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Study of Middle School Administrators' Perceptions of the Provisions of Services Provided to Students with Special Needs

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A STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE

PROVISIONS OF SERVICES PROVIDED TO STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

by

VERONICE FELTON

(Under the Direction of Walter S. Polka)

ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this quantitative study was to compare the perceptions of middle school administrators from four Georgia school districts regarding three policy areas: effective strategies; support for educational change; and inclusive education. Two school districts comprised Group 1: one urban and one rural school district that met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Two school districts comprised Group 2: one urban and one rural school district that did not meet AYP. Middle school administrators' perceptions of inclusion were collected through the use of an Inclusive Education Survey and analyzed using descriptive statistics and a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to answer the research questions and to determine whether significant differences existed between the means of urban and rural districts that met AYP and that did not meet AYP. ANOVA analysis also determined the extent of demographic factors that influenced the strategies of administrators to promote effective inclusion of students with special needs for the three policy areas.

A Scheffe's test was applied for post hoc analysis ($p < .05$). Descriptive statistics were used to describe demographic data of age, gender, level of education, and years of experience as a middle school principal. Means of demographic data for administrators

were run for the three policy areas: effective strategies, support for educational change, and inclusive education.

Hypothesis One revealed that younger administrators were more receptive and open to the three policy areas than older administrators. Significant differences were found for administrators with advanced degrees in effective strategies statement of making modifications for students who need adaptations to benefit from a particular instructional environment. Hypothesis Two revealed significant differences for the variable effective strategies for students with disabilities. No other differences were found for the remaining questions for effective strategies for students with disabilities. Hypothesis Three revealed a significant difference in the variable support for educational change for inclusion of students with disabilities. Hypothesis Four revealed no significant differences in inclusive education for students with disabilities on any of the statements. Overall, middle school administrators were supportive of students with disabilities in all three policy areas regardless of their AYP status.

INDEX WORDS: Effective strategies; Support for educational change; Inclusive education; Middle school administrators; Inclusion; Principal leadership; differentiated strategies for inclusion; Least restrictive environment; Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

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VERONICE FELTON

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DEDICATION

In recognition of their love and encouragement, I dedicate this dissertation to my family

Darrin, Jennifer and Jenniya Felton, Gail Sims, Gean, Devere and Davin

Sambrone-Darkins, Debra Ann Whatley, Louise Hughes,

Annie and Jennifer Felton and

Christopher Glenn, "The Contender".

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the movement toward inclusive education, general education classrooms have included an increasing number of students with mild disabilities (e.g., emotional and behavioral disorders, learning disabilities, mild mental disabilities) (U. S. Department of Education, 1996). The guiding principle of this movement is the provision of equitable educational opportunities for all students, including those with severe disabilities, with needed supplementary aids and support services, in age-appropriate general education classes in their neighborhood schools (National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion, 1994).

The goal of education is to educate all children, including students with special needs. In the wake of education reforms in special education over the past few decades, inclusion is one of the areas in education that is gaining the most attention. In a time of social reform and No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, inclusion has received considerable attention (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004). Under the provisions of NCLB, children with special needs must be educated in an inclusive education environment in the general education classroom with appropriate support in schools and communities (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Janko, Schwartz, Sandall, Anderson, & Cottam, 1997; Odom, 2000; Peck, Odom, & Bricker, 1993). Inclusion focuses on providing services to students in the regular classroom, rather than pulling students out of regular classrooms to receive special services (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004).

For a decade, the focus in education has been on inclusion and full inclusion. Some advocates of inclusion support the full inclusion model as the most appropriate

model to use, which means that all students with special needs would be taught in regular classes. Providing the least restrictive environment as a delivery model is considered the regular classroom inclusion model (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004). The least restrictive environment requires that students be placed in the environment where they can be the most successful (Green, 2004; Robertson & Valentine, 1998).

This study examined the attitudes of middle school administrators in urban and rural school districts that met AYP compared with school districts that did not meet AYP, toward inclusion in three areas of effective strategies, educational change, and inclusive education. This study sought to help school districts better understand how they provide for students with special needs in the least restrictive environment as mandated in the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 and further mandated through the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), passed in 1990 and reviewed in 1997 and 2004. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) requires districts to serve students with special needs in the least restrictive environment so that they are integrated with their non-special needs peers as much as possible.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to compare four school districts' Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) academic performance status and to determine the perceptions of middle school administrators regarding three policy areas: effective strategies for inclusion of students with special needs; support for educational change to promote inclusion of students with special needs. Two school districts comprised Group 1: one urban and one rural school district that met AYP. Two school districts comprised Group 2: one urban and one rural school district that did not meet AYP. Middle school

administrators' perceptions of inclusion were collected through the use of an Inclusive

Education Survey.

Statement of the Problem

Research indicates that inclusion continues to be one of the controversial issues in

American education (Richardson & Jording, 1999). With inclusion, students with

disabilities are placed in general education classrooms because it is thought that they will

learn best there. The movement towards the inclusion of students with special needs,

regardless of the severity of the disability, to the general education classroom has caused

numerous questions about the roles and responsibilities of administrators in providing an

appropriate education for all students (Daane et al., 2002). Since inclusion requires the

collaboration between teachers and principals, it is imperative that principals' and

assistant principals' perceptions are recognized by policymakers (Daane et al., 2002).

Principal leadership is pivotal in implementing educational opportunities for all

students (Sage & Burello, 1994; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams,

2000). The relationship between principal leadership and special education has not

received much attention until recently. The research of inclusion in the leadership

literature is relatively small (Educational Research Services, 1998, 2000; National

Association of Elementary School Principals, 2001b; Institute for Educational

Leadership, 2000; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). This

research provided support for the continued need for special education to provide support

for students with special needs by individualizing instruction and at the same time

showing potential benefits for students with special needs. This study was significant

because implications for determining the impact of inclusion as both an exemplary

practice and mandated practice served as the impetus for improvements in the school district for students with disabilities. The results were used to improve the quality of educational services for students with special needs within the general educational setting as well as increasing sensitivity among administrators on the importance of inclusion.

As a lead teacher for special education, the school and the administrative team where I am employed decided to use the full inclusion model because the school did not make overall improvement in reading and mathematics for three consecutive years. Special education students did not make improvement in mathematics. This school is a Title I school where the majority of students are poor and approximately 14% of students in this school are students with special needs. The administrator of this school examined the data and created a special committee to examine reasons why students with special needs were not succeeding. Upon the initiative and leadership of the administrator, the committee decided to use the school reform of full inclusion for students with special needs. The full inclusion model consists of students with special needs being placed in regular classrooms with other students. Identifying categories that are in full inclusion are mild intellectual disabilities (MID), specific learning disabilities (SLD), other health impairment (OHI), autism (A), emotionally and behavioral disorders (EBD), and orthopedically impaired (OI). Eighteen students who participate in a modified curriculum/Independent Living are placed in regular classrooms on a modified basis. These students' intellectual abilities range from the lower end of MID to moderate intellectual disabilities (MOID).

Twelve collaborative teachers or resource teachers of special education work individually and monitor special education students in regular classrooms. The resource

teacher plans and implements instructional plans with the regular classroom teacher.

These teachers modify assignments and tests in order for students with special needs to

understand and grasp concepts taught by the regular education teacher. Resource teachers

may place students in small groups to administer tests, assist them with classroom work

to help them get caught up with regular education students. Resource teachers also assist

regular education students to provide flexible grouping in small group assistance to

students who are struggling. Flexible grouping consists of students with special needs and

regular education students without disabilities who may benefit from small group

instruction (Swanson, 1999).

Differences in the full inclusion model and the pull out model are: time and

frequency of small group or individual assistance. The full inclusion model involves

students being pulled out only when the learning situation warrants the pull out in order

for the student to work with the collaborative teacher. In this model, students do not

spend the entire period with the teacher and time is not scheduled on a daily basis. The

resource model consists of students remaining in a separate classroom with other children

of similar special needs for the entire period and every day. Each student returns to

general education after appropriate "segment" time in the special education resource

room.

The administrator provides staff development on collaborative team work, how to

make the full inclusion model work, and examines on a regular basis the needs of

students with special needs. The administrator provides data to staff, interprets the data,

and seeks input from faculty regarding the needs of students with special needs. The State

of Georgia Department of Education has adopted the Georgia Performance Standards

(GPS) and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 purports that all students must meet these standards in content areas, including students with special needs. Placing all students with special needs in the full inclusion model of regular classroom instruction will allow them the opportunity to be exposed to GPS and meet standards on the Criterion Referenced Competency Test on grade level. Therefore, these students' performance in the content areas of English/language arts, reading, mathematics, social studies, and science on standardized measures may increase.

Research Questions

The following research questions were examined in this study:

1. To what extent do demographic factors influence the perceptions of middle school administrators in school districts that met AYP and did not meet AYP promote the three policy areas: effective strategies, support for educational change, and inclusive education for the inclusion of students with disabilities?

2. To what extent do middle school administrators in school districts that met AYP and did not meet AYP promote effective strategies for inclusion of students with disabilities?

3. To what extent do middle school administrators in school districts that met AYP and did not meet AYP provide support for educational change to promote inclusion of students with disabilities?

4. To what extent do middle school administrators in school districts that met AYP and did not meet AYP promote inclusive education for students with disabilities?

Significance of the Study

Children with unique learning needs should have an equal opportunity for learning as other children. Administrators' leadership paves the way for enhanced learning for all students, especially students with disabilities (Sage & Burello, 1994; Walther-Thomas et al., 2000). Little attention has been focused on the relationship between principal leadership and special education until recently. Children with special needs and special education teachers have not been the focus of research related to the roles and responsibilities of principals in effective schools (Educational Research Services, 1998; NAESP, 2001b; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). For the past ten years, research has emerged to determine whether a significant relationship exists between principal leadership and the needs of children with disabilities (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). Thus, this study provided information on middle school administrators' perceptions of providing services to students with special needs based on three policy areas in school districts that met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and did not meet AYP.

