Development Program

In the time since these standards were last approved, the William Cecil Golden School Leadership Development Program (see Appendix B) was established by the 2006 Florida Legislature. The goal of this program is “to provide a high quality, competency-based, customized, comprehensive and coordinated statewide professional development system for current and emerging school leaders” (Florida Department of Education [FLDOE], 2006, para. 1). The program uses a collaborative network of state and national leadership development organizations to support the needs of current and developing principals.

State Department of Education Regulation 6A-5081

In June of 2007, the Florida State Department of Education Regulation 6A-5.081 (see Appendix C) was passed to ensure that pre-service school leadership programs as well as in-service school leaders are of high quality as required in Section 1012.986, F.S. This rule lays out the foundation of requirements for approval of two levels of school leadership programs (Florida State Board of Education, 2007). These two levels include programs offered by both Florida postsecondary institutions as well as the public school districts.

On September 13, 2011 there was a rule development conference call with the Florida Department of Education. The purpose of this rule development was to review the existing standards that Florida school leaders must demonstrate in preparation programs and in personnel evaluations as well as to propose revised standards that align fully with the contemporary research on effective school leadership. On October 3, 2011, the proposed leadership standards were created. Four domains of effective leadership were identified: student achievement, instructional leadership, organizational leadership, and professional and ethical behavior. Under these four domains, ten leadership standards were created: student learning results, student learning as a priority, instructional plan implementation, faculty development, learning environment, decision making, leadership development, school management, communication, and professional and ethical behaviors. Time will tell if these standards become the framework for a new principal preparation program or if they are deemed ineffective prior to leadership curriculum modifications.

Summary

The field of special education has been largely defined through federal legislation, Supreme Court rulings, and consistent case law. Over the past 40 years, the United States has come a long way in creating equal and equitable education for students with disabilities. However, we still fall short on many fronts and the work needs to continue to ensure students with disabilities are receiving a socially just educational experience, based on their individuality and specific needs. School leaders are at the forefront in this endeavor, yet they lack the necessary skills and training to create the environments to promote success for these students. Presently, none of the

standards for school leaders address issues concerning students with disabilities. Fad-like changing leadership standards and program approval leaves principal preparation programs modifying program curriculum far before the effectiveness of state mandated standards have been evaluated, thus creating programs that may be both ineffective and continuously outdated.

This chapter presented a detailed legal foundation for special education in the United States. It provided an overview of the requirement for compulsory education and discussed federal special education policy and Supreme Court rulings. An explanation of the six specific principles of IDEA 2004: zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, individualized free-appropriate public education, due process, and parent participation was offered. Finally, the history of principal leadership development was discussed.

III. RESEARCH AND METHODS

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was created to ensure that all children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) (2001) has deemed school leadership as a major force behind successfully implementing IDEA requirements. This study assessed the knowledge of school principals in the area of special education policies and procedures through survey administration. Further, the survey was designed to establish the method (i.e., college coursework, district in-services, self-taught, on the job, or did not learn this) by which school principals purport to have learned the majority of special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles of IDEA 2004. These six principles included: zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment (LRE), free-appropriate public education (FAPE), due process, and parent participation.

The findings from this research could help shape policy for the creation of socially just educational leadership programs in the area of special education and assist in decreasing the marginalization of students with disabilities in the State of Florida. This chapter presents a detailed description of the methods and procedures that were used in conducting the research. It outlines the purpose of the study and the research questions. Additionally, the remainder of the chapter is divided into six major sections:

research design, population characteristics, sampling procedures, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Purpose of Study

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the knowledge of school principals in the area of special education policies and procedures through survey administration. In addition, the survey was designed to establish the method (i.e., college coursework, district in-services, self-taught, on the job, or did not learn this) by which school principals purport to have learned the majority of special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles of IDEA 2004. These six principles included: zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment (LRE), free-appropriate public education (FAPE), due process, and parent participation. Data generated from the principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures was then compared by (a) the amount of special education coursework taken during the principal's formal education, (b) the method by which school principals learned the majority of their knowledge of special education policies and procedures, (c) past teaching experience in the field of special education, (d) school enrollment, and (e) types of communities (i.e., rural, suburban, and urban).

Research Questions

In order to address the purpose of this study, the conceptual framework along with the following overarching research questions and sub questions guided the design of this quantitative study. What knowledge do Florida principals possess in the areas of special education policies and procedures, as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004? Further, what was the primary

method (i.e., college coursework, district in-services, self-learning, on the job, or did not learn this) by which principals purport to have learned the majority of special education policies and procedures?

The research questions and null hypotheses were as follows:

1. Do principals who receive formal training (i.e., any level of college coursework in any program area) in special education have a greater level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures than principals who did not receive formal training in special education?

H₀1. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures between principals who received formal training in special education and those who did not receive formal training in special education.

2. Is there a relationship between the principals' knowledge levels in the area of special education policies and procedures, as defined by the six principles of IDEA 2004, and the method by which they received the majority of their knowledge for each area?

H₀2. There is no significant relationship between principals' knowledge levels in the area of special education policies and procedures, as defined by the six principles of IDEA 2004, and the methods by which they received the majority of their knowledge for each area.

3. Do principals who have prior teaching experience in the field of special education have a greater level of overall knowledge in the area of special

education policies and procedures than principals who did not have prior teaching experience in the field of special education?

H₃. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures between principals who had prior teaching experience in the field of special education and those who did not have prior teaching experience in the field of special education.

4. Is the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures similar among principals across different school sizes, as measured by school enrollment?

H₄. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures among principals across different school sizes, as measured by school enrollment.

5. Is the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures similar among principals across community types (i.e., rural, suburban, and urban)?

N₅. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures among principals across community types.

Research Design

A quantitative study was designed utilizing a two-part survey to collect background/demographic information, level of special education knowledge, and sources of specified special education knowledge from all traditional Florida public school principals. The first section of the survey included respondent background and school demographic information. The second section consisted of 12 hypothetical

scenarios based on the six major principles of special education within IDEA 2004: zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, free-appropriate public education, due process procedures, and parent participation. After each principle of special education, the survey elicited information regarding where (i.e., college coursework, district in-services, self-learning, on the job, or never learned this) school administrators received the majority of their knowledge about the six major principles.

Population Characteristics

The state of Florida is comprised of 67 counties and each county has its own school district. In addition to the 67 county school districts, there are an additional seven districts that are composed of lab schools, juvenile detention center schools, virtual schools and specialty schools (e.g., deaf and blind). The target population of this study was public school principals across the State of Florida. For the purpose of this study, the researcher utilized only traditional (elementary, middle/junior high, and senior high) public school principals across the 67 county school districts. Traditional elementary schools are defined as schools providing instruction at one or more grade levels from PK through grade 5. It may include schools serving grade 6 if also serving one or more grades PK through 5 (FLDOE, 2011). Traditional middle/junior high schools are defined as schools providing instruction in middle school configurations (grades 6-8) and junior high school configurations (grades 7-9). It can also include schools serving a single grade in the 6-8 range (FLDOE, 2011). Traditional senior high schools are defined as schools providing instruction at one or more grade levels from 9-12. It includes regular high schools and 9th grade centers (FLDOE, 2011). Principals in charter schools, lab schools, combination schools (e.g., PK-8, 6-12, K-12), virtual

schools, juvenile detention centers, and alternative/specialty schools were excluded from the total population. Due to the researcher omitting specific types of schools, the number of districts decreased to 66.

According to the Florida Department of Education's Master School Identification (MSID) file, as of June 21, 2011 there were 2,598 traditional (elementary, middle/junior high, and senior high) public schools across the state of Florida. Of those listed schools, 1,701 were elementary schools, 513 were middle/junior high schools, and 384 were senior high schools.

Sampling Procedures

A summary of the school districts' and individual schools' statistics from the Florida Department of Education was used to analyze the number of traditional schools per school district. The researcher surveyed all traditional public school principals in the State of Florida. This sample size was determined to ensure the researcher would have enough respondents in order to generalize the findings.

Each school was separated into elementary, middle/junior high, and senior high. The researcher obtained the principals' names and e-mails for this study by accessing the Florida Public Schools MSID file. Once the information had been retrieved from the file, the researcher then accessed each of the remaining 66 school district websites and located the name of each school's principal. If there was a discrepancy between the file and the district/school website, then the researcher obtained the correct contact and e-mail address from the district's/school's website. Once the list of names and e-mail addresses were finalized, the researcher sent an e-mail to all of the school principals

with a cover letter explaining the study and consent to participate (Appendix D), which linked to the online survey.

Instrumentation

Knowledge of special education policies and procedures was defined by a two-part survey, Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Policies and Procedures (PKSE) (Appendix E). The survey was developed, piloted, and validated by the researcher. The first portion of the PKSE consisted of 18 questions that elicited school demographics, respondent's general information, training and experience, and specific special education coursework. These responses worked as independent variables in the analysis of the data. The second portion of the PKSE consisted of 12 hypothetical scenarios with four answer choices provided. For each question, there was one correct response, two incorrect responses, and a response to indicate the topic was not learned. For the purpose of this research, there was only one correct response, and the response that indicated the topic was not learned was considered incorrect. After each special education principle, the survey elicited information regarding the method (i.e., academic coursework, district in-services, on the job, or never learned this) by which school administrators purport to have received the majority of their knowledge for that principle.

Instrument Validity

To ensure content validity of the instrument, the survey was submitted to six experts in the field of special education, who are well versed in special education law and who are able to assess the clarity, correctness, and content validity of the survey. These experts consisted of a district level Coordinator of Exceptional Student

Education, two school psychologists, and three program specialists in the Exceptional Student Education Department. Their input was used to revise questions and scenarios. The expert panel judged the survey to have content validity in regards to the 12 hypothetical scenarios based on the six principles of IDEA 2004. However, minor changes were made on wording and additional information was provided on two of the twelve scenarios.

Once the researcher received feedback on the instrument and made the necessary changes, the survey scenarios were given to a graduate level class in the Educational Leadership Department of Florida Atlantic University. In an attempt to establish face validity, the class was asked to read the scenarios and respond to the following four questions: 1) Are there any questions where you had trouble understanding what the scenario was asking, 2) Are the 12 scenarios clearly written and easily understood, 3) After reading the scenarios, are there any questions you would need answered in order to choose the correct response to the scenario, and 4) Are these scenarios important to the six principles of IDEA 2004: zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, free-appropriate public education, due process procedures, and parent participation. After the researcher received feedback on the scenarios and made the necessary changes (rewording for clarity and providing additional information on one of the hypothetical scenarios), the instrument was tested for usability.

Instrument Usability

Instrument usability was tested through a field administration of the survey. The participant was a Director of Exceptional Student Education. She was asked to address

the clarity of the survey directions, the length of time it took to respond to the survey, and the overall user-friendliness of SurveyGizmo as a survey tool. Feedback indicated no changes were necessary to the instrument.

Pilot Study

Once the researcher received all of the feedback on the scenarios and made the necessary changes, the survey was piloted with a group of five district employees, who served as school principals within the last two years. The participants completed the electronic survey in its entirety. The data from the survey was used to inform the researcher of the reliability and validity of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 19.0 was used to establish this estimate of internal consistency. It was determined that Cronbach's alpha reliability statistic for this instrument was .723. While Gay (1987) states that reliability coefficients greater than .9 are acceptable for any instrument, he cautions that lower coefficients are often acceptable with new instruments, at least initially. Further, George and Mallery (2003) expand on this by providing the commonly accepted rule of thumb for describing internal consistency, whereas alphas equal or greater than .7 are acceptable for judging the acceptability of the alpha.