This research provided support for the continued need for special education and its particular focus on individualizing instruction while at the same time, showing the potential benefits of inclusion for students with special needs. This study was significant because of AYP implications for determining the impact of inclusion as both an exemplary practice and a mandated practice on the perceptions of middle school administrators. In addition, this study provided information to general educators, special educators, parents, administrators and policy makers regarding the AYP status and inclusionary practices in the general classroom. This study helped to determine whether

students with special needs benefited from being fully included in the general education classroom regardless of the severity of the disability. The results of the level of acceptance of these students and/or reasons for negative perceptions helped in providing more positive outcomes for these students.

The results of this study were discussed and/or used for future research in inclusive educational program for students with special needs. Inclusion should be approached on a student by population student basis. The positive aspects of being a part of the school community were all reasons for including students with special needs in the regular education environment. The results of this study were subsequently used to improve the quality of services for students with special needs in the regular classroom, while increasing sensitivity among principals and teachers to the importance of inclusion.

Research indicates that inclusion continues to be one of the controversial issues in American education (Richardson & Jording, 1999; Southwest Educational Regional Laboratory-SEDL, 1995). With inclusion, students with special needs are placed in general education classrooms because it is thought that they will learn best there (Green, 2004). This study will determine the perceptions of middle school principals and assistant principals regarding the implementation of inclusion. Richardson and Jording (1999) found that administrators spend very little time planning for inclusion implementation. They also reported that there are substantial differences in opinions regarding inclusion implementation. Further, participants stated that they are less than enthusiastic about the assistance they have received from resource personnel who should have assisted them in implementing inclusion. Finally, the participants acknowledge the need for additional training and staff development for all involved regarding inclusion.

How effective is inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms? Empirical research (Galis & Tanner, 1995) is sparse on administrators' perceptions of inclusion in school districts that met AYP and did not meet AYP. Does educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms have quantifiable benefits for students with and without special needs? These questions should be researched to include measuring student progress on Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals in regular classrooms and in pullout situations. Focus groups and interviews may be held with general education students regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in their classes to gauge their feelings on inclusion. In addition, studies using control and experimental groups to measure aggressive or inappropriate behaviors of students with disabilities over time in regular and pullout situations. Studies should measure students with special needs interactions with other students over time. However complex and situational these studies would be, they would provide baseline data for addressing inclusion as a viable mode for providing services to students with special needs as opposed to the emotional appeal of inclusion that is reflected in the majority of current literature (Galis & Tanner, 1995).

This study compared four school districts' Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) academic performance status and examined the perceptions of middle school administrators regarding three policy areas: effective strategies for inclusion of students with special needs; support for educational change to promote inclusion of students with special needs; and inclusive education for students with special needs. The current school climate underscored the need for answers to questions about inclusion from the professionals who were the providers of service. Administrators' viewpoints from school

districts that met AYP and did not meet AYP need to be identified and documented. One of the assumptions is the importance of gathering information from people who have the responsibility to implement inclusion. It is an assumption to conclude that administrators' experience and insight is vital in shaping future educational trends for all students.

Many advocates of school reform assumed that support existed for inclusion among those educators who would be the primary change agents, namely principals, assistant principals, general education teachers, and special education teachers. Little data exist to support this assumption, and the number of critics matches supporters in the literature. Teacher unions and many general education professional organizations voiced opposition to inclusion (Glass, 1996). Consequently, this study is a robust procedure to generate information about the beliefs and practices of middle school administrators representing four school districts in Georgia.

McDonnell and Hardman (1989) examined the role of all school personnel in the desegregation of students with disabilities. They designated regular education principals as key players in the quality of special education services and the degree of successful integration efforts and concluded that the attitudes of the principals appear to be even more important than their actions. The literature on the role of the principal in effecting needed modifications (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004; McDonnell and Hardman, 1989; Riley, 1993; Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1989) to accommodate inclusion offered some insights into the process of change. Riley (1993) underscored the role of the building level principal and teachers in any change process and the need for input from them into proposed changes: "I've learned . . . that the bottom-up approach works when you involve the nuts-and-bolts people. Who knows better than site school administrators

and teachers the kind of changes that have the best chance of improving education?" (p. 5). Burrello (1991) stated that effective principals make no distinction between the expectations set for special and general education students, staff, and programs.

Middle schools have traditionally been organized differently than elementary schools with the delivery of services centered on team approaches (Glass, 1996). The impact of inclusion on middle schools might be expected to produce a new and different set of challenges than those presented in the elementary schools. Investigations of middle school administrators and the resulting beliefs and practices in relation to inclusionary practices may be an addition to this sensitive body of knowledge.

The Setting

The structure of most middle school programs facilitates professional collaboration and peer support, important ingredients for successful inclusion. Interdisciplinary team organization is a distinguishing characteristic and foundation for the effective middle school level. Interdisciplinary teaming allows the same group of teachers to work with the same group of students that gives the team of teachers' flexibility and autonomy to create the most efficient learning environment for each student in the group (Robertson & Valentine, 1998).

Four school districts were recruited to participate in this study: two urban and two rural school districts. Initially, 25 middle school principals and 25 middle school assistant principals were anticipated as participants in this study. However, urban and rural school districts are generally small in administrative population. Given the small sample size and the return rate of voluntary participants who returned surveys, 15 urban middle school

administrators and 15 rural middle school administrators for a total of 30 middle school

administrators who voluntarily participated in this study (see Table 1).

Table 1

Return Rate of Surveys

School Districts	Middle School Administrators
Urban 1	10
Urban 2	5
Rural 1	13
Rural 2	2
Total	30

Georgia's Single Statewide Accountability System (SSAS) includes an

Accountability Profile for every public school and school system in the State. The

Accountability Profile consists of the following: (1) an absolute performance

determination based on the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP); (2) a Performance Index

based on annual growth in academic achievement as measured by statewide assessments;

and (3) Performance Highlights that provide recognition for schools and school systems

based on academic related indicators (Georgia Office of School Accountability, 2006).

Limitations

Based on different definitions of inclusion, a limitation of this study is its focus on

four school districts (two urban and two rural) in Georgia. In addition, middle school

principals and assistant principals as administrators are participants. Although this may

weaken the scope of the research, it was deemed necessary to restrict the sample in order to reduce the number of variables and thereby provide clearer results.

Another limitation results from the assumption that all administrators may not work under similar conditions. In practice, an administrator's level of control and ability to experiment may be influenced by legal requirements, district policies, and other specific issues that vary by school setting. Many of the classrooms in middle schools may not be using the full model, only partial inclusion for students with special needs. Because the pull-out model is a modified version of the full model, the results of this study cannot be generalized to a population where all students have been included in general education classrooms. The results of this study may not be generalized to the full inclusion model.

Another limitation is that this study is the limited number of a specific number of middle schools in two school districts that met AYP and two school districts that did not meet AYP selected for this study. Therefore, this study may have limited the ability for the results to be generalized to similar middle schools using the full inclusion and pull-out model in other districts in Georgia.

Finally, administrators' responses are based on different definitions of inclusion that may affect their perceptions of the three policy areas: (1) effective strategies; (2) educational change; and (3) inclusive education. This study assumes that the participants will be honest in their responses and not merely saying what others want to hear.

<center>Delimitations</center>

Due to the small sample size of 30 administrators in these four school districts, the results may not be considered significant; however certain themes emerged in the

three policy areas of effective strategies for meeting students' needs, support for educational change, and inclusive education. Based on the sample size, the results of this study cannot be generalized to another sample similar in size in four selected school districts in Georgia nor can the results be generalized to elementary and high school administrators. The results of this study of urban and rural school districts cannot be generalized to suburban and metropolitan school districts in Georgia and the nation. Utilizing all middle schools in the state of Georgia, including middle schools in four school districts would require the researcher to conduct a more in-depth study and larger sample population across school districts throughout Georgia. The researcher desired to limit the study to middle schools that met AYP and did not meet AYP for students with disabilities within four selected urban and rural school districts.

Procedures

The research design for this study was a mixed design of quantitative and qualitative in nature. Data were collected through the use of a survey entitled "Inclusive Education Survey" that includes demographic information. Research questions were analyzed using the following analyses: Research Question One using demographic data (age, level of education, and years of experience as a middle school administrators) with the three policy areas (effective strategies, support for educational change, and inclusive education) were analyzed using descriptive statistics in means and standard deviations; Research Questions Two, Three, and Four were analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test for significant differences among the means of the three policy areas of effective strategies, educational change, and inclusive education. Perceptions of middle school administrators in school districts that met AYP and school districts that did

not meet AYP were compared. Scheffe's test is a post hoc analysis that was run after the

ANOVA analysis. The alpha level of significance was accepted at $p < .05$. Scheffe's test

revealed whether significant differences existed among middle school administrators in

school districts that met AYP and school districts that did not meet AYP. The researcher

hand delivered surveys to each school district and schools. Upon the completion of

surveys, a designated individual at each school collected the surveys and gave them to the

researcher who personally picked them up.

<div align="center">Definitions</div>

Without a legal definition, inclusion has many meanings, depending on which

group, or individual is presenting a point of view (Price, Mayfield, McFadden, & Marsh,

2001). Inclusion is a concern of educators across all grade levels. Therefore, consensus

may be difficult to reach because inclusion is applied differently in educational settings

(Smelter, Rasch, & Yudewitz, 1996). This study will use the definition of inclusion that is

presented in this section.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP stands for adequate yearly progress. It

represents the annual academic performance targets in reading and mathematics that the

State, school districts, and schools must reach to be considered on track for 100%

proficiency by school year 2013-14 (NEA, 2007).

Did Not Meet AYP. Did Not Meet AYP indicate whether a school, a Local

Education Agency, or the state made AYP for 2007. The possible values are "Yes" or

"No." The report displays a "No" only if the school, LEA, or state means results for at

least one or more criteria were below the 2007 targets (NEA, 2007).

Full inclusion. Full inclusion is the process and practice of educating students with special needs in the general education classroom in neighborhood schools with the supports and accommodations needed. In full inclusion, students spend one hundred per cent of the school day in the general education classroom regardless of the severity of the disability (Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxen, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004).

Inclusion. Inclusion refers to the process of placing students with special needs in the same classes or programs as their typically developing peers and providing them with the necessary services and supports (Winter, 1999; Zemil & Ryan, 2004). *Inclusive education* is one of the policy areas that was studied and was used interchangeably with the term *inclusion* with a similar definition as indicated here.

Inclusion without classroom supports. Inclusion without classroom supports is additional time outside of the classroom to support the inclusion of students (Winter, 1999; Zemil & Ryan, 2004).

Mainstreaming. Mainstreaming is the practice of removing children from their special education classes for part of the day and placing them in general education classes (McLean & Hanline, 1990; Price, Mayfield, McFadden, & Marsh, 2001). Mainstreaming is not necessarily synonymous with inclusion or may be called partial inclusion. The word implies that the student with disabilities receives a part (often, the majority) of his or her education in a separate, self-contained special education classroom (National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, 1995).

Met AYP. Met AYP indicates whether a school, an LEA, or the state made AYP for 2007. The possible values are "Yes" or "No." The report displays a "Yes" only if the

school, Local Education Agency, or state met all of its AYP criteria for 2007, including

requirements for numerically significant subgroups (NEA, 2007).

Partial inclusion. In this delivery model of special education, the children are

included with their non-special needs peers for a portion of the school day. These times

are usually when academics do not interfere with their functioning and may include

lunch, recess, physical education, art, music, recreational therapy (Gallaudet University,

2004; The Cooke Center for Learning & Development, 2004).

Pull-out model. The pull-out model is placing students in a particular setting, or

providing them with a particular set of activities in a group without at the same time,

changing the content and the instructional strategies (Council for Exceptional Children,

2001b).

Subgroup. A subgroup is defined as numerically significant for percent proficient

if it has 100 or more students with valid scores or 50 or more students with valid scores

who make up at least 15% of the total valid scores. For the purpose of this study, the

subgroup for AYP is students with disabilities who receive special education services and

have a valid disability code (NEA, 2007).

Chapter Summary

Chapter I presented the purpose of the study, statement of the problem, and

research questions. The significance of the study, the setting for school districts,

limitations, delimitations, methodology, and definitions were also presented. Chapter II

presents the educational reform and restructuring of inclusion. The review of literature

inclustds research on inclusion and the least restrictive environment for children with

special needs, benefits of inclusion, service delivery models to support inclusion

programs, and inclusion roles of teachers. Effective strategies for inclusion are presented.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to compare four school districts' Adequate

Yearly Progress (AYP) academic performance status to determine the perceptions of

middle school principals and assistant principals regarding three policy areas: (1)

effective strategies for meeting the needs of all students; (2) the support in the school

district for educational change; and (3) inclusive education. Two school districts

comprised Group 1: one urban and one rural school district that met AYP. Two school

districts comprised Group 2: one urban and one rural school district that did not meet

AYP. The perceptions of middle school administrators within these two groups were

compared in the aforementioned policy areas. The overarching question was whether

differences existed between middle school administrators' perceptions of the provisions

of services to students in three policy areas, including effective strategies, educational

change, and inclusive education for AYP status for students with disabilities

No Child Left Behind Act and Adequate Yearly Progress

On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

(NCLB) that reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). NCLB

significantly raises expectations for states, local school districts, and schools in that all

students will meet or exceed state standards in reading and mathematics within twelve

years. NCLB requires all States, including the State of Georgia, to establish state

academic standards and a state testing system that meet federal requirements. Georgia

received final approval of its state accountability plan from the US Department of

Education on May 19, 2003, and revisions to the plan were approved by the federal

government on June 7, 2004 (Georgia Department of Education, 2006).

The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 requires that Georgia

determines whether or not each public school and local educational agency (LEA) is

making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP refers to the minimum level of

improvement that states, school districts and schools must achieve each year as they

progress toward the ESEA goal of having all students reaching the proficient level on

state tests by 2014.

AYP is one of the cornerstones of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

(NCLB). It is an annual measure of student participation and achievement of statewide

assessments and other academic indicators. Accountability is key to NCLB - the State of

Georgia, each local school district, and each individual school will be held accountable

for the academic success of students. The federal law requires that each State set high

academic standards and implement an extensive student testing program which is aligned

with standards and which measures students' achievement based on the standards. AYP

requires schools to meet standards in three areas: Test Participation (for both

Mathematics and Reading/English Language Arts), Academic Performance (for both

Mathematics and Reading/English Language Arts), and a Second Indicator. AYP holds

each local school district and each individual school accountable for the academic

success of students (Georgia Department of Education, 2006; NEA, 2007).

Three conditions are required for making AYP in a given school year. First, at

least 95% of students are tested in reading/English language arts and mathematics, for all

students and for all subgroups of 45 or more students must have a participation rate of

95% or above on selected state assessments in (Georgia Department of Education, 2006; NEA, 2007). Second, at least meet the minimum annual target, for meeting/exceeding standards for State's Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) in reading and mathematics for all groups and all subgroups of 45 or more students (Georgia Department of Education, 2006; NEA, 2007). Finally, each school, as a whole and as subgroups, must meet the standard or show progress on a Second Indicator. For Second Indicator, the minimum group size is 40 or 10% of the students enrolled in AYP grades, whichever is greater (with a 75 student cap) (Georgia Department of Education, 2006; NEA, 2007).

Under NCLB, public schools and districts that do not meet AYP in the first year face no consequences. However, the school and/or district should develop/review its school and/or school district improvement plan. Schools that do not meet AYP in the same subject for two or more consecutive years are placed in Needs Improvement status with escalating consequences for each successive year. Same subject is defined as two years of not making Reading/English Language Arts (participation or academic performance) or two years of not making mathematics (participation or academic performance) or two years of not making second indicator (Georgia Department of Education, 2006; NEA, 2007).

A Needs Improvement school is simply a school that has been identified as needing to improve in specific areas. Needs Improvement schools are not failing schools. Schools that do not make AYP for two or more consecutive years in the same subject are in need of improvement or are simply under-performing (Georgia Department of Education, 2006; NEA, 2007).

Educational Reform and Restructuring

Educational reform requires fundamental change in the organizational structures of schools and in the roles and responsibilities of teachers and administrators to be successful in the inclusion of students with special needs in general classrooms. Change in schools can be difficult given school structures that promote traditional practices and provide little support for creativity and innovation (Bullough, 1995; Klinger, Arguelles, Hughes, & Vaughn, 2001; McLeskey & Waldron, 2000; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Pechman and King (1993) found in a restructuring effort of six middle schools were difficult to change traditional habits and customs ingrained in teachers and outmoded leadership styles.

Based on the challenges of school reform and restructuring, many researchers have focused on identifying ways to promote school change. Consequently, a growing body of research provides insight into the change process (Fullan, 1991, 2001; McAdams, 1997; Moffett, 2000; Shields & Knapp, 1997; Wagner, 2001). Thus, this research has been helpful in promoting change in inclusive practices (Fisher, Sax, & Grove, 2000; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995).

While teachers and administrators may initially be enthusiastic about change, sustaining the change process is often difficult (Burnstein, Sears, Wilcoxen, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004). Change in school practices requires strong support systems containing key personnel and resources committed to the change process (Fullan, 2001; McLeskey & Waldron, 2000; Wagner, 2001). First, administrative support, at both district and school levels, is critical in changing organizational structures of schools to promote inclusive practices (Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996). Second, resources are

needed to support the substantial efforts of district staff in reorganization, internal coordination, and shared planning (Fullan, 2001; Miles & Louis 1990; Wagner, 1993, 2001). Teachers have consistently reported lack of support as the key barrier to successful inclusion, noting particularly time, training, personnel, materials, class size, and severity of special needs (Deno, Foegen, Robinson, & Epsin, 1996; McLeskey & Waldron, 2000; Roach, 1995; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995).

School reform is challenging is challenging and inclusion is one of the more complex changes within educational reform (Fullan, 1991, 2001; Fullan & Miles, 1992; McLeskey & Pugach, 1995). Kavale and Forness (2000) concurred, "inclusion is not something that simply happens, but something that requires careful thought and preparation…implemented with proper attitudes, accommodations, and adaptations in place" (p. 287).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997) was reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 (Smith, 2005). The law was passed in November 2004 and signed by President Bush in December 2004 (Council for Exceptional Children-CEC, 2004). The IDEIA (2004), still referred to as to IDEA, contains some changes, but may not be that significant according to Smith (2005). When Public Law 94-142 (Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 1975) was passed, the state of special education changed dramatically from what it is today. Congress found that up to one million of the estimated eight million children with special needs in America were excluded from public school services, and another three million children were being served inappropriately.

Since P. L. 94-142 was passed, several reauthorizations and changes were made in the law. Changes included all children with special needs must be referred, evaluated, and determined to be eligible or not; all eligible students must have Individual Education Plans (IEP); and all must be provided with a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment (Green, 2004).

The reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 included a name change with the word improvement inserted making it the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. Congress has partially funded IDEA at a rate up to 40% of excess costs for educating children with special needs. The law authorizes Congress to fund IDEA for $12.36 billion for fiscal year 2005 and an additional $2.3 billion each year through 2011, when full funding will be achieved (CEC, 2004). Other changes of IDEA 2004 are that:

1. special education teachers meet the highly qualified mandate introduced in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001);

2. deleting the requirement that IEPs include short-term objectives, except for students who are assessed using alternative assessment procedures that are aligned with alternate achievement standards (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 2006), which will result in a reduction of paperwork for teachers and paraprofessionals.

3. providing flexibility in attendance at IEP meetings by permitting team members not to attend if their area of expertise is not needed to limit the number of times that complete teams have to get together to develop and modify IEPs;

4. providing parental notice and consent and right to a due process hearing wherein parents are given consent prior to the initial evaluation and placement of their child in special education to reduce the number of complaints, due process hearing requests, and court actions;

5. providing disciplinary procedures for students with special needs through a manifestation hearing to determine whether a relationship exists between inappropriate behavior and the disability or suspension up to 10 days may be imposed;

6. major offenses including weapons possession, use of drugs, or inflicting serious bodily injury on someone, the child may be removed from the school for up to 45 days without regard to whether the behavior is a manifestation of the disability; and

7. reducing the percentage of students that are over-identified with special needs since schools may use a child's response to intervention such as reading programs as part of their eligibility process (Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, 2004) and if the child responds positively, then the child is not eligible under IDEA (pp. 315-318).

Inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms may not be working as some would hoped it to do, however IDEA (2004) is the law that supports the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Much research should be conducted to determine the effectiveness of inclusion. While the term inclusion is typically not found in any federal law or regulations, it is used inconsistently in the educational area because its definition is not conclusive (Hines, 2001; Price, Mayfield,

McFadden, & Marsh, 2001). The term inclusion is used to mean the integration of students with special needs into regular classroom. Inclusion has become a standard term used in many court cases (Hines, 2001; Price et al., 2001).

Not only is inclusion used in court cases to apply to students with disabilities but school districts throughout the nation apply different definitions of inclusion as they implement inclusive education. School districts also vary in the amount and type of support provided to the general education and special education teachers. Hence, these variables of amount and type of support are not easily controlled for research purposes thus making empirical research difficult (Hines, 2001). No comparative data are available on special education students' academic gains, graduation rates, preparation for post-secondary schooling, work, or involvement in community living based on their placement in inclusive v. general education classroom environments. Therefore, an accurate comparison between separate programming and inclusive programming cannot be done (Wisconsin Education Association Council, 2001).

In the review of the literature, terms such as inclusion, full inclusion, integration, full integration, and inclusive education are frequently used interchangeably. All of these terms are used to describe the practice and philosophy that students with special needs are provided full participation in regular education classrooms. This study investigated the three policy areas of effective strategies, support for educational change, and inclusive education. Inclusive education was used interchangeably with inclusion in this study.

Brief History of the Principal's Role in Special Education

Until the 1970s, the principal's job was quite clearly, although narrowly, defined as building managers and student disciplinarians. During the 1970s, principals' role

began evolving because of the emerging research on effective schools (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Effective principals developed learning communities that emphasized high academic standards and expectations (Brookover & Schneider, 1978; Weber, 1971); shared leadership and collaboration; continuity of high-quality instructional programs; and effective communication (Marcus, 1976; Wellisch, MacQueen, Carriere, & Duck, 1978). As principals' role and responsibilities changed, the term instructional leadership emerged to describe a broad set of roles and responsibilities that addressed many of the workplace needs of successful teachers (Brieve, 1972; Peterson & Deal, 1998).

Principal Leadership and Special Education

Research has demonstrated that principals who focus on instructional issues, demonstrate administrative support for special education, and provide high-quality professional development for teachers produce enhanced outcomes for students with disabilities and for others at risk for academic failure (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000; Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001; Kearns, Kleinert, & Clayton, 1998; Klinger, Arguelles, Hughes, & Vaughn, 2001). One of the greatest challenges in schools is the lack of qualified special education teachers (U. S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2001).

As performance expectations for all students continue to rise, many educators are poorly prepared to provide effective academic support for students with disabilities. It is estimated that as many as half of all new special education teachers leave the field within the first three years as a result of inadequate administrative support, lack of preparation, complex job responsibilities, and overwhelming paperwork requirements (Billingsley & Cross, 1991; Boe, Barkanic, & Leow, 1999; Embick, 2001; Miller, Brownell, & Smith,

1999). Consequently, many states and local school systems must employ individuals to serve as emergency special education teachers who lack the essential knowledge and skills needed to meet the complex challenges they face. A study by Gersten and colleagues (2001) reported that building level support from principals and general education teachers had strong effects on "virtually all critical aspects of special education teachers' working conditions" (p. 557). As a result of growing concerns about special education attrition, various professional organizations currently focus on the importance of the principal's role in effective special education (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003).

<div align="center">Staff Development for Principals and Special Education</div>

Although principals do not need to be experts on disability and special education, they must however have the fundamental knowledge and skills that will enable them to perform essential special education leadership tasks. Research suggests that many 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 & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Katsiyannis, Conderman, & Franks, 1996; Parker & Day, 1997).

As a result, effective principals need to develop a working knowledge about disabilities and the unique learning and behavioral challenges various conditions present. Principals need a thorough understanding of the laws that protect the educational rights of students with disabilities. Without a solid understanding of IDEA and NCLB, principals cannot administer special education programs effectively (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; NAESP, 2001a; Valente, 1998). As instructional leaders, principals must understand and facilitate the use of effective research-based practices (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, Sage

& Burrello, 1994; Turnbull & Cilley, 1999). Principals who understand effective practices and recognize the instructional demands that classroom teachers and special education teachers face can provide more appropriate support to these professionals (Gersten et al., 2001; Gonzalez, 1996; Wald, 1998).

Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, and Williams (2000) noted that schools become more inclusive as they become more collaborative. Effective leaders know how to build positive relationships that increase the social capital of their schools (Coleman, 1990). By creating and supporting relational networks that facilitate dialogue, support, and sharing among teachers, administrators, students, and families, the social capital grows as stakeholders work together for the benefit of all learners, including students with disabilities and others at risk (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; Gersten et al., 2001; Miller et al., 1999).

Given the complexity of federal and state rules and regulations and limited special education experience, it is not surprising that many principals feel poorly prepared for these complex responsibilities. Principals report the need for additional knowledge and skills to help them develop and implement appropriate programs and support systems for these students (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003).

Principal Shortage and the Impact on Special Education

Given the complexity of the principal's job, increasing expectations for both student and professional performance, and increased accountability and public scrutiny, it is not surprising that fewer teacher leaders are choosing career paths that result in administrative positions (Barker, 1996; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1996, 1997). Although the number of individuals holding

administrative licenses or endorsements exceeds the number of position vacancies each year, recruitment and retention of qualified and certified administrators are among the greatest challenges confronting school systems across the nation (Bell, 2001; Ferrandino, 2000; Gates, Ross, & Brewer, 2001).

The U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (1996-1997) predicted that the need for school administrators would increase by 10% to 20% within the next decade. In addition,, the National Association of Elementary School Principals estimated that approximately 40% of the country's 93,200 principals would retire by 2008 (Doud & Keller, 1998). The shortage of qualified personnel interested in administrative leadership has forced many school districts to employ uncertified individuals as building principals. In another approach to the critical shortage, professionals from outside the field of education were recruited to become school principals. Other school districts are resorting to implementing alternate principal licensure programs as a way to address the shortage of principals (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003).

The shortage of qualified principals impacts the caliber of leadership in schools when school districts must resort to hiring non-certified and individuals who are not in the field of education. It is difficult for individuals with little or no prior experience in schools to understand and appreciate the diverse needs of learners. Even those with prior school experience who have little formal preparation for the role of principal rarely have adequate understanding of how to plan, coordinate, and deliver services to meet the needs of students with disabilities (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003).

Council for Exceptional Children (2001a) argues that the principal's role is pivotal in the improvement of educational opportunities of students with disabilities and

other learners at risk. If students with disabilities are to be properly served, principals must be supportive in the development of a school culture of inclusiveness (Burrello & Lashley, 1992; National Council on Disabilities, 1995; National Research Council, 1997; National Staff Development Council, 2001). A lack of administrative support is frequently cited as a primary reason why special education teachers leave their jobs. Clearly, the shortage of well-prepared, competent school principals has the potential to exacerbate the current nationwide shortage of special educators (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003).

<div align="center">Inclusion</div>

Inclusion means that all children should be given an equal opportunity to be educated in the same classrooms. The goal of inclusion means that children with disabilities should be educated together with children without disabilities (Price, Mayfield, McFadden, & Marsh, 2001). Inclusion opponents are not cognizant that many students in inclusive education benefit from these programs in regular classrooms. These opponents oppose inclusion and support exclusion of students with disabilities or even giftedness being placed in resource rooms or other types of environments. According to P. L. 101-476, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 1997, 2004), these opponents suggest that students with disabilities should be educated in the least restrictive environment as determined by assessment results and students' IEPs. Conversely, advocates of full inclusion believe that all children, including children with disabilities should be educated in regular classrooms with peers who do not have disabilities (Green, 2004; Price, Mayfield, McFadden, & Marsh, 2001).

Full Inclusion Model

Full inclusion model entails students with disabilities being placed in regular

classrooms where special services are available to support the effort (Biklen, 1992). Full

inclusion apparently has two opposing views: (a) the belief that special education should

be dismantled; and (b) special education should exist only in the regular classroom.

Advocates of full inclusion are sometimes referred to as radical inclusionists. These two

opposing views represent the debate about inclusion (Price, Mayfield, McFadden, &

Marsh, 2001). Mock and Kauffman (2005) suggest that the place of instruction, rather

than instruction itself, has become a central issue in the inclusion movement.

Partial Inclusion Model

Many secondary schools including middle and high schools use a partial inclusion

model, for it meets the needs of all students. Partial inclusion means that students are in

self-contained classrooms but participate in daily inclusion activities with their general

education peers (Green, 2004; Keegan, 2004).

The partial inclusion model addresses the following points:

1. There are a natural proportion of students with learning, and/or physical special

   needs at a school and assigned to general education classrooms.

2. The general education classroom should be age-appropriate for the students.

3. There is a special education classroom for those students who have problems with

   the inclusive classroom.

4. IEPs for students with learning, and/or physical disabilities should be written and

   implemented by both the regular and Special Education teacher, and support staff.

5. Students with learning, and/or physical disabilities should receive support from special education staff.

6. Mainstreaming should be the place for students who can meet the essential elements of their grade level beyond the inclusive classroom (Keegan, 2004, p. 6).

Research on Inclusion

Mittler (2000) stated that "Inclusion is not about placing children in mainstream schools but it is about changing schools to make them more responsive to the needs of all children" (p. vii). A survey of 408 elementary school principals was conducted by Praisner (2003) to investigate relationships regarding attitudes toward inclusion. This study focused on variables such as training and experience, and placement perceptions. The results indicated that one in five principals' attitudes toward inclusion were positive while most were uncertain. Positive experiences with students with special needs and exposure to special education concepts are associated with a more positive attitude toward inclusion. The results emphasize the importance of inclusionary practices that give principals positive experiences with students with special needs as well as provide principals with more specific training.