Data Collection

After the survey was piloted and any necessary changes were made, it was sent to every practicing public school principal across the 66 remaining Florida school districts. The survey was conducted online and all efforts were made to secure the highest response rate. The initial e-mail contained a cover letter with the intent of the

project, consent for participation, and a link to access the online survey. Since the survey was anonymous, one week after the initial survey e-mail was sent out, all of the principals received a follow up e-mail with the link to connect them to the survey. Two weeks after the initial survey was sent out, the principals received a third e-mail explaining the survey would remain open for an additional week due to the popularity of the topic. After the second reminder, 176 participants completed the survey for a total response rate of 12%. The survey was used to elicit the principals' knowledge base of special education policies and procedures, as well as to determine if statistical evidence was available to show special education training is beneficial for aspiring school leaders. Additionally, this survey allowed the researcher to get a sense of the method by which the principal received his or her special education training and to what degree it contributed to his or her knowledge base in the areas of policies and procedures of students with disabilities.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the survey was evaluated through the use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19.0 for Windows. Three statistical methods were employed to analyze the collected data. These analyses included three Pearson Product Moment Correlations, a t-test, and seven ANOVAs. The outputs were used to respond to the research questions and test their respective null hypotheses. Table 1 illustrates the research questions, statistical analysis used, and both the independent and dependent variables.

Table 1

Research Questions and Statistical Analysis Type

Research Questions	Statistical Analysis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
1. Do principals who receive formal training (i.e., any level of college coursework in any program area) in special education have a greater level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures than principals who did not receive formal training in special education?	Correlation Coefficient ANOVA	Formal Training	Level of Knowledge
2. Is there a relationship between the principals' knowledge levels in the area of special education policies and procedures, as defined by the six principles of IDEA 2004, and the method by which they received the majority of their knowledge for each area?	Six Independent ANOVAs	Methods of Knowledge Acquisition	Level of Knowledge
3. Do principals who have prior teaching experience in the field of special education have a greater level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures than principals who did not have prior teaching experience in the field of special education?	t-test	Prior Teaching Experience (Y/N)	Level of Knowledge
4. Is the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures similar among principals across different school sizes, as measured by school enrollment?	Correlation Coefficient	School Enrollment	Level of Knowledge
5. Is the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures similar among principals across school types (i.e., rural, suburban, and urban)?	Correlation Coefficient	School Type	Level of Knowledge

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a detailed description of the methods and procedures that were used in conducting the research. The purpose of the study and the research questions were summarized. Additionally, the research design, population

characteristics, sampling procedures, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures were outlined.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the knowledge of school principals in the area of special education policies and procedures through survey administration. The survey, which was developed, piloted, and validated by the researcher, assessed principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures by posing 12 survey items to participants asking them to respond to hypothetical scenarios based on the six major principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004). These six principles included: zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment (LRE), free-appropriate public education (FAPE), due process, and parent participation. In addition, the survey was designed to establish the method (i.e., college coursework, district in-services, self-taught, on the job, or did not learn this) by which school principals purport to have learned the majority of special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles of IDEA 2004. Data generated from the principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures was then compared by (a) the amount of special education coursework taken during the principal's formal education, (b) the method by which school principals learned the majority of their knowledge of special education policies and procedures, (c) past teaching experience in the field of special education, (d) school enrollment, and (e) types of communities (i.e., rural, suburban, and urban).

This chapter begins with a reintroduction of the research questions and null hypotheses. Next, descriptive statistics are used to present and discuss the site and

participant demographic information. Following the descriptive statistics, an item analysis and summary of the responses to the hypothetical scenarios and a summary of the methods by which principals purport to have learned the majority of special education policies and procedures, grouped by the six principles of IDEA 2004, are described. Finally, results of the statistical analyses are presented for each of the research questions and null hypotheses.

Research Questions and Null Hypotheses

The overarching questions for this study were:

1. What knowledge do Florida principals possess in the area of special education policies and procedures, as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004?
2. What was the primary method (i.e., college coursework, district in-services, self-learning, on the job, or did not learn this) by which principals purport to have learned the majority of special education policies and procedures?

The research questions and null hypotheses were as follows:

1. Do principals who receive formal training (i.e., any level of college coursework in any program area) in special education have a greater level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures than principals who did not receive formal training in special education?

H₀1. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures between principals who received formal training in special education and those who did not receive formal training in special education.

2. Is there a relationship between the principals' knowledge levels in the area of special education policies and procedures, as defined by the six principles of IDEA 2004, and the method by which they received the majority of their knowledge for each area?

H₀2. There is no significant relationship between principals' knowledge levels in the area of special education policies and procedures, as defined by the six principles of IDEA 2004, and the methods by which they received the majority of their knowledge for each area.

3. Do principals who have prior teaching experience in the field of special education have a greater level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures than principals who did not have prior teaching experience in the field of special education?

H₀3. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures between principals who had prior teaching experience in the field of special education and those who did not have prior teaching experience in the field of special education.

4. Is the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures similar among principals across different school sizes, as measured by school enrollment?

H₀4. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures among principals across different school sizes, as measured by school enrollment.

5. Is the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures similar among principals across community types (i.e., rural, suburban, and urban)?

N_o5. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures among principals across community types.

Target Population and Sample

The target population for this study was to consist of all traditional Florida public school principals across the 66 school districts (this number represents all school districts in the State of Florida that have at least one traditional school). These districts accounted for 2,598 traditional (elementary, middle/junior high, and senior high) public schools. Of those listed schools, 1,701 were elementary schools, 513 were middle/junior high schools, and 384 were senior high schools.

However, after the initial cover letter, Internal Review Board (IRB) consent form, and survey were sent to the principals of the 2,598 traditional schools across 66 school districts, 9 separate school districts emailed the researcher indicating the district required its own approval process for any research to be conducted within the district. Despite the fact the researcher had secured IRB approval from Florida Atlantic University, 9 of the 66 school districts denied the researcher access to survey the principals. Due to the time constraints of the study and the inordinate amount of extra work and time applying to nine separate school districts for research and IRB approval, the researcher elected to omit these school districts from the study and any participants from the nine school districts who responded were removed from the data. Therefore the sample decreased to 57 school districts and 1493 schools/principals (973 elementary

schools, 294 middle/junior high schools, and 226 senior high schools). However, an additional 8 participants were invalidated for various reasons (such as email address was not valid, the principal was over multiple schools, etc); therefore, the overall sample was 1,485 school principals (967 elementary schools, 292 middle/junior high schools, and 226 senior high schools). Of the 1,485 eligible principals, 176 participants completed the survey for a total response rate of 12%. Not included in the 12% response rate were 101 principals who only partially completed the survey, thus making their data incomplete and not comparable.

Descriptive Statistics

When analyzing the site demographics (see Table 2) of type of community (N=174) and average daily attendance (ADA), it is worthy to note that the largest number of participants (89) led in suburban communities (51%) and 115 had an ADA of 500-999 students (65%). Additionally, 39 of the principals led in rural communities (23%) and 46 of the principals led in urban communities (26%). A total of 26 principals had an ADA up to 499 students (15%), 18 principals had an ADA between 1000-1499 students (10%), and 17 principals had an ADA above 1,500 students (10%). It is interesting to note only the high schools responded as having above 1500 students and that number accounted for 77% of the high schools participating in the study.

Table 2

Site Demographics

Type of Community (N=174)	N	Percentage (%)
Rural	39	23%
Urban	46	26%
Suburban	89	51%
ADA		
Up to 499	26	15%
500-999	115	65%
1,000-1,499	18	10%
1,500+	17	10%

An analysis of the demographics of the participants (see Table 3) showed that of the 176 returned surveys, 125 were elementary schools principals (71%); 28 were middle school principals (16%); and 22 were high school principals (13%). There were 121 females who participated in the study (69%) and 55 males who participated in the study (31%). Two of the participants were between the ages of 25-34 (1% of the sample tested). Thirty-six of the participants were between the ages of 35-44 (20% of the sample tested). Sixty-six of the participants were between the ages of 45-54 (38% of the sample tested). Seventy-two of the participants were age 55 or older, which accounted for the largest percentage of the sample (41% of the sample tested).

Table 3

Demographics of the Participants

Grade Level	N	Percentage (%)
Elementary School	125	71%
Middle School	28	16%
High School	22	13%
Gender		
Female	121	69%
Male	55	31%
Age		
25-34	2	1%
35-44	36	20%
45-54	66	38%
55+	72	41%
Years as a Principal		
1-5 years	75	43%
6-10 years	55	31%
11-15 years	26	15%
16+ years	20	11%

Finally, it is interesting to note, the largest percentage of the participants (43%) have only served as a school principal for 1-5 years. A total of 55 participants (31%) served as a school principal for 6-10 years, while 26 participants (15%) served as a school principal for 11-15 years. The remaining 20 participants (11%) served as a school principal for 16 or more years.

According to the survey responses inquiring about their backgrounds (see Table 4), 79 of the principals held a master's degree (45%), 45 held masters + 30 hours (26%), 20 held a specialist degree (11%), 4 had completed all of the coursework for a doctoral degree (2%), and 28 held a doctoral degree (16%). When asked if they had any prior teaching experience in the field of special education, 127 participants (72%) indicated they did not have any prior experience specifically teaching special education students, while 49 participants (28%) indicated they had experience teaching special education students. Of the 176 participants, 36 (20%) were certified to teach in special education, while 140 (80%) held no special education certification.

When asked about coursework and training in special education (see Table 5), 41 participants (23%) indicated they did not take any formal coursework in special education at the college/university level. The highest number, 64 participants (37%), indicated they took one to two courses at the college/university in special education. A total of 30 participants (17%) indicated they took three to four courses at the college/university in special education and 41 participants (23%) indicated they took five or more courses in special education at the college/university level. Further, the participants were asked "How much information about special education programs/laws do you feel you received in your education administration/leadership licensing or

Table 4

Background of Participants

Highest Degree	N	Percentage (%)
Master's	79	45%
Master's + 30	45	26%
Specialist	20	11%
Doctorate	28	16%
Other	4	2%

Teaching Experience in Special Education		
No	127	72%
Yes	49	28%

Special Education Certified		
No	140	80%
Yes	36	20%

degree (Master's, Specialist, Ph.D., Ed.D.) program?" The results were interesting in that 44% of the participants indicated they received little to no information regarding special education programs/laws during their education administration/leadership licensing or degree programs.

Table 5

Training and Education of Participants

Courses in Special Education	N	Percentage (%)
None	41	23%
1-2	64	37%
3-4	30	17%
5+	41	23%
Special Education Information through Program		
Little – None	77	44%
Some - Substantial	99	56%

For the purpose of this study, the researcher also sought to determine the amount of participation in special education in-services provided through the participants’ respective school districts and also participation in in-services, conferences, and workshops (see Table 6). When asked, “Approximately how many formal special education in-services (provided through your school district) have you participated in over the past two years?” 12 participants (7%) responded they did not participate in any special education in-services. Most participants (46%) participated in one to two special education in-services over the past two years. A total of 44 participants (25%) participated in three to four in-services over the past two years, while 39 participants (22%) participated in five or more in-services over the past two years. Finally, the participants were asked, “How frequently do you attend special education in- services,

Table 6

In-Service, Workshop, and Conference Training of Respondents

District Special Education In-Services	N	Percentage (%)
None	12	7%
1-2	81	46%
3-4	44	25%
5+	39	22%
Special Education In-Services, Workshops & Conferences (N=173)		
Never	31	18%
Yearly	102	59%
Quarterly	30	17%
Monthly	10	6%

conferences, or workshops?” The results showed 31 participants (18%) never attend special education in-services, conferences, or workshops; 102 participants (59%) attend special education in-services, conferences, or workshops annually; 30 participants (17%) attend special education in-services, conferences, or workshops four times a year; and 10 participants (6%) attend special education in-services, conferences, or workshops monthly. Finally, the participants were asked to rank from most to least (1= most and 8= least) where they felt they received the majority of their assistance and support in terms of their professional needs with regards to special education (see Table 7). The scores were a weighted calculation. Items ranked first were valued higher than

Table 7

Form of Greatest Assistance for Special Education Needs of Respondents

Form of Assistance	Total Score¹	Overall Rank
Coordinator/Consultant	871	1
District/Central Office	797	2
Special Ed. Teacher	772	3
Policy Manuals	712	4
Professional Literature	645	5
Conferences/Workshops	638	6
Assistant Principal	458	7
Special Ed. Coursework	368	8

¹Score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks; the score is the sum of all weighted rank counts.

the following ranks. Items ranked as number ones were given a score value of eight, and each subsequent number was given a diminished value (7, 6, 5...). The total score is the sum of all weighted rank counts; therefore the highest total score was given the overall rank of one, while the lowest total score was given the overall rank of eight. Findings indicated the participants received the most assistance and support from the special education coordinator/consultant (school based), followed by the central office, special education teacher, policy manuals, professional literature, conferences and workshops, the assistant principal, and finally the least amount of assistance through special education coursework at a college/university.