Watkins (2006) conducted a study in the ABC Unified School District in southern California to determine the attitudes and perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the inclusion of special education students in the mainstream environment at four comprehensive secondary schools. In addition, this study attempted to determine whether or not the district was ready to embrace inclusion based on the results. The results showed that the inclusion issue was greater at the middle schools than at the high schools. Administrators were most optimistic about students' ability to achieve more and

embrace inclusion. The most experienced teachers had the least optimistic view about special education students' ability to achieve more, but saw merit in inclusion for the purpose of the passage of the California High School Exit Exam. Nearly all teachers and administrators agreed that special education can be improved, and the majority of them agreed that ongoing training and support were important factors to achieving success.

Idol (2006) conducted a program evaluation of four elementary and four secondary schools to determine the degree of inclusion of students with special needs in general education classes: how similarities and differences in how special education services were offered; and the ways in which students with special needs were supported in the least restrictive environment. Qualitative research using personal interviews was conducted to determine the perceptions of classroom teachers, special education teachers, instructional assistants, and principals in each school regarding special education services. The findings revealed that educators were positive about educating students with special needs in general education settings. They were conservative about how to best do this, with many of them preferring to have the included students accompanied by a special education teacher or instructional assistant or continuing to have resource room services (Idol, 2006).

McDonnell, Brownell, and Wolery (2001) surveyed 500 preschool teachers and found that a majority view individualized intervention on specific goals was important for all children. In addition, these teachers wanted to receive all of the listed forms of assistance from special educators, and wanted special educators to be involved in collaborative roles in their classrooms.

Green (2004) examined the percentage of time that children with individualized education plans (IEPs) were removed from general education settings. Six years worth of data were gathered on 2, 020 students who had been identified as have either a learning, mental or behavior disability. The data set was analyzed for trends on average removal time during the six years and for trends across the six years using ethnic, gender, disability, grade level, and school district size as independent variables. Analyses were also done on grade level during the first year of the study to look at the effects of grade level over the six years. Results demonstrated that children in preschool and kindergarten during the first year of the study spent significantly more time in special education than students who were in first through third grades, fourth through sixth grades, and seventh grade and above. The least restrictive environment (LRE) in the first year of the study was similar to the LRE in the sixth year. Analyses using between groups measures demonstrated significant results on the demographic characteristics of district size, ethnic group, disability category, and grade levels. Trends showing more time in general education were limited to a few specific categories. The findings suggest that the best predictor of percentage of time removed from the general education setting after six years in a special education program was the LRE during the first year.

Benefits of Inclusion

Research findings also support the specific benefits of inclusion classrooms that utilize teaching teams for classroom instruction. Walther-Thomas, Bryant, and Land (1996) conducted a study of inclusion and teaming to assess collaboration between general education and special education staff and the subsequent affects on academic and social performance. Students with disabilities developed better self images, became less

critical and more motivated, and recognized their own academic and social strengths. Low achieving students showed academic and social skills improvements as well. Improvements were attributed to more teacher time and attention, reduced pupil-teacher ratios, and more opportunities for individual assistance.

A study conducted by Tichenor and Piechura-Couture (1998) examined parent perceptions of a team teaching inclusion classroom and found results similar to those listed above. The findings seemed to suggest that the parents were in favor of inclusive classrooms and they also reported increases in self-esteem, social skills, and academic achievement of their special needs children. They also commented on how the different teaching styles by the team benefited their children as it afforded diverse opportunities for learning. General education parents whose students participate in inclusion classrooms have also reported positive social and academic benefits for their children due to their involvement with persons with disabilities and the increase in instructional supports that are associated with team teaching in inclusion classrooms (as cited in Tichenor & Piechura-Couture, 1998).

Many case studies have reported individual success in implementing team teaching strategies with inclusion classrooms. Several school districts in Michigan have successfully implemented these types of inclusion programs thanks to the Michigan Inclusive Education Project (as cited in Rainforth & England, 1997). General education teachers and special education teachers in Menno Public School in South Dakota have also had great success in their team teaching and inclusion model (Bittner, 1995). An elementary teaching team at Tower Street School in Westerly, Rhode Island has experienced personal development through their program, as well as, academic success

from their students (Latz & Dogon, 1995). These studies provide a glimpse into the positive outcomes that are possible with the integration of diverse curriculums and teaching teams with a heterogeneous student environment.

Inclusion means students with special needs receive their entire academic curriculum in the general education program (Idol, 1997; Price, Mayfield, McFadden, & Marsh, 2001). Inclusion is not synonymous with mainstreaming (Price et al., 2001; Robertson & Valentine, 1998). Mainstreaming is different from inclusion. Mainstreaming means that students with disabilities spend part of the school day in the general education classroom and part of the day in a separate special education program (Idol, 1997; Price et al, 2001).

Inclusion and mainstreaming are ways to educate students with special needs in the least restrictive environment (Green, 2004; Hallahan & Kauffman, 2000; Kauffman & Hallahan, 1995). This review of literature includes the social benefits of inclusion and academic benefits of inclusion. Praisner (2003) stated that the more positive of an attitude a principal has towards inclusion, the better the chance that the student will be put in a less restrictive environment. These environments varied on the different levels of disabilities. Principals that were trained and understood what occurred in inclusion had more positive attitudes. Without a staff that supported the process of inclusion, progress was unlikely.

The social and academic benefits of inclusion for students with special needs have been well researched and documented (Hunt & Goetz, 1997; McDonnell, Thorsen, & Disher, Mathoot-Buckner, Mendel, & Ray, 2003; Renazaglia, Karvonen, Drasgow, & Stoxen, 2003). Unfortunately, inclusion opportunities are limited by lack of qualified

staff, scheduling and other difficulties encountered when attempted to meet students' unique needs in the general education program (Schoger, 2006).

Academic Benefits

Studies of students with mild special needs placed in the general classroom report increased academic skill acquisition to varying degrees (Fishbaugh & Gum, 1994). Wang and Birch (1984) found program models in which substantial gains were found. Models in which gains were shown in some, but not all, curriculum areas were from Affleck, Madge, Adams, and Lowenbraun (1988), or for some, but not all, students (Manset & Semmel, 1997; Zigmond & Baker, 1990). The small groups associated with cooperative learning and with peer tutoring were associated with academic benefits for students with and without special needs in a variety of curriculum areas (Lew, Mesch, Johnson, & Johnson, 1986; Maheady, Sacca, & Harper, 1987). For example, in one study all students (regular, remedial and special education) in an inclusive school (in comparison to a non-inclusive control school) demonstrated significantly superior gains in several areas, including reading, vocabulary and language (Jenkins, Jewell, Leicester, O'Connor, Jenkins, & Troutner, 1992).

Studies have reported that students with more severe special needs who take part in general education classes show some academic increases and behavioral and social progress (Cole & Meyer, 1991). Parents have reported that their children with more severe special needs, placed in general education classrooms, were able to learn material from the general education curriculum (Ryndak, Downing, Morrison, & Williams, 1996). The model of instruction matters; studies show that small, cooperative learning groups in which a student with severe special needs is a member with non-special needs peers best

supports these students' engagement and learning (Dugan, Kamps, Leonard, Watkins, Rehinberger, & Stackhaus, 1995; Hunt, Staub, Alwell, & Goetz, 1994; Logan, Bakeman, & Keefe, 1997).

In a study that focused on programs meeting selected criteria for best practices and models for teacher training, students with severe special needs made much greater progress in the general education classrooms as compared with their peers in special education classrooms (Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis, & Goetz, 1994).

Social Benefits

Research has shown that students with and without special needs interact more frequently in integrated and inclusive settings than in self-contained environments (Brinker, 1985; Fryxnell & Kennedy, 1995), which is especially true for pre-school (Hanline, 1993; Jenkins, Odom, & Speltz, 1989), elementary school (Cole & Meyer, 1991), and secondary settings (Kennedy, Shukla, & Fryxell, 1997; McDonnell, Hardman, Hightower, & Kiefer-O'Donnell, 1991). Increased social interaction can lead to social competence and communication skills. Studies show improvement in the area of social skills and communication to be associated with participation in an inclusive educational program (Bennett, DeLuca, & Bruns, 1997; Guralnick, Connor, & Hammond, 1995; Hunt, Alwell, Farron-Davis, Goetz, 1996; Hunt, Staub, Alwell, & Goetz, 1994).

Anecdotal evidence from New York City inclusion programs confirms that non-disabled peers provide role models for more socially acceptable behavior, also that being a fully included member of general education classes increase self-esteem. Students with special needs in inclusive settings have been shown to develop a greater circle of non-disabled friends than those in self-contained classrooms that offer less social interaction

with students without special needs (Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995), especially when the school the student is attending is close to his home (McDonnell, Hardman, Hightower, & Kiefer-O-Donnell, 1991). A more diverse social life for special needs and non-special needs children alike is valuable in itself, but also because of the social and cognitive development it promotes in both.

Klinger, Vaughn, Shay, Schumm, Cohen, and Forgan (1998) conducted a study on inclusion and found that pulling students out of class is more successful method of teaching than inclusion. When the students were interviewed individually the conclusion came that inclusion may not be the best method of educating. However inconclusive evidence was found that supported inclusion as successful. Social development inclusion is better than pull out methods (Fennick & Liddy, 2001; Kavale & Forness, 2000; King-Sears & Cummings, 1996). In addition to academic benefits, Downing, Eichinger, and Williams (1997) emphasized that children with special needs benefited significantly from inclusion experiences that fostered the development of friendships, enhanced self-respect, and provided peer models. Inclusion with non-students with special needs has been shown to result in increased awareness and responsiveness, increased skill acquisition, gains in communication skills, development of friendships, and an enhanced sense of belonging (Fisher & Meyer, 2002; Burstein, Sears, Wilcoxen, Cagbeloo, & Spagna, 2004; Salend & Duhaney, 1999).

<div align="center">Barriers to Inclusion</div>

Organizational, attitudinal, and knowledge barriers are barriers to inclusion (Kochhar et al., 2000). Organizational barriers consist of differences in ways schools and classes are taught, staffed, and managed. Attitudinal barriers, especially among teachers,

have been explored as inclusive education practices (Fisher, Sax, & Grove, 2000; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). Findings revealed that teachers agree with the goals of inclusion but many do not feel prepared to work in inclusive education settings (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000; Hines & Johnston, 1997). In addition, collaboration calls for a shift in control and the sharing of a learning environment rather than having individual space, both concepts that are unfamiliar to the traditionally trained teacher. Also, accepting new ideas about teaching, learning, and learning styles is called for but not always supported by teachers (Clough & Nutbrown, 2005).