Item Analysis and Summary of Responses

One of the overarching research questions in this study was: What knowledge do Florida principals possess in the area of special education policies and procedures, as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004? To assist in the investigation of this question, an item analysis and summary of the responses to the hypothetical scenarios, grouped by the six principles of IDEA 2004: zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment (LRE), free-appropriate public education (FAPE), due process, and parent participation (see Table 8) will be described. Following this summary, a second item analysis will be presented for the following overarching research question (see Table 9): What was the primary method (i.e., college coursework, district in-services, self learning, on the job, or did not learn this) by which principals purport to have learned the majority of special education policies and procedures?

The six principles of special education policies and procedures, as defined under IDEA 2004, were tested and demonstrated an overall mean score of 5.74, which equates to a 48%. Participants' scores ranged from 8% correct to 100% correct. However, only 20 participants received an overall score of 75% or higher. Of these 20 participants, there did not appear to be any specific characteristics that they all shared, which would account for their higher score on the PKSE.

Major areas of concern were those items in which the participants had a higher percentage of responses with the incorrect answer than the correct answer. Each of the six areas has one out of the two questions with a greater percentage of participants answering incorrectly. For the principle of zero reject (Item 20), 60% of participants

Table 8

Item Analysis Results for Hypothetical Scenarios

Item (N)	Area	A	B	C	Don't Know	Correct Answer	Percent Correct
20 (171)	Zero Reject	23	68	61	19	B	40%
21 (171)	Zero Reject	3	57	104	7	C	61%
23 (172)	Evaluation	155	6	8	3	A	90%
24 (171)	Evaluation	63	59	32	17	C	19%
26 (170)	LRE	23	94	18	35	B	55%
27 (169)	LRE	83	19	12	55	A	49%
29 (166)	FAPE	47	6	45	68	A	28%
30 (164)	FAPE	7	20	90	47	C	55%
32 (165)	Due Process	9	94	43	19	B	57%
33(163)	Due Process	51	34	40	38	C	25%
35 (163)	Parents	6	56	57	44	C	35%
36 (165)	Parents	118	22	10	15	A	72%

incorrectly answered the hypothetical scenario dealing with prior knowledge of a suspected disability. Additionally, 81% of participants incorrectly answered the hypothetical scenario dealing with parental consent for initial placement under the principle of nondiscriminatory evaluation (Item 24). Under the principle of least restrictive environment (Item 26), 51% incorrectly answered the scenario dealing with a student's classroom placement. Likewise, 72% of the participants incorrectly answered

Table 9

Item Analysis Results of Where Principals Report to Have Received Knowledge

Item (N)	Area	Academic Courses	District In-Services	Self Taught	On the Job	Did not Learn
22 (173)	Zero Reject	3%	22%	4%	26%	45%
25 (170)	Evaluation	5%	35%	4%	40%	16%
28 (171)	LRE	13%	41%	3%	34%	9%
31 (168)	FAPE	13%	35%	5%	33%	14%
24 (166)	Due Process	5%	34%	4%	46%	11%
37 (166)	Parents	4%	45%	3%	39%	9%

the scenario dealing with a student who received a special diploma but wanted to return to school the following fall, under the principle of free-appropriate public education (Item 29). Under the principle of due process (Item 33), 75% of the participants incorrectly answered the scenario dealing with the “stay-put” clause and placement in alternative educational settings during due process proceedings. Finally, 65% of participants incorrectly answered the scenario dealing with parental revocation of consent for special education and related services, under the parent participation principle (Item 35)

The principals were then asked the primary method by which they learned the majority of special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles of IDEA 2004 (see Table 9). The table below portrays the six principles of IDEA 2004 and the percentage of principals who report learning the knowledge for each of the six principles through the following methods: academic coursework, district in-services, self-taught, on the job, as well as the percentage of principals who reported not to have

learned this knowledge. It is important to note the majority of the participants felt they received the most knowledge about the particular topic in five of the six areas from either district in-services or learning while on the job. The one exception to this is in the area of zero reject, where 45% of participants claimed to have never learned this information.

Statistical Analyses

This section includes the corresponding statistical data analyses for each of the research questions and null hypotheses. Through the use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19.0 for Windows, three statistical methods were employed to analyze the collected data. These analyses included a t-test, three Pearson Product Moment Correlations, and seven ANOVAs. The outputs were used to respond to the research questions and test their respective null hypotheses.

Research Questions, Null Hypotheses, and Statistical Analyses

1. Do principals who receive formal training (i.e., any level of college coursework in any program area) in special education have a greater level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures than principals who did not receive formal training in special education?

H₀1. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures between principals who received formal training in special education and those who did not receive formal training in special education.

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation was conducted using the following variables: the knowledge score (level of knowledge of special education policies and

procedures) and formal training (number of courses). The alpha level was set at .05 to determine if any relationship existed between the knowledge score and the formal training in special education.

The results show a positive correlation between receiving formal special education training and a participant’s knowledge of special education policies and procedures, which was found to be statistically significant ($r = .202$, $n = 171$, $p < .05$). As a result of this small effect size ($r = .202$), the correlation result, while statistically significant, is not considered to be of much practical significance. An ANOVA (see Table 10) was then used to test for the difference between the four means and determine whether there were any significant differences between the means of the knowledge scores and the amount of formal training in special education (i.e., number of special education classes taken).

Table 10

ANOVA for Principals’ Knowledge of Special Education Policies and Procedures by Number of Special Education Courses Taken

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	45.314	3	15.105	3.253	.023
Within Groups	775.364	167	4.643		
Total	820.678	170			

Levene’s Test of Homogeneity of Variance, which tests for similar variances, was found not to be significant ($p = .476$). Consequently, the assumption of

homogeneity of variance was met. Results from the one-way ANOVA for this hypothesis indicate among Florida principals responding to the survey (N = 171) there were statistically significant differences between the means of the knowledge scores and the amount of formal training in special education (i.e., number of special education classes taken) $F(3, 167) = 3.253, p < 0.05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in overall knowledge of special education policies and procedures between principals who received formal training and those who did not receive formal training was rejected.

Further, a Tukey post-hoc test was run. It revealed that the knowledge of special education policies and procedures was statistically significantly higher after taking five or more special education courses. Based in the eta value for effect size, it is determined the effect size is just below that of a medium effect ($\eta^2 = .055$, where .06 is considered a medium effect), and thus is considered relatively small and not considered to be of much practical significance.

2. Is there a relationship between the principals' knowledge levels in the area of special education policies and procedures, as defined by the six principles of IDEA 2004, and the method by which they received the majority of their knowledge for each area?

H₀2. There is no significant relationship between principals' knowledge levels in the area of special education policies and procedures, as defined by the six principles of IDEA 2004, and the methods by which they received the majority of their knowledge for each area.

The null hypothesis was tested for a statistically significant difference in principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures, as defined by the six areas of IDEA 2004, against the method by which they received the majority of their knowledge for each area. Six, one-way ANOVAs were performed (see Table 11). The ANOVAs showed no significant difference between principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures, in the six principles of IDEA 2004, and the method of knowledge acquisition. Therefore, null hypothesis two that there is no significant relationship between principals' knowledge levels in special education, as defined by the six areas of IDEA 2004, and the methods by which they received the majority of their knowledge for each area failed to be rejected.

3. Do principals who have prior teaching experience in the field of special education have a greater level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures than principals who did not have prior teaching experience in the field of special education?

H₀3. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures between principals who had prior teaching experience in the field of special education and those who did not have prior teaching experience in the field of special education.

According to Table 4 (previously discussed), 72% of the Florida principals surveyed (127 participants) had no prior teaching experience in the field of special education, where 28% of the Florida principals surveyed (49 participants) had prior teaching experience in the field of special education. A t-test was conducted to compare the means between the principals' overall knowledge of special education policies and

Table 11

ANOVA for Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Policies and Procedures, as Defined by the Six Areas of IDEA 2004, by Method of Knowledge Acquisition

	Zero Reject Total	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups		.608	3	.203	.385	.764
Within Groups		47.392	90	.527		
Total		48.000	93			
Evaluation Total						
Between Groups		.729	3	.234	.974	.407
Within Groups		34.454	138	.250		
Total		35.183	141			
LRE Total						
Between Groups		.189	3	.063	.098	.961
Within Groups		96.149	150	.641		
Total		96.338	153			
FAPE Total						
Between Groups		.106	3	.035	.075	.973
Within Groups		64.880	138	.470		
Total		64.986	141			
Due Process Total						
Between Groups		1.157	3	.386	1.078	.361
Within Groups		50.066	140	.358		
Total		51.222	143			
Parent Participation Total						
Between Groups		.763	3	.254	.519	.670
Within Groups		70.534	144	.490		
Total		71.297	147			

procedures and past teaching experience in the field of special education. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was tested by Levene's Test for Equality of Variances and the p-value was greater than .05 ($p = .719$), thus confirming the assumption of equal variance. This study found among Florida principals responding to the survey ($N = 171$) there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups, group 1: Yes Teaching Experience ($M = 6.43, SD = 2.030$) and group 2: No Teaching Experience ($M = 5.48, SD = 2.210$), $t(169) = 2.542, p < .05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the principals' overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures and past teaching experience in the field of special education was rejected. Further, using a pooled estimate of the standard deviation: Cohen's $d = 6.43 - 5.48 / \sqrt{((2.030^2 + 2.210^2)/2)}$. Therefore, Cohen's effect size value ($d = .4477$) suggested a medium practical significance.

4. Is the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures similar among principals across different school sizes, as measured by school enrollment?

H₀4. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures among principals across different school sizes, as measured by school enrollment.

A Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was run to determine the relationship between a participant's overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures and school enrollment, $r(171) = 0.080, p > 0.05$. The results were not statistically significant ($p = .297$). Therefore, null hypothesis four that there is no

significant relationship in the overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures between principals across different school sizes failed to be rejected.

5. Is the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures similar among principals across community types (i.e., rural, suburban, and urban)?

N_o5. There is no significant difference in the level of overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures among principals across community types.

The three types of communities: rural, suburban, and urban, were coded ordinally as one, two, and three, respectively. A Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was run to determine the relationship between a participant's overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures and the type of community in which their school is located, $r(169) = 0.016$, $p > 0.05$. The results were not statistically significant ($p = .840$). Therefore, null hypothesis five that there is no significant difference in the overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures among principals across rural, suburban, and urban schools in the State of Florida failed to be rejected.

Summary

This chapter presented an analysis of the data collected according to the methods discussed in chapter three. The first section of the chapter reintroduced the research questions and null hypotheses. An expanded description of the sample surveyed was also provided. The next section used descriptive statistics to present the demographic information of the respondents. Following the descriptive statistics, an item analysis and summary of the responses to the hypothetical scenarios and a summary of the methods

by which principals purport to have learned the majority of special education policies and procedures, grouped by the six principles of IDEA 2004, were described. Finally, results of the statistical analyses were presented for each of the research questions and null hypotheses.

The following presents a summary of the null hypotheses that were rejected and those that failed to be rejected. Null hypotheses one and three were both rejected at the .05 significance level. Null hypotheses two, four, and five all failed to be rejected. Null hypothesis one that there is no significant difference in overall knowledge of special education policies and procedures between principals who received formal training and those who did not receive formal training was rejected at the .05 significance level. Null hypothesis two that there is no significant relationship between principals' knowledge levels in special education, as defined by the six principles of IDEA 2004, and the methods by which they received the majority of their knowledge for each area failed to be rejected. Null hypothesis three that there is no significant relationship between the principals' overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures and past teaching experience in the field of special education was rejected. Null hypothesis four that there is no significant difference in the overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures between principals across different school sizes failed to be rejected. Finally, null hypothesis five that there is no significant difference in the overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures among principals across rural, suburban, and urban schools in the State of Florida failed to be rejected.

V. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While few would suggest school leaders must be experts in the area of student disabilities, common thought dictates, minimally, they have fundamental knowledge in this area in order to perform essential special education leadership tasks (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). As the instructional leader, this knowledge is critical in ensuring effective instruction and successful learning opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities (Bays & Crockett, 2007). However, research consistently finds most school principals do not have the knowledge in special education, as most of the principal training deals with instructional, operational, and leadership oriented tasks (Aspedon, 1992; Dickenson et al., 2003; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Doyle, 2001; McClard-Bertrand & Bratberg, 2007; Potter & Hulsey, 2001; Smith & Colon, 1998). Although the overall objective of principal leadership training programs is to prepare future school leaders, commonly accepted leadership standards such as The National Council for Accreditation in Teacher Education (NCATE) or The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) rarely focus specifically on the knowledge necessary for principals to work effectively with students who exhibit learning or behavioral difficulties, despite the fact most school principals will lead in schools that include a portion of these students in the school population (Crockett, 2002; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Doyle, 2001).

This chapter begins with a brief review of the purpose of the study and the conceptual framework that guided the design and data analysis. Following this brief

review, the study's findings are juxtaposed to the extensive literature using the conceptual framework to guide the discussion. Subsequently, this chapter includes the prevalent implications of the study, followed by the limitations and delimitations. Also included in this chapter are recommendations for current principals, principal preparation programs at the college/university level, and education lawmakers on the topic of principal preparation in the area of special education. Finally, this chapter ends with recommendations for further research in the field.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the knowledge of school principals in the area of special education policies and procedures through survey administration. In addition, the survey was designed to establish the method (i.e., college coursework, district in-services, self-learning, and on the job, or never learned this) by which school principals purport to have learned the majority of special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004). These six principles included: zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment (LRE), free-appropriate public education (FAPE), due process, and parent participation. Data generated from the principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures was then compared by (a) the amount of special education coursework taken during the principal's formal education, (b) the method by which school principals learned the majority of their knowledge of special education policies and procedures, (c) past teaching experience in the field of special education, (d) school enrollment, and (e) types of communities (i.e., rural, suburban, and urban).

Data gathered for this study included overall knowledge scores for the six principles of IDEA 2004; individual knowledge scores for each of the six principles of IDEA 2004; methods by which principals purport to have learned the majority of their knowledge for each of the six principles of IDEA 2004; and select demographic and background information of the participants, including previous coursework, teaching experience, school enrollment, and type of community in which they lead. Through the use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19.0 for Windows, statistical methods were employed to analyze the collected data.

The data generated in the study was analyzed and the findings presented. The findings were then juxtaposed through the conceptual frame posited in the paper, a dual lens of social justice and ethical reasoning in educational leadership. These lenses were used to help recognize the many inequalities that have hindered education for a variety of students, including those with disabilities (Lashley, 2007). In discussing the findings in relationship to the combination of conceptual lenses and paradigms, the researcher hoped to identify the levels of equity among the opportunities provided for children with special needs.

Discussion of Findings

The overarching research questions explored (a) the level of knowledge Florida principals possess in the area of special education policies and procedures, as defined by IDEA 2004, and (b) the primary method by which principals purport to have learned the majority of special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles of IDEA 2004. The following sections of the chapter discuss the study's overall findings as well as the two statistically significant ancillary findings, with specific regard to

existing literature and in light of the conceptual framework used to guide the study's design and analysis. The conclusions section will attempt to understand the study's findings by applying the study's conceptual frames, social justice and ethical reasoning in educational leadership, to the findings broadly to better recognize how principals' knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures interacts with social justice and ethical reasoning in education policy.

Knowledge of Special Education Policies and Procedures

The six principles of special education policies and procedures, as defined under IDEA 2004, were tested and demonstrated an overall mean score of 5.74, which equates to a 48%. Therefore, of the 176 school leaders whose knowledge of special education policies and procedures were assessed, the average score was a 48%. Consequently, the findings of this study suggest that most of the school leaders in Florida who participated in the research responded incorrectly to more than half of the questions on the survey designed to assess their knowledge of special education policies and procedures. In most cases, a 48% correct response rate on any assessment is considered failing. Therefore, the finding is suggestive that school principals in Florida do not hold a sufficient amount of knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures.

Specifically, when broken down by area, it was determined the mean knowledge scores of principals regarding each of the six principles of IDEA 2004 were considerably low. The percentage of correct responses for each of the six principles were as follows: zero reject policy had a 50% correct response rate; the nondiscriminatory evaluation policy had a 55% correct response rate; the least restrictive environment policy had a 52% correct response rate; the free-appropriate

public education policy had a 41% correct response rate; the due process policy had a 40% correct response rate; and the parent participation policy had a 53% correct response rate. This data suggests principal knowledge to be the weakest in the areas of free-appropriate public education and due process.

These findings are synonymous with the results of previous studies in the field, which indicated a lack of educational training and preparation in the area of special education for school leaders (Aspedon, 1992; Dickenson et al., 2003). Similarly, McClard-Bertrand and Bratberg (2007) found more extensive formal training in the special education field is essential if school leaders are to have the knowledge necessary to operate successful special education programs in their schools. These findings also support the prior research of DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003) who found “most principals lack the course work and field experience needed to lead local efforts to create learning environments that emphasize academic success for students with disabilities” (p. 11). Gaps in training regarding special education policies and procedures as reported by Rhys (1996) and Nardone (1999) confirm the lack of preparation by stating school principals are deficient in their knowledge of special education legal issues. Further, findings from this study reflect extensive research (Davidson & Algozzine, 2002; Valesky & Hirth, 1992; Wakeman et al., 2007) that reveals dissonance between what education leadership preparation programs are providing future school leaders and the knowledge they will need for the demands of the job.

This lack of knowledge suggests there may be some concerns in the areas of social justice and ethical reasoning as they relate to special education. “Most

importantly, principals' lack of knowledge of these regulations may affect the outcome of services for students with disabilities" (Cooner, Tochtermann, & Garrison-Wade, 2004, n.p.). If this is indeed true, the students, programs, and special education teachers will suffer.

Methods of Knowledge Acquisition

The principals were then asked the primary method by which they acquired the majority of their knowledge of special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles of IDEA 2004. The overall mean percentages showed 7% of the principals acquired the majority of their knowledge through academic coursework; another 35.3% of the principals acquired the majority of their knowledge through district in-services; 4% of the principals acquired the majority of their knowledge through the method of self teaching; 36.3% of the principals acquired the majority of their knowledge through the method of on the job experiences; and 17.3% of the principals claimed never to have learned this information.

When the methods of knowledge acquisitions were separated according to the six principles of IDEA 2004 (see Table 12), the percentage of principals who acquired their knowledge through academic courses, district in-services, self-taught, on the job, and those who did not learn the information were as follows for each principle. The zero reject principle percentages were: 3%, 22%, 4%, 26%, and 45%, respectively. The nondiscriminatory evaluation principle percentages were: 5%, 35%, 4%, 40%, and 16%, respectively. The least restrictive environment principle percentages were: 13%, 41%, 3%, 34%, and 9%, respectively. The free-appropriate public education principle percentages were: 13%, 35%, 5%, 33%, and 14%, respectively. The due process

Table 12

Methods By Which Principals Report To Have Received Knowledge

IDEA 2004 Principle	Academic Courses	District In-services	Self Taught	On the Job	Did not Learn
Zero Reject	3%	22%	4%	26%	45%
Evaluation	5%	35%	4%	40%	16%
LRE	13%	41%	3%	34%	9%
FAPE	13%	35%	5%	33%	14%
Due Process	5%	34%	4%	46%	11%
Parents	4%	45%	3%	39%	9%

principle percentages were: 5%, 34%, 4%, 46%, and 11%, respectively. Finally, the parent participation principle percentages were: 4%, 45%, 3%, 39%, and 9%, respectively.

An analysis of the methods by which principals purport to have acquired their overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures across all six principles suggests that the majority of participants acquired the knowledge through district in-services and on the job experiences. This finding suggests principal preparation programs are inadequate in providing the necessary knowledge of special education policies and procedures. This supports the prior research of Hess and Kelly (2005) who concluded, “Because preparation of principals has not kept pace with changes in the larger world of schooling, graduates of principal preparation programs have been left ill equipped for the challenges and opportunities posed by an era of accountability” (p. 40). Capper et al. (2006) call for increased attention to assessing

preparation programs and how they prepare school leaders for social justice. Further, Laskey and Karge (2006) surveyed 205 principals in California and found that although the majority of principals considered formal training in special education as very important, many indicated little to no direct experience working with students with disabilities in their preparation programs. Similarly, Wakeman et al. (2007) reported that principals had “received little (47.8%) or some (37.6%) information about special education in their principal licensing program” (p. 158). Little or some information has not proven adequate in providing the necessary knowledge of special education policies and procedures. Finally, Lust (2005) reported that 77.6% of principals indicated principal preparation programs did not prepare them to deal with the special education issues they faced once on the job. All of these findings indicate a dearth of included knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures in most school leadership programs (Valesky & Hirth, 1992).

This overall finding is consistent with the data for each individual principle of IDEA 2004, with the exception of the zero reject principle where 45% of the principals claimed never to have learned the information. Thus, having been unable to report where or even if they had received knowledge of the zero reject principle, this finding suggests a gap in training across colleges and school districts. This is consistent with earlier findings of similar studies that indicated a lack of special education training for school leaders (Aspedon, 1992; Dickenson et al., 2003; McClard-Bertrand & Bratberg, 2007).

Amount of Coursework

Further findings from this study revealed the knowledge of special education policies and procedures was statistically significantly higher after taking five or more special education courses. This finding suggests broad training in special education is needed if school leaders are to have knowledge of special education policies and procedures. This finding aligns with the research of McClard-Bertrand and Bratberg (2007), who concluded more extensive formal training in the special education field is necessary if school leaders are to have the knowledge necessary to operate successful special education programs in their schools. Further, it supports the findings of Patterson et al. (2000), who found administrators who obtained special training or professional development related to educating students with disabilities indicated such training and background as beneficial to their leadership role in special education at the school level.

Career Path

The final finding indicated that principals who had prior teaching experience in the field of special education had a greater overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures than those who did not have prior teaching experience in the field of special education. However, it is unknown if this finding potentially has a confounding influence; perhaps the participants who taught in special education also received formal education in the field of special education. However, this finding still suggests that actually having personal experience with students with disabilities can increase one's knowledge of the policies and procedures in the field of special education.

This aligns with the previous research regarding personal experiences with people with disabilities. Praisner (2003) and Wakeman (2005) found that having personal experience with people with disabilities had a clear relationship with the principal's attitude and fundamental knowledge of special education. However, other prior research in the field looked at an increase in special education knowledge in relation to teaching experience in general, not specific to teaching in the field of special education. Therefore, this study's comparison of the knowledge in the area of special education between those principals who had teaching experience in special education and those who did not have teaching experience in special education is a contribution to the literature. Nevertheless, the following studies did look at principals' knowledge level and years of experience as a teacher in general. Hirth (1988) found that principals' knowledge of special education was related with their years of experience as a teacher and Claxton (2002) found principals' knowledge levels in special education were positively correlated to their years of teaching experience. On the other hand, Copenhaver (2005) and Power (2007) each found that there was no significant difference in principal knowledge when compared to teaching experience.