<div align="center">Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusion</div>

According to Halvorsen and Neary (2001), inclusion means that students are included in regular classrooms during the entire school day whereas mainstreaming means that students spend a part of the day in regular classes and part in resource classes based on their IEPs (Price, Mayfield, McFadden, & Marsh, 2001). This notion of inclusion is supported by middle schools using the true middle school model. In these schools, students with disabilities are members of the regular classroom and not members of a special education population. Middle schools also lend themselves to inclusive education practices (Fisher, Sax, & Grove, 2000; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995) because the co-teaching model (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989; Fisher, Sax, & Grove, 2000; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995; Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996), which is common in middle schools, is more successfully implemented where interdisciplinary teaching teams share planning.

Advantages

The Twenty-First Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) reports that the number of students with disabilities served under IDEA continues to increase at a rate higher than the general population. Research on inclusion is needed to understand barriers and advantages of inclusive education for students with special needs. With the increase of students in regular classrooms and the demand for more access to the general curriculum with peers, more research on inclusion is warranted. Definitive conclusions regarding the effectiveness of inclusion are hampered by the absence of a comprehensive research base that describes its social and academic impact on students with and without special needs (Bricker, 1995; Odom, 2000).

Several studies (Hunt & Goetz, 1997; McDonnell, Thorsen, Disher, Mathoot-Buckner, Mendel, & Ray, 2003; Renazaglia, Karvonen, Drasgow, & Stoxen, 2003) have focused on mainstreaming or integration and, although not synonymous with inclusion, provide insight into the benefits and risks involved. McLean and Hanline (1990) define mainstreaming as the practice of removing children from their special education classes for part of the day and placing them in general education classes. Integration is a broader term and refers to the process of actively mixing children with and without special needs (Odom & McEvoy, 199; Price et al., 2001).

Kochhar, West, and Taymans (2000) conclude that the benefits of inclusion across grade levels far outweigh the difficulties inclusion presents. For example, they believe that for students with disabilities, inclusion facilitates more appropriate social behavior because of higher expectations in the general education classroom and students

model their behavior after their peers. Inclusion also encourages students with special needs to compete with their peers to achieve high levels of achievement as well as allows these students to socialize with others. Furthermore, inclusion allows teachers the opportunity to use differentiation strategies according to students' individual ability levels and learning styles.

Co-teaching as supported by Kochhar et al. (2000) offers the advantage of having a regular classroom teacher and special education teacher to help them with the development of their own skills. In addition, students with disabilities in regular classrooms lead to greater acceptance and tolerance of students with disabilities by regular classroom teachers. In addition to acceptance, inclusion facilitates understanding that students with disabilities are not always easily identified and promotes better understanding of the similarities among students with and without disabilities.

Research appears to support many of these claims. Walther-Thomas, Bryant, and Land (1996) examined a three-year study of elementary inclusive settings where co-teaching was practiced. Improvements and benefits were noted for both special and general education students in social skills for special education and low-achieving students. All students were reported to have developed a new appreciation of their skills and accomplishments and how to value themselves and others as unique individuals.

In a review of research on inclusion at both the elementary and secondary levels, Salend and Duhaney (1999) also report that academic performance is equal to or better in inclusive settings for general education students, including high achievers. Social performance also appears to be enhanced because students have a better understanding of and more tolerance for student differences.

Similar to Salend and Duhaney's study, Hunt (2000) reported positive effects for general and special education students at the elementary level not secondary level. Elementary students' academic benefits for general education students include additional special education staff in the classroom, providing small-group, individualized instruction, and assisting in the development of academic adaptations for all students who need them. Hunt also reported that students have a better understanding of individual differences through learning in inclusive settings.

Baker and Zigmond (1995) conducted a meta-analysis of the effects of inclusion on students with special needs. A small to moderate positive effect of inclusive practices on the academic and social outcomes of pupils in elementary schools was found. Academic benefits were measured through standard achievement tasks, while self, peer, teacher, and observer ratings were used to evaluate social effects. Ritter, Michel, and Irby's (1999) study examined the perceptions of middle school students, their parents, and teachers. The results indicated a shared belief that middle level students with mild disabilities included in the general classroom experienced increased self-confidence, camaraderie, support of the teachers, and higher expectations. Results also indicated that these students avoided low self-esteem that can result from placement in a special education setting.

Disadvantages

Inconclusive results were found for students with disabilities (Salend, 2001). Other studies that examined research on the effectiveness of inclusion reported mixed results (Kavale & Forness, 2000). While some studies show increased academic performance of students with disabilities in inclusive settings, others question the

effectiveness of inclusion. Likewise, some studies report positive social gains for students with disabilities in the regular classroom, while others report that students included have experienced isolation and frustration (Burnstein, Sears, Wilcoxen, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004).

Tiner's (1995) study surveyed 120 teachers from six middle schools in one Colorado school district. The results reported that teachers were most concerned with ensuring that all students have an opportunity to learn. Teachers voiced concern that spending time with students with disabilities required too much time that was taken away from other students in the classroom.

<div align="center">Regular Education and Special Education Research</div>

Research on empirical studies comparing regular and special education students is limited. Staub and Peck (1995) used control groups and experimental groups to compare progress of children who are not disabled in classrooms with those in classrooms that do not include students with disabilities. No significant differences were found between the two groups of students. In addition, the presence of children with disabilities had no effect on either the time allocated to instruction or the levels of interruption.

Other studies have obtained similar results. Hines and Johnston (1997) investigated 25 general education middle school teachers, whose schedules included regular, co-teaching in inclusive education, and mainstream settings. Instructional interactions across the three settings were analyzed, and results indicated that there was no significant statistical difference in instructional time across the three settings.

The results revealed that "significantly more time was spent in managerial interactions in mainstream classrooms than in regular or co-teaching settings" (Hines &

Johnston, 1997, p. 113). The co-taught classes had the fewest incidences of correcting student behavior by the general education teacher. On a corresponding survey, however, these same teachers perceived that they had less instructional time when special students were present (Pivik, McComas, & LaFlamme, 2002).

Regular Education

Not everyone is excited about bringing students with disabilities into the mainstream classroom setting. Tornillo (1994), president of the Florida Education Association United, is concerned that inclusion, as it all too frequently is being implemented, leaves classroom teachers without the resources, training, and other supports necessary to teach students with disabilities in their classrooms. Consequently, "the disabled children are not getting appropriate, specialized attention and care, and the regular students' education is disrupted constantly." He further argues that inclusion does not make sense in light of pressures from state legislatures and the public at large to develop higher academic standards and to improve the academic achievement of students. Lieberman (1992) agrees:

> Schools are testing more, not less and locking teachers into constrained curricula and syllabi more, not less. The imprint of statewide accountability and government spending [is increasingly] based on tangible, measurable, tabulatable, numerical results. The barrage of curriculum materials, syllabi, grade-level expectations for performance, standardized achievement tests, and competency tests continue to overwhelm even the most flexible teachers (pp. 14-15).

Similar to Tiner's (1995) study, Tornillo (1994) suggests that time spent on students with disabilities requires an inordinate amount of time to give attention to a few, thereby decreasing the amount of time and energy directed toward the rest of the class. As a result, the range of abilities between regular and special education students is too varied for one teacher to adequately teach. Consequently, the mandates for greater academic accountability and achievement are unable to be met by regular classroom teachers.

American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in West Virginia conducted a poll that revealed "78 percent of respondents think disabled students will not benefit from inclusion; 87 percent said other students will not benefit either" (Leo, 1994, p. 22). Citing numerous concerns expressed by many of its national membership, the AFT has urged a moratorium on the national rush toward full inclusion. AFT members were specifically concerned that students with disabilities were "monopolizing an inordinate amount of time and resources and, in some cases, creating violent classroom environments" (Sklaroff, 1994, p. 7). Leo (1994) and Sklaroff (1994) note that when inclusion efforts fail, it is frequently due to "a lack of appropriate for teachers in mainstream classrooms, ignorance about inclusion among senior-level administrators, and a general lack of funding for resources and training" (p. 7).

An additional concern of the AFT and others (Leo, 1994; Tornillo, 1994) is a suspicion that school administration motives for moving toward more inclusive education practices are often more of a budgetary, or cost-saving measure than out of a concern for what is really best for students. If students with disabilities can be served in regular classrooms, then the more expensive special education service costs due to additional

personnel, equipment, materials, and classrooms, can be reduced. "But supporters argue that, while administrators may see inclusion as a means to save funds by lumping together all students in the same facilities, inclusion rarely costs less than segregated classes when the concept is implemented responsibly" (Sklaroff, 1994, p. 7).

Special Education

Regular educators, special educators, and parents of students with disabilities have reservations about the move toward full inclusion. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC, 1993) issued a strong endorsement for a continuum of services to be available to children, youth, and young adults with disabilities. Services to the disabled, including various placement options besides the regular classroom, are to be tailored to individual student needs.

The concept of inclusion is a meaningful goal to be pursued in our schools and communities. Children, youth, and young adults with special needs should be served whenever possible in general education classrooms in inclusive neighborhood schools and community settings (CEC, 1993). Clearly, the concern of this broad-based advocacy organization is not so much with inclusion as with full inclusion. However, some parents of children with special needs and others have serious reservations about inclusive educational practices. Some of the concerns are forged out of parents' struggles to get appropriate educational services for their children and those of others. Parents are concerned that, with the shift of primary responsibility for the education of these children from special education teachers to regular classroom teachers, there will be a loss of advocacy.