Conclusions

In examining the four significant findings, it is logical to conclude there is an absolute gap in principal training when it comes to their readiness to lead schools that enroll students with disabilities, which happens to be most, if not all, public schools. While there are areas where some principals, although most often the minority of study participants, demonstrated a greater degree of knowledge of special education policies and procedures, in no way do their scores suggest any level of expertise. As mentioned

in the previous section, this fact alone is disconcerting and absolutely begs that principal training programs be re-examined for gaps in these particular areas of knowledge. However, and perhaps even more disconcerting, is how ignorance of special education policies and procedures correlates with injustice across special education policy.

Social justice as defined by Adams et al. (1997) and ethical reasoning in educational leadership developed and defined by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) were chosen as the conceptual framework with which to guide the design and analysis of the study. These underlying sets of ideas were used to help recognize the many inequalities that have hindered education for a variety of students, including those with disabilities (Lashley, 2007). In looking at principal preparation in regards to special education through a combination of conceptual lenses and paradigms, the researcher hoped to identify the levels of equity among the opportunities provided for children with special needs.

The following sections discuss the findings of the study using the conceptual frames of social justice and ethical reasoning in educational leadership discussed earlier. Using these lenses, several implications arise for current principals and principal preparation programs. By utilizing these frameworks, one can assess if enough training is provided to school principals in the area of special education policies and procedures, to ensure they are equipped to provide equitable and socially just educational opportunities for students with disabilities in the public school systems.

Social Justice

Foster (1986) expressed the ideology of ethics best when he wrote: “Each administrative decision carries with it a restructuring of human life: that is why

administration at its heart is the resolution of moral dilemmas” (p. 33). Unless school leaders are trained in the area of moral reasoning and, more specifically, social justice, the inequities we see today will most likely remain. Greenfield (1993) stressed the importance for such training in moral reasoning when he stated:

A failure to provide the opportunity for school administrators to develop such competence constitutes a failure to serve children we are obligated to serve as public educators. As a profession, educational administration thus has a moral obligation to train prospective administrators to be able to apply the principles, rules, ideals, and virtues associated with the development of ethical schools. (p. 285)

In considering the findings of the study, that school principals in Florida may not hold a sufficient amount of knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures, it is suggested not enough training in special education exists in our principal preparation programs. These individuals are expected to be the instructional leaders in their schools, yet they do not have the fundamental knowledge necessary to ensure the rights given to a percentage of their total school population are not being violated. In fact, they do not have sufficient knowledge to ensure they, themselves, are not violating these particular rights. What good are rights, if those who hold the power are oblivious to them? What good are laws, when they do not stretch far enough, and those who are left to interpret them may possibly lack the knowledge and moral reasoning needed to guarantee the laws are followed with the intent in which they were written?

Another finding from this research indicated the methods by which principals purport to have learned the majority of their knowledge of special education policies and procedures, across the six principles of IDEA 2004, may not be effective in providing sufficient or accurate knowledge. Principals claimed to have received the majority of their knowledge either from district in-services or on the job for the principles of nondiscriminatory evaluation, LRE, FAPE, due process, and parental participation. With the overall low test scores, the level of district training should be questioned. Further, those individuals who felt they learned the majority of their knowledge on the job should re-evaluate how this knowledge was learned. If they are asking other individuals to assume special education responsibilities or receiving their information from other individuals, these individuals may be just as unprepared and unknowledgeable in the area of special education policies and procedures as the principal (Smith & Colon, 1998). Without this direct knowledge of special education policies and procedures, principals simply cannot provide equitable and socially just educational opportunities to students with disabilities.

Ethical Reasoning in Educational Leadership

In the following framework, “four approaches to ethical analysis are presented that influence the practice of school leaders, including the perspectives of justice, critique, care, and the ethics of one’s profession” (Lashley, 2007, p. 182). These four approaches are interwoven, and when used together, this paradigm model can assist in solving moral dilemmas. Following is a brief description of each approach in the paradigm model and how it applies to the findings of this study.

Ethic of justice. The ethic of justice focuses on rights and laws. It looks to see if there is a law, right, or policy that relates to a particular case. For the purpose of this research we will use the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. In addition to IDEA 2004, chapter two contained an array of special education Supreme Court cases that have assisted in the interpretation of IDEA 2004. A school principal has to be aware of the “rights inherent in IDEA and why they are in place...He or she must also know the legal and policy requirements of the law, as well as understand the historical and educational contexts that have led to these requirements” (Lashley, 2007, p. 184).

Examining the findings of this study through the ethic of justice, it is suggested school principals do not have the basic knowledge of IDEA 2004 or the necessary knowledge of the legal and policy requirements of the law. An overall score of 48% in the knowledge of special education policies and procedures, as assessed by the PKSE, suggests a lack of knowledge of the policies and procedures across the six principles of IDEA 2004. It is the recommendation of the researcher that a policy be put in place to require specific special education training on IDEA 2004 within the principal preparation programs.

Ethic of critique. The ethic of critique is based on critical theory, which has, at its heart, an analysis of social class and its inequities. Giroux (1991) asserts the ethic of critique provides “a discourse for expanding basic human rights” (p. 48). It is “aimed at awakening educators to inequities in society and, in particular, in the schools” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 16). The ethic of critique raises hard questions concerning the treatment of diverse groups in society: issues of oppression, domination, and

discrimination can be taken into account (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). In the ethic of critique, questions are asked such as: “who benefits from the law, rule, or policy...who are the silenced voices?” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 16).

Examining the findings of this study through the ethic of critique, it is clear the silenced voices belong to the students with disabilities. With school leaders lacking the knowledge to ensure they are following the law and leading in the best interest of students with disabilities, school leaders could in fact be continuing to oppress and silence this group. If the school leader cannot stand up for the rights of students with disabilities, merely because they lack the knowledge to do so, who will become the voice for these students? The ethic of critique portrays, yet again, the need for a policy to be put in place requiring specific special education training on IDEA 2004 within the principal preparation programs.

Ethic of care. According to Young (1990), to achieve equity “social policy should sometimes afford special treatment to groups” (p. 158). This concept provides a case for unequal treatment for those who have been disadvantaged over time. Aristotle “held that justice consists in treating equals equally and unequals unequally” (Strike & Soltis, 1992, p. 46).

The ethic of care places equity at the center of the paradigm. Using this paradigm, the voices of the diverse groups, particularly those who have been discriminated against, are heard (Young, 1990). This paradigm asks basic questions such as who will benefit from what I decide; who will be hurt by the decisions; and what are the long term effects of the decision I make today?

Considering the findings of this study through the ethic of care, it is suggested the mere neglect of knowledge required of school leaders causes one to wonder what the long term effect of the absence of standards might be and how this would impact students with disabilities. The effects are portentous; it is difficult to imagine such a lack of knowledge in respect to special education policies and procedures wouldn't ultimately result in creating inequitable opportunities for students with disabilities. Again, the need for a policy to be put in place to require specific special education training on IDEA 2004 within the principal preparation programs is evident under the ethic of care.

Ethic of the profession. Using the ethic of the profession, we understand that how our schools address the evolving needs of our students, who are diverse in nature, will determine the success of our schools and our nation (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). “In educational administration, we believe that if there is a moral imperative for the profession, it is to serve the best interests of the student [including those with disabilities]” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 26). Looking at the findings of the research through this lens, it suggests principal preparation programs and school districts may not be providing the level of intensity and types of supports needed for school leaders to serve the best interest of students with disabilities. The overall lack of knowledge in this area hinders school leaders from even knowing what is in the best interest of their students with disabilities. In knowing the current policy, which dictates Florida Principal Leadership Standards, is not based on the best interests of students with disabilities, it would not be professionally ethical to follow these standards.

Implications

This study suggests that principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures does indeed matter if there is an assumption of social justice underpinning educational leadership preparation. While principals are expected to be the instructional leaders in their schools, they may not have the fundamental knowledge necessary to ensure the rights, given to a percentage of their school population, are not being violated.

Examining the findings of this research through the dual lenses of social justice and ethical reasoning, it can be suggested that there is a lack of training being provided to school principals in the area of special education policies and procedures. If society is interested in ensuring principals are equipped to provide equitable and socially just educational opportunities for students with disabilities, appropriate training must be provided. There is a strong need for a policy to be put in place to require specific special education training on IDEA 2004 within the principal preparation programs. Lashley (2007) expressed the current need when he stated:

A new understanding of the school leader's accountability for the education of all students—an understanding that emerges from the knowledge traditions of special and general education, the provisions of the IDEA and NCLB, and the wisdom of practice—is necessary to focus on leadership, not only for school improvement, but for social justice, equity, and democracy in schools. (p. 186)

With accountability and evaluations being tied to student performance, as measured by high-stakes standardized testing, insurmountable issues have arisen in regards to evaluating teaching and subsequently leading the education of students with

disabilities. When principals lack the necessary knowledge of special education policies and procedures, yet are required to evaluate special education teachers and programs, the teachers, programs, and subsequently the students with disabilities are set up for inevitable failure. It is like trying to fly a plane, while still putting together the pieces. It will not end well.

Limitations

Limitations to research are defined as those elements over which the researcher has no control (Creswell, 2003). They are the characteristics of design or methodology that set parameters on the application or interpretation of the results of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). Major limitations of this study were those associated with survey research. This type of research generally has a low response rate. Further, a potential limitation of e-mail survey research includes the difficulty in sorting out those who responded versus those who have not yet responded, especially with a large sample size (Schmidt et al., 2006). After the initial cover letter, Internal Review Board (IRB) consent form, and survey were sent to the principals of the 2,598 traditional schools across 66 school districts, 9 separate school districts emailed the researcher indicating the district required its own approval process for any research to be conducted within the district. Due to the time constraints of the study and the inordinate amount of extra work and time applying to nine separate school districts for research and IRB approval, the researcher elected to omit these school districts from the study and any participants from the nine school districts who responded were removed from the data. Therefore the sample decreased to 57 school districts and 1493 schools/principals. Another limitation of the study was related to the idea of social desirability. There are certain

facts or issues participants would rather not report accurately (Fowler, 2008). Therefore, if the principal did not feel he or she had a sufficient level of knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures, he or she may have decided not to complete the survey. Since the hypothetical-scenario based questions can be seen as a test of knowledge, there was no control as to whether the school principals felt comfortable completing a survey that elicited their knowledge of issues dealing with social desirability. Further, for those principals who did respond, social desirability could also have affected what method the participants purported to have received their knowledge for the six principles of IDEA 2004. Additionally, there was no control as to whether they received on-line or personal assistance in the completion of the survey. Finally, due to the low response rate of 12%, findings from this research are not generalizable. However, these findings are consistent with the findings of prior research in the field (Aspedon, 1992; Dickenson et al., 2003; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Doyle, 2001; McClard-Bertrand & Bratberg, 2007; Potter & Hulsey, 2001; Smith & Colon, 1998).

Delimitations

Delimitations are defined as elements in which the researcher can manipulate and control (Creswell, 2003). They are the characteristics that limit the scope of the inquiry as determined by the conscious exclusionary and inclusionary decisions that were made throughout the development of the proposal (McMillan & Schumacher, 2005). The first delimitation was the researcher limited the study to Florida public school principals in traditional elementary, middle, and high school settings (K-12). Additionally, the survey was limited to questions regarding the six major principles of

special education within IDEA 2004: zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, individualized free-appropriate public education, due process procedures, and parent participation. Finally, attempts to determine the level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures were limited to responses on case scenarios and not actual practice.

Recommendations

This study should assist principal preparation programs and education law makers in providing a foundation of knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures for both current and aspiring school principals. The recommendations section is broken down into recommendations for the following areas: school principals, principal preparation programs, education lawmakers, and finally further research.

Recommendations for School Principals

1. School principals should enroll in special education coursework, directly related to policies and procedures, through a college or university.
2. School principals should attend special education conferences and in-services at the local, state, and national levels to increase their knowledge base in the area of special education policies and procedures.
3. School principals should seek out individuals who possess knowledge of special education policies and procedures and ask questions to better understand this major component of public schooling.
4. School principals should self-reflect on their knowledge of social justice and ethical reasoning, specifically as it relates to special education, and make a plan for increasing this knowledge if it is found to be low.

Recommendations for Principal Preparation Programs

1. Principal preparation programs should merge their programs with components of the special education programs at the college/university level in order to provide more in depth knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures.
2. Principal preparation programs should address specific knowledge and skills related to special education and IDEA 2004 including: zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment (LRE), free-appropriate public education (FAPE), due process, and parent participation.
3. Principal preparation programs should facilitate meaningful field-based experiences that include participation in special education decision-making at both the school and district level, during the principal preparation program.
4. Principal preparation programs should understand how the field of educational leadership is changing. They should realize special education has emerged as an important factor in public education, with our new system of accountability. Principal preparation courses should be modified to the same extent.
5. Principal preparation programs should include components of social justice and ethical reasoning, specifically as they relate to special education and other underrepresented groups, in the curriculum.

Recommendations for Education Lawmakers

1. Education lawmakers should expand ISSLC to include standards specifically relating to special education and students with disabilities in the current leadership standards to build the special education knowledge of pre-service administrators.
2. Educational lawmakers should ensure that pre-service school leadership programs as well as in-service provided to school leaders are of high quality and require components specifically related to knowledge of special education policies and procedures.
3. Education lawmakers should implement a state credentialing requirement for successful completion of a special education law course and a special education programming course focusing on supervision of instruction specific to students with disabilities.
4. Education lawmakers should ensure a large number of competencies aimed at special education policies and procedures are included on the Florida Educational Leadership Exam (FELE).

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Future research should investigate the types of special education courses most effective in preparing school principals in the area of special education policies and procedures. What do principals really have to know in the area of special education to successfully lead inclusive schools?

2. Future research should investigate the characteristics of principals who score high in the knowledge of special education policies and procedures, as determined by the PKSE, by adding a qualitative component to the research.
3. Future research should investigate the principals' perceptions of the relationship between social justice and special education knowledge.
4. Future research should investigate college/university principal preparation programs to determine the amount of curriculum aimed at teaching special education policies and procedures.
5. Future research should investigate college/university principal preparation programs to determine the amount of curriculum aimed at teaching social justice components through special education.

While this study has expanded our understanding of principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures, through the social justice and ethical reasoning frameworks, there is, as will always be the case, more work to be done!

APPENDICES

Appendix A

6A-5.080 Florida Principal Leadership Standards

Florida's school leaders must possess the abilities and skills necessary to perform their designated tasks in a high-performing manner. The school leader, commensurate with job requirements and delegated authority, shall demonstrate competence in the following standards:

(1) Instructional Leadership.

(a) Instructional Leadership. High performing leaders promote a positive learning culture, provide an effective instructional program and apply best practices to student learning, especially in the area of reading and other foundational skills.

(b) Managing the Learning Environment. High performing leaders manage the organization, operations, facilities and resources in ways that maximize the use of resources in an instructional organization and promote a safe, efficient, legal and effective learning environment.

(c) Learning, Accountability and Assessment. High performing leaders monitor the success of all students in the learning environment; align the curriculum, instruction and assessment processes to promote effective student performance; and use a variety of benchmarks, learning expectations and feedback measures to ensure accountability for all participants engaged in the educational process.

(2) Operational Leadership.

(a) Decision Making Strategies. High performing leaders plan effectively, use critical thinking and problem solving techniques, and collect and analyze data for continuous school improvement.

(b) Technology. High performing leaders plan and implement the integration of technological and electronic tools in teaching, learning, management, research and communication responsibilities.

(c) Human Resource Development. High performing leaders recruit, select, nurture and, where appropriate, retain effective personnel; develop mentor and partnership programs; and design and implement comprehensive professional growth plans for all staff, paid and volunteer.

(d) Ethical Leadership. High performing leaders act with integrity, fairness, and honesty in an ethical manner.

(3) School Leadership.

(a) Vision. High performing leaders have a personal vision for their school and the knowledge, skills and dispositions to develop, articulate and implement a shared vision that is supported by the larger organization and the school community.

(b) Community and Stakeholder Partnerships. High performing leaders collaborate with families and business and community members, respond to diverse community interests and needs, work effectively within the larger organization and mobilize community resources.

(c) Diversity. High performing leaders understand, respond to, and influence the personal, political, social, economic, legal, and cultural relationships in the classroom, the school and the local community.

Specific Authority 1001.02, 1012.55 FS. Law Implemented 1012.55 FS. History–New 5-24-05, Formerly 6B-5.0012.

Appendix B

1012.986 William Cecil Golden Professional Development Program

for School Leaders

(1) There is established the William Cecil Golden Professional Development Program for School Leaders to provide high standards and sustained support for principals as instructional leaders. The program shall consist of a collaborative network of state and national professional leadership organizations to respond to instructional leadership needs throughout the state. The network shall support the human-resource development needs of principals, principal leadership teams, and candidates for principal leadership positions using the framework of leadership standards adopted by the State Board of Education, the Southern Regional Education Board, and the National Staff

Development Council. The goal of the network leadership program is to:

- (a) Provide resources to support and enhance the principal's role as the instructional leader.
- (b) Maintain a clearinghouse and disseminate data-supported information related to enhanced student achievement, based on educational research and best practices.
- (c) Build the capacity to increase the quality of programs for preservice education for aspiring principals and in-service professional development for principals and principal leadership teams.
- (d) Support best teaching and research-based instructional practices through dissemination and modeling at the preservice and in-service levels for both teachers and principals.

(2) The Department of Education shall coordinate through the network identified in subsection (1) to offer the program through multiple delivery systems, including:

(a) Approved school district training programs.

(b) Interactive technology-based instruction.

(c) Regional consortium service organizations pursuant to s. 1001.451.

(d) State, regional, or local leadership academies.

(3) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules pursuant to ss. 120.536(1) and 120.54 to administer this section.

History.--s. 63, ch. 2006-74.

Appendix C

6A-5.081 Approval of School Leadership Programs

The Florida Legislature and State Board of Education recognize multiple pathways for demonstrating the standards required to qualify for a Professional Florida Educator's Certificate. To ensure capacity and quality of pre-service school leadership programs and the development of in-service school leaders required in Section 1012.986, F.S., this rule sets forth requirements for approval of two levels of school leadership programs. Level I programs lead to initial certification in educational leadership for the purpose of preparing individuals to serve as school leaders who may aspire to the school principalship. Level II programs build upon Level I training and lead to certification in School Principal. This bi-level certification and preparation process includes programs offered by Florida postsecondary institutions and public school districts as described herein.

(1) Level I: Educational Leadership.

(a) General Criteria.

1. An initial certification program in educational leadership approved pursuant to this section shall satisfy specialization requirements for certification in Educational Leadership pursuant to Rule 6A-4.0082, F.A.C. Each approval or extension shall be granted for a period of time determined by the Department of Education but shall not exceed seven (7) years based upon the institution or school district meeting the requirements of this section.

2. Each entity offering an approved program in accordance with this section shall report to the Department annually the number of participants admitted to and enrolled in the program and the number of program completers.

(b) Requirements for initial approval of programs offered by Florida postsecondary institutions. Each institution seeking approval of an initial certification program in educational leadership shall submit a request in writing from the chief executive officer to the Commissioner providing evidence of all of the following:

1. The institution is a Florida public or nonpublic postsecondary institution that requests approval of an initial certification program in educational leadership, has legal authority to grant appropriate master's degrees or higher in educational leadership or school administration, and meets accreditation requirements as prescribed in subsection 6A-4.003(1) or paragraph (2)(c), F.A.C.

2. The institution has incorporated into the program objectives which directly respond to needs assessed and projected for school leaders both in Florida school districts and the state as a whole.

3. The institution has established a comprehensive program that meets the following requirements:

a. Provides instruction in and assesses each candidate's level of knowledge and application of the competencies aligned to each of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards, pursuant to Rules 6A-5.080 and 6A-4.00821, F.A.C. The program description must include in which courses the competencies will be taught and assessed.

b. Incorporates appropriate elements of the William Cecil Golden Program for School Leaders to ensure a statewide foundation for leadership development in accordance with Section 1012.986, F.S.

c. Provides for field experiences in K-12 schools designed in collaboration with Florida public schools or school districts, during which program knowledge is applied and candidates are provided with opportunities to demonstrate required competencies.

d. Endorses as program completers only candidates who demonstrate all of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards at the initial certification level and earn passing scores on all portions of the Florida Educational Leadership Examination required in Section 1012.56, F.S.

4. The institution has employed faculty who are qualified to teach courses required in the program, and who document annual onsite participation or research in K-12 school settings. Activities must be related to the program course(s) they teach.

5. The institution has a means for collecting performance data on admitted candidates and program completers.

6. The institution publishes a description of the qualitative and quantitative requirements for program completion.

7. The institution may include a modified version of its approved program to be offered to individuals who hold a master's or higher degree, provided the institution has a means to document that the completer of the modified program has met all program requirements of this section. A modified program is not required to terminate in a degree.

(c) Requirements for initial approval of programs offered by Florida school districts. Each Florida school district seeking approval of an initial certification program in educational leadership shall submit a request in writing from the chief executive officer to the Commissioner providing evidence of all of the following:

1. The district shall offer the initial certification program in educational leadership only to its employees through its approved professional development system in accordance with Section 1012.98, F.S., and the requirements of this rule.

2. The district has incorporated into the program objectives which directly respond to needs assessed and projected for school leaders both in Florida and the district.

3. The district has established a comprehensive program that meets the following requirements:

a. Admits only candidates who hold a master's degree from an accredited or approved institution as described in Rule 6A-4.003, F.A.C. Programs may provide for admission of candidates without this degree, provided that the district's program documentation includes a process of formally notifying such candidates that they are not eligible to complete the program without official documentation of the master's degree.

b. Provides instruction in and assesses each candidate's level of knowledge and application of the competencies aligned to the Florida Principal Leadership Standards, pursuant to Rules 6A-5.080 and 6A-4.00821, F.A.C. The program description must indicate the professional development activities through which the competencies will be taught and assessed.

c. Incorporates appropriate elements of the William Cecil Golden Program for School Leaders to ensure a statewide foundation for leadership development in accordance with Section 1012.986, F.S.

d. Provides for field experiences in K-12 schools designed in collaboration with Florida public schools or school districts, during which program knowledge is applied and candidates are provided with opportunities to demonstrate required competencies.

e. Endorses as program completers only candidates who hold an acceptable master's degree, demonstrate all of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards at the initial certification level, and earn passing scores on all portions of the Florida Educational Leadership Examination required in Section 1012.56, F.S.

4. The district has employed instructors whom the district has documented are qualified to deliver the professional development required in the program, based upon degree level and practical experience in school leadership. Practical experience must be related to the program curriculum taught.

5. The district collaborates with one or more institutions of higher education in the development and/or delivery of the program.

6. The district has a means for collecting performance data on admitted and enrolled candidates and program completers.

7. The district publishes a description of the qualitative and quantitative requirements for program completion.

(d) Initial approval determination and notification. The Commissioner shall determine whether the institution or district has met the criteria for initial approval and shall provide notification in writing of the approval or denial of approval. A denial of

approval shall include identification of specific areas of program weakness that must be corrected prior to reconsideration for approval. For programs receiving initial approval, the institution or district shall be apprised of the requirements for continued approval.

(e) Continued program approval.