Spreading children out and placing them in districts away from their neighborhoods and school communities will only dilute the effectiveness of special education programs. Some educational programs that place children in regular classrooms are inappropriate placements for some children. Parents have legitimate concerns about the attitudes of teachers and school systems toward accommodating students with special needs into regular classrooms. Parents argue that the "special education system emerged precisely because of the non-adaptability of regular classrooms and that, since nothing has happened to make contemporary classrooms any more adaptable inclusion most likely will lead to rediscovering the need for a separate system in the future" (Skrtic, 1991, p. 160)

A stronger concern about children's placement in regular education has been raised by advocates of inclusion (Fisher, Sax, & Grove, 2000; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). However, because "most deaf children cannot and will not lip-read or speak effectively in regular classroom settings, full access to communication-and therefore full cognitive and social development-includes the use of sign language" (p. 35). Supportive research suggests that greater intellectual gains are made by deaf students enrolled in schools for the hearing impaired, where a common language and culture may be shared, than for similarly disabled students in mainstream classroom settings.

Although a shortage of sign language interpreters exist throughout American, students with impaired hearing still miss out on many of the experiences targeted as a rationale for inclusive environments by inclusion advocates (e.g., a sense of belonging, opportunities to interact with peers). Social, emotional, and even academic development is difficult when communication must be facilitated through an interpreter. Informal

communications and friendships with peers, participation in extracurricular activities, and dating are also not well-facilitated when a third-party interpreter is needed to communicate. Consequently, many argue that the more appropriate educational placement option for the hearing impaired is a residential school with a community of others similarly disabled.

Lieberman (1992) points out that many advocates, primarily parents, for those with learning disabilities also have significant concerns about the wholesale move toward inclusion. Their concerns stem from the fact that they have had to fight long and hard for appropriate services and programs for their children. They recognize that students with learning disabilities do not progress academically without individualized attention to their educational needs. These services have evolved primarily through a specialized teacher working with these students individually or in small groups, usually in a resource room setting. Many successful practices have been researched and identified (Lyon & Vaughn, 1994). Special education professionals and parents alike are concerned that regular education teachers have neither the time, nor the expertise to meet their children's needs. "The learning disabilities field seems to recognize that being treated as an individual can usually be found more easily outside the regular classroom" (p. 15). Some parents of students with more severe disabilities are concerned about the opportunities their children will have to develop basic life skills in a regular classroom setting. They are also cautious about inclusion because of fears that their children will be ridiculed by other students (Lyon & Vaughn, 1994).

The issue of inclusion is also debated in another area of exceptionality for students who are gifted and talented. Inclusion is discussed under the concept of

heterogeneous grouping rather than inclusion. However, the issue is still one of providing

appropriate services in an integrated versus a segregated setting. Some advocates support

that concept that gifted students are better served when they are able to work with other

gifted students usually in a pull-out program where they are serviced for part of the day.

Others promote the position that gifted students benefit more from being heterogeneously

grouped with other students of various levels of ability in an inclusive education setting

(Tompkins & Deloney, 1994).

<div align="center">Service Delivery Models to Support Inclusion Programs</div>

Several different types of collaborative teaching programs are used to support

general education teachers who co-teach with special education teachers: (1) consultation

teacher services; (2) cooperative teaching (Idol, Nevin, & Paolucci-Whitcomb, 1986); (3)

supportive resource programs; (4) instructional assistants (Idol, 2006); and (5) reverse

inclusion program (Guralnick, 2001; Schoger, 2006). The goal is for teachers to co-teach,

work together, and plan collaboratively. Each service is viewed as an important means of

supporting both general education and special education teachers. Collaboration leads to

a re-conceptualization of how special support programs can best be offered by both

general and special education (Idol, 2006).

Consultation Teacher Model

The consultation teacher model (Idol, Nevin, & Paolucci-Whitcomb, 1994, 2000)

is a form of indirect special education service delivery in which a special education

teacher serves as a consultant to a classroom teacher. The program is quite effective when

there is an overload of special education students who receive indirect services from the

classroom teacher. Then the consultant works indirectly with targeted students with

disabilities by working directly with the classroom teacher (Idol, 2006) and providing services.

The consultation model is the opposite of the itinerant model that requires the teacher to work in one or two buildings with large numbers of students to serve. The itinerant teacher enters a classroom and provides direct services to the student and/or to the teacher of a regular class. The effectiveness of this model has been a concern for many years, and it is especially controversial as the trend toward inclusion expands. It is a model that will remain popular and requires specific kinds of skills that may not always be taught in preparation programs (Price et al., 2001).

The itinerant model and consultation model of inclusion confuses the role and responsibilities of the general education and special education teacher. Adjusting the curriculum for each subject and grade level is the responsibility of the regular education teacher. Further planning objectives, classroom activities, instructional plans, homework, and selecting appropriate materials require considerable time and energy for regular and special education teachers. Planning the types of instructional activities, including making proper arrangements for them can require considerable energy and follow through, and this is complicated by inclusion (Price et al., 2001).

On a daily basis, teachers must also manage student behavior, routines, rules, and procedures during class work as students are organized into large and small group activities, each requiring management of student work. Teachers must also monitor student progress, maintain records requiring paperwork or computer input of grades, and prepare feedback to parents and students on their progress. Additional obligations are generally before and after school with duty assignments in the hallways, bus duty, and

morning and after school duties as well as conducting parent conferences and meetings after school (Price et al., 2001).

During teacher planning, teachers meet with other teachers about their roles and responsibilities while little time is spent discussing student work or progress. The majority of the teacher's typical school day is spent working with and teaching students. Little time is available for reflection on the day's activities. After school, teachers must grade papers, attend or participate in extracurricular activities evenings, and attend faculty meetings, department or grade level meetings, and tutor students at least one day a week after school (Price et al., 2001).

In addition to extra duties and responsibilities before and after school, teachers' concerns involve the inclusive education of students with disabilities. Not only are teachers concerned about inclusion, they are concerned about handling discipline problems that come from these students.

Guzman and Shofield (1995) surveyed 244 teachers, principals, support staff, and parents in 11 elementary schools. The findings revealed themes in skill training, beginning with behavioral challenges of students with disabilities. These researchers concluded that proper training that clearly addresses concerns of regular classroom teachers may reduce resistance to inclusion (Dickens-Smith, 1995). McEvoy and Reichle (1995) emphasize the importance of organizing environments to prevent behavior problems in the first place, which is also a training problem that can be addressed in pre-service and in-service programs.

Kunc (1995) suggests that when inclusive education is fully supported, the idea that children must act like normal children in order to contribute to the world will no

longer be an idea. Teachers are apprehensive that inclusion interferes with their ability to teach. Parents and professional organizations believe it limits the educational experiences of the majority of students. Teachers find it difficult to accept the notion that social skills and peer relationships are equal to or more important than achievement. Much of these barriers to acceptance are the attitudes of teachers. Barriers to administrators are represented a decline in the overall classroom performance and class averages on state mandated examinations. Characteristics of successful inclusion programs were identified by Salisbury and Smith (1991).

Cooperative Teacher Model

In the cooperative teaching model, special education and classroom teachers work together with a variety of co-teaching arrangements in the same classroom to provide educational programs for all students (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989). Cooperative teaching is described as being a direct and complementary outgrowth of the collaborative consultation model (Idol, Nevin, & Paolucci-Whitcomb, 1986).

Resource Programs Model

Wiederholt and Chamberlain (1989) defined the resource room approach as being "any setting in the school in which students come to receive specific instruction on a regularly scheduled basis, while receiving the majority of their education elsewhere, usually in a general school program (p. 15)." Wiederholt and Chamberlain further stated that resource rooms are not part-time special education classes where students with special needs are integrated with peers only for lunch, physical education classes, music, and art. Resource rooms are also not consultative programs where students with special needs stay full-time in a general classroom setting and where modifications (Galis &

Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004; McDonnell and Hardman, 1989; Riley, 1993; Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1989) are made in instruction. Resource rooms should not be used or considered as after school programs, discipline or detention centers, or crisis rooms for students with disabilities.

In supportive programs, resource teachers and classroom teachers collaborate in designing the contents of a student's individualized program of instruction for the resource room (Idol, 2006). The purpose of collaboration is to ensure that the resource room program actually supports the general education program. Collaboration supports the transfer of skills taught in the resource room to skills taught in the general education classroom (Idol, 2006).

Instructional Assistants Model

The fourth type of service delivery to support inclusion to support inclusion programs is providing instructional assistants or paraprofessionals to accompany special education students attending general education classes (Idol, 2006). Generally, this is one of the first options that educators choose for providing assistance to classroom teachers, particularly if teachers have not had preliminary preparation in building collaborative and inclusive schools. Instructional assistants are usually funded exclusively with special education monies to provide assistance to a single student with special needs. The instructional assistant typically remains with that student throughout the school day (Idol, 2006).

According to Causton-Theoharis and Malmgren (2005), the involvement of paraprofessionals may be the crucial support that some children with special needs require to be included in the general education classroom rather than in more restrictive,

isolated environments. Nevertheless, due to a shortage of applicants and funding shortcomings, school districts have often failed to allocate adequate numbers of trained paraprofessionals to support students with special needs who require support (Scheuermann, Webber, Boutot, & Goodwin, 2003).

Reverse Inclusion Program Model

Reverse inclusion is used to describe classes whereby a relatively small group of children who are typically developing is added to a specialized program for children with special needs (Guralnick, 2001; Schoger, 2006). The Reverse Inclusion Program was developed by the special education teacher (Schoger, 2006) and was designed to provide students with special needs with peer interaction opportunities that were lacking in students' program, while providing needed support services. This program involved removing general education students out of their classrooms for short periods of time to interact socially with students with special needs.

A study conducted by Schoger (2006) found that students with special needs showed remarkable improvement in their appropriate social interaction behaviors as they started to initiate social interactions with not only their inclusion friends in general education, but other peers as well. In addition, students with special needs improved their overall participation in class and communication skills as well as made friends. General education students learned that just because a student looked differently did not mean that they could not be friends and have fun together.

<div align="center">Inclusion Roles</div>

The movement toward inclusion has made educating and caring for children with disabilities an increasingly critical part of the early education teacher's role (Chang,

Early, & Winton, 2005). The roles of general education and special education teachers are confounded with the concept of full inclusion (Schattman, 1992). During the 1990s, defining the roles of regular and special education teachers was critical in determining how inclusion functioned in a school. In a seclusion program, the roles are clear since definition of roles and responsibilities avoided conflict and confusion among regular and special education teachers. In an inclusion model, the special education teacher is a member of the team, who may co-teach with the regular class teacher and assumes responsibility for training, support, and supervision of the regular education teacher. Success is determined by the ability of professionals to integrate special services with the total school program.