1. Continued approval of each initial certification program in educational leadership shall be based upon the Department's review of the institution's or school district's description of its continuous improvement of the program throughout the approval period as submitted annually through a program evaluation plan. The program evaluation plan shall be based upon an internal analysis of data collected annually and published for the general public. The data must include, but are not limited to:

a. Candidate admission, enrollment, and completion data as described in paragraph (1)(a) of this rule;

b. Candidate pass rates on each portion of the Florida Educational Leadership Examination;

c. Candidates' performance during field experiences;

d. Program completers' satisfaction with their preparedness for serving in a school-based leadership position in the first year of such employment after completing the program; and

e. The satisfaction level of school district or public school employers of program completers with the level of preparedness for the first year of serving in a school leadership position. The description of the level of satisfaction shall be based on results of a survey of the employers that includes the candidate's performance related to the

Florida Principal Leadership Standards, the placement rates of program completers, and the rehire rates of program completers.

2. In the final year of the review cycle the Department shall make a site visit to the district or institution. Prior to the site visit the institution or district shall provide a summary report to the Department that synthesizes the data and actions taken as a result of the program evaluation plans issued during the cycle. The Commissioner will consider the summary report and report of the program approval site visit team to determine whether continued approval is granted and will notify the institution or district in writing of the decision. A denial of approval shall include identification of specific areas of program weakness.

(2) Level II: School Principal. Florida public school districts are authorized to seek approval for a program leading to certification in School Principal pursuant to Rule 6A-4.0083, F.A.C. For purposes of this rule a public school district is referred to as a “district.”

(a) Initial Approval Requirements. The Department may approve a school district’s School Principal certification program for a period of time determined by the Department not to exceed seven (7) years. Approval is based upon the district providing documentation of meeting the following requirements:

1. Admitting only candidates who hold a valid Florida Educator’s Certificate in the area of educational leadership, education administration, or administration and supervision pursuant to requirements of Rule 6A-4.0083, F.A.C., and who are employed in a public school within the district in a leadership position through which the

candidate can fully demonstrate the competencies associated with the Florida Principal Leadership Standards.

2. Delivery of a competency-based developmental program that:

a. Is based upon each individual's needs using data gathered from self-assessment, selection, and appraisal instruments aligned to the competencies to be demonstrated in the program to develop the customized learning plan;

b. Uses district-developed indicators of competency in all Florida Principal Leadership Standards and provides multiple, job-embedded opportunities for achievement;

c. Incorporates appropriate elements of the William Cecil Golden School Professional Development Program for School Leaders to ensure a statewide foundation for leadership development pursuant to Section 1012.986, F.S.;

d. Integrates on-going professional development and the district's annual appraisal system into program experiences;

3. A means of collecting continued approval data as described in subparagraph (2)(d) of this rule.

4. An endorsement of program completion by the superintendent for all program participants who fully demonstrate the Florida Principal Leadership Standards at a level commensurate with full responsibility as head of a school as described in Section 1012.01(3)(c)1., F.S., and as required by the district's program.

(b) Initial program approval determination and notification. The Commissioner shall determine whether the district has met the criteria for initial approval and shall reply with a notification in writing indicating approval or denial of approval. A denial of

approval shall include identification of specific areas of program weakness that must be corrected prior to reconsideration for approval. For programs receiving initial approval, the district shall be apprised of the requirements for continued approval.

(c) Changes to an approved program prior to the end of the approval period. If a district seeks to make substantial revisions to its approved School Principal certification program prior to the resubmission of the program for continued approval, the district should submit those revisions to the Commissioner with a letter requesting a review. The Commissioner will advise the district in writing whether the revised program remains in compliance with this rule and of any proposed changes that are not acceptable. This determination and subsequent program revisions will not affect the approval period previously established for the program.

(d) Continued program approval.

1. Annual reporting. Each district with an approved program in School Principal certification under this rule will report to the Department annually the individuals who are admitted and enrolled, and who complete the program. The district will include in the report to the Department the number and type of in-service hours completed by each participant in curriculum offerings provided by the state through the William Cecil Golden Professional Development Program for School Leaders.

2. Continued approval review.

a. During the last year of approval of the program, the Department will request of the district documentation for continued approval review. Documentation shall include results of an analysis of data collected by the district during each year of approval and a summary of program improvements made during the course of the approval period. The

analysis and summary submitted by the district should include data on program participants as follows:

(I) Data elements listed in subparagraph (2) (d) of this rule;

(II) Level of satisfaction of the participants and their supervisors with the training received in the program with regard to their level of preparedness for their employment in a leadership position in the years immediately following completion of the program;

(III) Evaluation of the effectiveness of the professional development offered through the program in accordance with the protocol standards for professional development adopted by the state;

(IV) Longitudinal data on program participants including placement rates, rehire rates, retention rates, performance based on the achievement of their students and other indicators of the success of the school(s) where they are assigned during the years immediately following completion of the program.

b. After a review of the summary documents, the Commissioner will provide the district with written verification of the continued approval of the program or denial of approval. If a determination of denial is reached, the Commissioner must provide the reasons for the determination in accordance with requirements of this rule. A district whose program is denied continued approval may apply for a new initial approval in accordance with the requirements in paragraph (2) (a) of this rule.

c. The Department will publish a periodic reporting of the statewide status of programs approved under this rule.

Specific Authority 1012.98, 1012.986 FS. Law Implemented 1012.986, 1012.56 FS.

History—New 6-20-07.

Appendix D

Letter to Principals

Greetings Florida Principal:

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study. The purpose of this quantitative study is to review the awareness of school principals in the areas of special education policies and procedures and to establish where school principals purport to have learned the majority of these policies and procedures. To participate in this study, you will respond to a 37-item survey consisting of demographic and background information, short hypothetical scenarios, and information eliciting where you received the majority of your knowledge in the area of special education. This survey will take approximately 15 minutes of your time and is completely voluntary.

The risks involved with participating in this study are no more than one would experience in regular daily activities. A potential benefit you may receive from participation is the satisfaction in knowing that you have contributed to expanding research in principal preparation programs. Additionally, the findings could help shape policy for the creation of socially just educational leadership programs, in the area of special education and assist in decreasing the marginalization of students with disabilities. In order to maintain anonymity, your name is not required. To ensure confidentiality, your email address will not be recorded with your survey responses and all responses will be encrypted and transmitted to a secure server. While several safeguards have been instituted to protect the confidentiality of your responses, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by third parties.

For questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Florida Atlantic University Division of Research at 561.297.0777. For questions regarding the study, please contact the principal investigators: Lindsay Jesteadt at lbryant7@fau.edu or Meredith Mountford at mmountfo@fau.edu.

By clicking the “I consent” link below, you are giving your consent to participate in this research study. You are also affirming the following: 1) You have read the information describing this study and any questions have been answered to your satisfaction; 2) You are 18 years of age or older and freely consent to participate. Please print or save a copy of this consent form for your records.

I consent _____ I do not consent _____ to participate in this research study

Thank you in advance for your participation and for supporting the future of principal preparation programs. Please accept my sincere gratitude for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Meredith Mountford
Associate Professor
Department of Educational Leadership & Research Methodology
Florida Atlantic University

Lindsay Jesteadt
Doctoral Candidate
Florida Atlantic University

Appendix E

Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Policies and Procedures

School Demographics

1) Indicate the grade level of your school.*

- Elementary (K-5)
- Middle School (6-8)
- High School (9-12)
- Other (Please Specify) : _____*

2) Which of the following best describes the community that your school serves?

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

3) Which category describes the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) of your school?*

- 0-499
- 500-999
- 1,000-1,499
- 1,500 +

4) What is the percentage of students receiving special education services in your school?*

General Information

5) What is your gender?*

- Female
- Male

6) What is your age category?*

- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55+

7) How many years have you served as a school principal?*

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16 +

8) Do you have any teaching experience in special education?*

- Yes
- No

9) How many years?

10) Have you ever been involved in Special Education Litigation, where a parent(s) brings suit against the school system, during your time as a school administrator (Assistant Principal or Principal)?*

- Yes
- No

Training/Course Work

11) Indicate the highest degree you have attained?*

- Master's
- Master's + 30 Semester Hours
- Specialist
- Doctorate
- Other (Specify): _____*

12) How many courses in special education have you taken at the college or university?*

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5+

13) How many college or university classes, which were focused directly on special education, have you completed in your entire educational career?

Undergraduate Courses: _____

Graduate Courses: _____

Other: _____

14) Have you taken special education coursework in the following areas?

(Please check either yes or no by each area).

	X	
	Yes	No
Inclusive Education for General Ed. Teachers: Gives gen. ed. teachers the opportunity to understand their roles and responsibilities in teaching students with special needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exceptionalities: Types of exceptionalities/disabilities and their characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programming: Creating programs/curriculum for exceptional students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assessment: Administration and interpretation of assessment instruments for exceptional students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instructional Practices: Teaching exceptional students through the continuum of services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Behavior Strategies: Classroom management, applied behavior analysis & positive behavior supports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategies: Cognitive/Metacognitive Learning Strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual Education Program: Creating IEPs with measurable goals and objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Compliance: Laws, Policies and Procedures pertaining to educating students with disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transition Planning: Implementation of curricula (social, vocational, academic, and daily living) for individuals with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collaboration: Collaborative interaction skills when dealing with an array of supports for a student	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15) Do you have special education certification?*

- Yes
- No

16) Approximately, how many formal special education in-services

(provided through your school district) have you participated in over the past two years?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5+

17) How much information about special education programs/laws do you feel you received in your education administration/leadership licensing or degree (Master's, Specialist, PhD, Ed.D) program?*

- None
- A Little
- Some
- A Lot

18) How frequently do you attend special education in-services, conferences, or workshops?

- Never
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Yearly

19) Where do you get most of your assistance in meeting your professional needs with regard to special education? Please rank from most to least (1= most and 8= least).*

- _____ Central Office
- _____ Assistant Principal
- _____ Special Ed. Coordinator/Consultant (school based)
- _____ Special Education Teacher
- _____ Special Ed. Coursework (college)
- _____ Conferences/Workshops
- _____ Professional Literature
- _____ Policy Manuals

Zero Reject

20) The school year has just started and Mrs. Bishop comes in to enroll Jimmy into the 8th grade. When Mrs. Bishop enrolls Jimmy, she tells you that she feels Jimmy has an emotional/behavioral disability and hands you a letter requesting an evaluation. One week later, Jimmy is involved in a major fight/disruption in the cafeteria. All students involved were given 10 days out-of-school suspension with a recommendation for expulsion. What must you do?

- Expel Jimmy, as you would any general education student who was involved in a major fight/disruption in school.
- Have a manifestation meeting for Jimmy, as you would with any student with a disability who was given 10 days out-of-school suspension with a recommendation for expulsion.
- Suspend Jimmy until an evaluation can be conducted (possibly in the home) and the team can determine if Jimmy has a disability. If he is found to have a disability, then he should be disciplined under those guidelines.
- I did not learn this. I would call the special education department in my school or district for further instruction.

21) Dylan just re-enrolled in your school from a Department of Juvenile Justice Program. This is the second time he has returned to your school from this program. Dylan receives exceptional student services under the Other Health Impaired Program. Last time he was on campus, he was a behavior problem and was frequently in the Dean's office. When he enrolls, you want to make sure he understands the rules in the student code of conduct and what is expected of him. What do you do?

- Meet with Dylan and his mother when they come in to enroll him for school. Have Dylan sign a behavior contract which states that he will abide by all school rules and expectations and if he has done this by a certain date, he will have the same rights as any other student on campus.

Hold an IEP meeting for Dylan to determine appropriate services and supports. During the meeting, have Dylan sign a behavior contract which states that he will abide by all school rules and expectations and if he has done this by a certain date, he will have the same rights as any other student on campus.

Hold an IEP meeting for Dylan to determine appropriate services and supports. Explain to Dylan what the school rules are and the consequences for not following these rules.

I did not learn this. I would call the special education department in my school or district for further instruction.

22) Please mark where you received the majority of your information for the principle of Zero Reject. Please mark only one.

academic coursework

district in-services

self taught

on the job

I never learned this

Nondiscriminatory Evaluation

23) Mid-way through the school year, David and his mother show up to enroll David in school. David just arrived here from Puerto Rico, is 16 years old, and has never been in school. David and his mother do not speak English. You observe David as the translator is speaking with his mother. During the observation you notice that he appears to have characteristics similar to those of children with Intellectual Disabilities. Additionally, while David is sitting in the chair, he is waiving his hand and fingers in front of his face and appears oblivious to everything going on around him. Since David is new to Florida and has never been in school, he is not identified as having a disability. What do you do?

() Enroll David in school and provide him with ELL services. Immediately call an RtI team meeting and initiate the RtI process and begin collecting data, until you have sufficient information to determine he is a student with a disability.

() Enroll David in school and provide him with ELL services. Have David's mother sign paperwork for initial placement and place David in the InD program. Initiate an initial evaluation and collect the back-up documentation to show he should be in the InD program.

() Postpone David's enrollment in school until an evaluation can be conducted (possibly in the home). Once the evaluation is complete, enroll David in school with the most appropriate services and supports.

() I did not learn this. I would call the special education department in my school or district for further instruction.

24) Sidney is a second grade student who was retained in first grade and has struggled academically since Kindergarten. The RtI team put interventions in place for Sidney in both reading and math. The team progress monitored and the gaps between Sidney's academic achievement and those of her peers were actually widening. The team met with Sidney's father and obtained consent to conduct an initial evaluation. The team used the data they had available and also requested additional testing from the school psychologist. Once the testing was completed, the team attempted to set up a meeting with dad to explain the results of the testing as well as the other information the team had gathered through the intervention phases. The school tried to contact the parent via telephone, notes home and invitations to meetings through the U.S. Postal Service. Dad never came to any of the meetings the school tried to set up. What do you do?

() The team can proceed with the initial placement as they have demonstrated that they have taken reasonable measures to obtain consent and the child's parent has failed to respond. The team must send all paperwork from the placement meeting home via certified mail.

() The team cannot proceed with the initial placement as they must have parental consent for placement. They may use mediation or due process hearing procedures in

order to obtain agreement or a ruling that special education and related services may be provided without the parent's consent.

The team cannot proceed with the initial placement as they must have parental consent for placement. They may not use mediation or due process hearing procedures in order to obtain agreement or a ruling that special education and related services may be provided without the parent's consent.

I did not learn this. I would call the special education department in my school or district for further instruction.

25) Please mark where you received the majority of your information for the principle of Nondiscriminatory Evaluation. Please mark only one.

academic coursework

district in-services

self taught

on the job

I never learned this

Least Restrictive Environment

26) Julie is currently receiving Hospital Homebound services due to her severe anxiety and subsequent inability to be successful on a large school campus. Her mother, Mrs. Jacobs, brings in a doctor's note which states that Julie can attend school for 2 hours a day. Mrs. Jacobs asks you to enroll Julie for the 2 hours daily and continue the hospital homebound placement for the remainder of the day. What do you do?

Enroll Julie and arrange for an IEP meeting to reflect the services and supports she will need for her new school-based two hour schedule. Explain to Mrs. Jacobs that Julie can receive either school-based instruction or hospital homebound instruction, but not both. Discontinue the hospital homebound services as the doctor has stated she can now attend school for a period of time.

Enroll Julie and arrange for an IEP meeting to reflect the services and supports she will need for her new school-based two hour schedule. Continue the hospital homebound services as well.

Do not enroll Julie for the two hour time frame. Explain to Mrs. Jacobs that if Julie is to enroll in school, she will have to physically be in school for the entire day, due to federal funding and FTE. Continue the hospital homebound services until the doctor agrees she can come back full-time.

I did not learn this. I would call the special education department in my school or district for further instruction.

27) Jeremy Franks, a 10th grader at your school, was previously placed into the behavior unit/transition room for 2 periods daily (for credit recovery via the computer). At his recent IEP meeting, the team determined that Jeremy was no longer demonstrating a need for the intensive behavioral supports of the behavior unit/transition room. It was determined that this placement would end, and Jeremy would return to the general education setting for his computer based credit recovery classes. However, upon review of his schedule, it was determined there were no seats available in the computer lab and rearranging his schedule would not solve the problem either. What do you do?

Find Jeremy a seat in the credit recovery lab, even if it involves reviewing the schedules of other students and rearranging them accordingly to ensure that Jeremy has a seat.

Tell the IEP team that due to the lack of space in the computer lab, Jeremy will need to continue taking the classes in the behavior unit/transition room and his IEP will need to be revised to reflect these services.

Place Jeremy into elective classes at that time and recommend he finishes his credit recovery classes after school in the lab or by attending adult education classes.

I did not learn this. I would call the special education department in my school or district for further instruction.

28) Please mark where you received the majority of your information for the principle of Least Restrictive Environment. Please mark only one.

academic coursework

district in-services

- self taught
- on the job
- I never learned this

Individualized Free Appropriate Public Education

29) After successfully completing four years of study in a special education high school program working towards a special diploma, Karen, an 18 year old student was recommended for graduation and subsequent termination of special education services. Karen had met all graduation requirements for a special diploma and made progress towards her IEP goals. The following August, Karen shows up for school on the first day and tells the teacher she wants to come back to school. What do you do?

- Re-enroll Karen in school. Set up an IEP meeting to determine what supports she needs at this time and continue providing services through the exceptional student education program.
- Explain to Karen that she has already graduated from high school and any continuation of exceptional student services was terminated at that time. However, remind Karen that she can volunteer at the school if she would like.
- Explain to Karen that since she has already met graduation requirements under a special diploma, the only way she will be allowed to return is if she is working towards a standard diploma. If she agrees, enroll her and hold an IEP meeting to determine the services and supports she will need in the standard diploma courses.
- I did not learn this. I would call the special education department in my school or district for further instruction.

30) Amanda, a student with spina bifida, just moved into your county. When she enrolled in school her mother explained that she needed catheterized every three or four hours to avoid injury to her kidneys. In accordance with accepted medical practice, clean intermittent catheterization (CIC), a procedure involving the insertion of a catheter into the urethra to drain the bladder, has been

prescribed and is a related service on her IEP. You do not have a full-time nurse on campus. What do you do?

- Enroll Amanda in school and explain her mother the school does not have a full-time nurse on campus to perform the CIC procedure and therefore, she will need to make arrangements to be at the school when a nurse is not available.
- CIC is considered a medical service. Schools do not have an obligation to perform these tasks. Enroll Amanda after Medicaid has provided a private-duty nursing assistant to be available for the CIC procedure.
- Enroll Amanda in school and train people at the school to perform the CIC procedure. Add this as a related service to Amanda's IEP and ensure that provisions are made to guarantee the procedure is completed every 3-4 hours.
- I did not learn this. I would call the special education department in my school or district for further instruction.

31) Please mark where you received the majority of your information for the principle of Individualized Free Appropriate Public Education. Please mark only one.

- academic coursework
- district in-services
- self taught
- on the job
- I never learned this

Due Process Procedures

32) During Maggie's most recent IEP meeting, it was recommended that she be put into a more restrictive classroom setting. She was failing all of her courses and started demonstrating inappropriate behaviors in the classroom. After conducting a functional behavioral assessment, it was determined that the function of the behavior was to escape the academic demands/tasks. A review of Maggie's academic scores (as measured by the Brigance) shows her to be two or more grade

levels behind her peers. The school feels Maggie would be more successful and have a better chance of increasing her academic ability if she were in the resource room for reading, writing and math. Maggie’s parents disagree and want her to stay in the general education classes all day. The parents have stated their intent to go to due process and have initiated the proceedings. What do you do?

- Per the “stay-put” clause, Maggie should be put into the resource room placement, as that was the recommendation of the team, until due process proceedings can take place.
- Per the “stay-put” clause, Maggie should be left in the general education classroom until due process proceedings can take place.
- Explain to the parent that the student’s placement is an IEP team decision, and although the parents are part of the team, they cannot unilaterally decide appropriate placement. The majority of the team has recommended a more restrictive placement; therefore the student will be placed accordingly.
- I did not learn this. I would call the special education department in my school or district for further instruction.

33) It is three months into the school year and Erica has reached 10 days of out of school suspension with the recommendation of expulsion. Erica receives exceptional student education services under the Other Health Impaired program for her ADD. Upon review of her records, Erica has had numerous disciplinary referrals for non-compliance, aggression, and disrespect of authority. At her manifestation meeting, Erica was recommended for alternative placement as the behavior in question was determined not to be a manifestation of her disability. Erica’s mother disagreed with the team and filed a due process hearing request.

What do you do?

- Erica should be left in your school (her current setting) until due process proceedings (resolution meeting) can take place.
- Continue Erica’s suspension until the due process proceedings (resolution meeting) can take place, as they must be held within 15 calendar days.

Erica should be placed in the interim alternative educational setting until due process proceedings (resolution meeting) can take place.

I did not learn this. I would call the special education department in my school or district for further instruction.

34) Please mark where you received the majority of your information for the principle of Due Process Procedures. Please mark only one.

academic coursework

district in-services

self taught

on the job

I never learned this

Parent Participation

35) Sally, a student in your school, was evaluated and found to have a disability. Sally received services under IDEA for a couple of years. The teachers have expressed continuous concerns about the Sally's lack of progress and they have recommended placing her in a more restrictive setting. A meeting is called and Sally's mom comes in and hands you a letter stating that consent for special education and related services has been revoked. What do you do?

At the meeting, explain that Sally is not being successful in the less restrictive setting and the team feels it would be in her best interest to be in a more restrictive setting. If her mother still wishes to revoke consent, explain to the mother that she does not have that right. Tell the mother it is an IEP team decision and at this time, the team is recommending a more restrictive placement, to meet the needs of the child. Place Sally in the more restrictive setting.

At the meeting, explain that Sally is not being successful in the less restrictive setting and the team feels it would be in her best interest to be in a more restrictive setting. If her mother still wishes to revoke consent, explain to the mother that she does not have that right. Tell the mother it is an IEP decision, but keep Sally in the less restrictive environment (stay-put) until a due process hearing can take place.

At the meeting, explain that Sally is not being successful in the less restrictive setting and the team feels it would be in her best interest to be in a more restrictive setting. If

the mother still wishes to revoke consent, then fill out the paperwork at the meeting to dismiss the child.

I did not learn this. I would call the special education department in my school or district for further instruction. (This is an okay answer).

36) Steven has had difficulties in reading throughout his school years. His grades are poor as a result of his inability to read. Steven's teachers have just started the RtI process with him. They are in the middle of their second Tier 2 intervention, as the first intervention did not even start to close the learning gap. Steven's father has come in for a conference with his teachers. During the conference he requests an evaluation for Steven, and hands the teacher the request in writing. The teacher brings you the letter and asks you to speak with the father.

What do you tell the father?

Explain the RtI process to Steven's dad and let him know Steven is currently in the intervention stage. Assure him that you will keep him updated on Steven's progress. Tell him that the school will concurrently initiate an evaluation, but will continue with the RtI process at the same time.

Explain the RtI process to Steven's dad and let him know Steven is currently in the intervention stage. Assure him that you will keep him updated on Steven's progress. Tell him that the school no longer evaluates using batteries of tests with the school psychologist as a means for determining if a child needs special education and related services.

Explain the RtI process to Steven's dad and let him know Steven is currently in the intervention stage. Assure him that you will keep him updated in Steven's progress. If he is adamant about testing, then discontinue the RtI process and initiate a psycho-educational evaluation with the school psychologist.

I did not learn this. I would call the special education department in my school or district for further instruction.

37) Please mark where you received the majority of your information for the principle of Parent Participation. Please mark only one.

academic coursework

district in-services

- self taught
- on the job
- I never learned this

Thank You!

Thank you for taking the survey. Your responses are very important to us.

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