The organization of the integration of students with disabilities into regular classrooms is critical. Many people are involved with the process, something most classroom teachers have not had to experience before. Co-teaching involves working with regular education teachers and with two teachers, more frequent contact with parents can occur. Frequent interactions with another teacher can be overwhelming to a classroom teacher who has always been alone with his or her students. Consequently, interpersonal conflicts may arise from personality differences and from lack of clarity about appropriate role functions of both teachers. Research supports evidence that experienced teachers are more likely to accept collaboration and co-teaching than inexperienced teachers. Areas to consider in role definition are the central role of the teacher, communication with other teachers, training of teachers, and time to plan (Price et al., 2001).

Central Role of the Teacher

The regular classroom teacher should be involved in the entire process of co-teaching rather than being informed. If this does not happen, then serious conflict can result from non-involvement of the regular teacher. Both regular and special education teachers must exhibit mutual respect, communicate with each other, and plan collaboratively. Effective school teams recognize the central role of the regular classroom teacher (Price et al., 2001).

Effective Communication

When individuals do not communicate effectively, conflicts arise, rumors become the major source of communication that result in misunderstandings. Even the use of psycho-educational jargon can cause problems. Teachers may be intimidated by special education teachers who may use psycho-educational terminology that is unfamiliar to regular classroom teachers. Thus, regular classroom teachers may be fearful of appearing ignorant of the use and meanings of these terms. Communication between and among both groups of teachers is crucial (Price et al., 2001).

Training of Teachers

In service training is absolutely essential. Traditionally, one teacher and not two teachers, was expected to work with one group of students. The concept of inclusion consisted of new roles and understandings in a team effort known as co-teaching. Disagreement occurs anywhere when two people work together ranging from discipline procedures to choice in instructional materials to use. Little is known about how to co-teaching is most effective. What is known is that teams that work together for the benefit of students is likely to be more successful than not (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991).

Time to Plan

Teachers need time to plan during inclusive education settings. Common planning times require teachers to work together outside of class time to provide appropriate activities for students with and without disabilities. The school's master schedule should provide adequate common planning periods for teachers who are involved in co-teaching and collaboration (Price et al., 2001).

<div align="center">Effective Differentiated Strategies for Inclusion</div>

Effective differentiated strategies for students with disabilities (Tomlinson, 1995, 1999) include compacting curriculum, tiered assignments, acceleration/deceleration, and flexible grouping. Swanson (1999) recommends teachers use strategies that breakdown the task and use step-by-step prompts; daily testing of skills, repeated practice, and daily feedback; process-related questions and/or content-related questions; sequence tasks from easy to difficult and use only necessary hints or prompts; use a computer, structured text; use small group instruction; and verbalize problem solving with think aloud models.

Compacting Curriculum

Teachers compact the curriculum by assessing a student's knowledge, skills and attitudes and providing alternative activities for the student who has already mastered curriculum content. Pre-testing basic concepts and using performance assessment methods are ways teachers can determine mastery levels of students. When students demonstrate that they do not require instruction, teachers should move on to tiered problem solving activities while others receive instruction in compacting (New Horizons for Learning, 2004).

Tiered Assignments

Tiered activities are alternative activities that teachers use with students who have mastered skills. Tiered activities become a way of teaching the same goals while taking into account students' individual needs and differences. The series of related tiered tasks vary in complexity and relate to essential understanding and key skills that students need to acquire (Kochhar et al., 2000; New Horizons for Learning, 2004).

Acceleration/Deceleration

Gifted and talented students typically complete work at a faster rate than the average student. Teachers can use differentiation with these students as well through acceleration of the speed that students are able to handle the curriculum. High level students who have mastered the content may move ahead of other students to avoid boredom, or stalled while waiting on others to catch up. Deceleration is used for those students who are encountering difficulty with a skill and need to slow their pace in the completion of activities until mastery, or until they fully understand before moving to the next skill level to experience success (New Horizons for Learning, 2004).

Flexible Grouping

Some students have no problem remaining with the same group; however others need the flexibility to move among groups as their readiness levels indicate. Student performance changes according to their interests and talents as well as their abilities. Teachers must understand that students are permitted to move between groups that are known as flexible grouping. As student performance varies, it is important to permit movement between groups. A student may be below grade level in one subject at the

same time as being above grade level in another subject (Tomlinson, 1995, 1999;

Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

Flexible grouping allows students to be appropriately challenged and avoids

labeling a student's readiness as static. Students should not be kept in a static group for

any particular subjects as their learning will probably accelerate from time to time. Gifted

and highly talented students can benefit from flexible grouping because they can work

with intellectual peers, while occasionally in another group they can experience being a

leader. In either case, peer-teaching is a valuable strategy for flexible group work

(DiMartino, 2004; Heacox, 2002; New Horizons for Learning, 2004; Tomlinson, 1995,

1999; Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006).

<div align="center">Effective Inclusion Strategies</div>

Readiness and Ability

Flexible grouping depends on the readiness and ability levels of students.

Assessments vary based on students' abilities or readiness. In order for students to learn

new concepts, they may be working below or above grade level or they may need to be

introduced to new skills or receive a review of skills once learned. As students are

learning, their level of readiness changes as they do and therefore, it is important that

teachers permit students to move between different groups through flexible grouping.

Differentiation permits activities to be differentiated according to the level of difficulty

and complexity.

Gifted and talented students or advanced students work on activities that are more

complex than students performing below grade level. Students reading below grade level

may benefit by reading with a friend, or listening to a story from a tape recorder or CD as

they receive the information orally. Teachers should vary the skill level depending on the readiness and ability levels of students (Kochhar et al., 2000; New Horizons for Learning, 2004).

Adjusting Questions

Questioning is an important skill for teachers to learn. Far too many questions posed by teachers are at the lowest level of comprehension that requires low level thinking skills (Kochhar et al., 2000). Questions should challenge all students to think critically even students who read below grade level. Just because students read below grade level does not mean that their thinking level is low, too. Teachers must know the student in order to adjust questions to their abilities to avoid embarrassing students in front of their peers during large group discussion activities. Students can be taught the levels of thinking with key words in order to provide an easy tool for students and the teacher during class discussion (New Horizons for Learning, 2004).

With written quizzes, the teacher may assign specific questions for each group of students. They all answer the same number of questions but the complexity required varies from group to group. However, the option to go beyond minimal requirements can be available for any or all students who demonstrate that they require an additional challenge for their level (Kochhar et al., 2000; New Horizons for Learning, 2004

Peer Teaching

Peer teaching allows students to provide individual instruction with an assigned student. Occasionally, a student may need one-on-one instruction above and beyond his or her peers and that is when a peer tutor can be assigned. The student who receives the help can be called the resident expert after mastery and can then teach it to another

student in need of help. As a result, both students benefit because they are able to practice what they have learned by re-teaching the concept to others have personal needs that require one-on-one instruction that go beyond the needs of his or her peers (New Horizons for Learning, 2004).

Learning Profiles and Styles

No two students are alike and each student may learn differently from another. Some students prefer quiet areas for working and others enjoy movement from one group to another. Others enjoy listening while some enjoy discussion and question periods. Teachers must understand how students in the classroom learn best and try to use each modality (auditory, visual, and kinesthetic) differently to fit the needs of all students. Since student motivation is also a unique element in learning, understanding individual learning styles and interests will permit teachers to apply appropriate strategies for developing intrinsic motivational techniques (New Horizons for Learning, 2004).

Student Interest

How do teachers determine the interest levels of students? Informal interest inventories are useful to give to students to determine their interest levels. Brainstorming for subtopics within a curriculum concept and using semantic webbing to explore interesting facets of the concept is another effective tool, which is also an effective way of teaching students how to focus on a manageable subtopic. Computer software applications can help the teacher in guiding students through exploring a concept and focusing on manageable and personally interesting topics (New Horizons for Learning, 2004).

Reading Buddies

Students who need help with reading may be assigned a reading buddy to listen to them read orally. Younger children generally enjoy this activity more than older children because it is not as embarrassing to them. As children read orally, they develop fluency and comprehension as they practice reading daily. Reading with a specific purpose in mind is always helpful and then permit students to discuss what they just read. Reading buddies can be on the same level or different levels. The important idea is that one is reading orally and the other student is reading silently, which benefit both students' comprehension (New Horizons for Learning, 2004).

Independent Study Projects

All students can benefit from independent study projects that are based on students' interests and ability levels. An independent study is a research project where students learn how to develop the skills for independent learning. The degree of help and structure will vary between students and depend on their ability to manage ideas, time and productivity. A modification of the independent study is the buddy-study. Even college students engage in independent study projects (New Horizons for Learning, 2004).

Buddy-Studies

Study groups exist at higher levels in school, from elementary school through college. A buddy-study permits two or three students to work together on a project or simply a friend with whom you study. The expectation is that all may share the research and analysis/organization of information but each student must complete an individual product to demonstrate learning that has taken place and be accountable for their own

planning, time management and individual accomplishment (New Horizons for Learning, 2004).

Learning Contracts

A learning contract may accompany an independent study project as a written agreement between teacher and student that results in students working independently. The contract helps students to set daily and weekly work goals and develop management skills. It also helps the teacher to keep track of each student's progress. Actual assignments vary according to specific student needs, interests, and abilities (New Horizons for Learning, 2004).

Learning Centers

Learning centers have been in use for years and were originally called interest centers because they were established based on the interest levels of students. Students were able to rotate to different centers during the day to complete activities. These learning centers may contain both differentiated and compulsory activities. However, a learning center is not necessarily differentiated unless the activities are varied by complexity taking in to account different student ability and readiness. Prior expectations are set by the teacher to help students understand what is expected of them at the learning center. Students are encouraged to manage their use of time using specific guidelines and rules. The degree of structure that is provided varies according to each student's independent work habits. At the end of each week, students should be able to account for their use of time at each center (New Horizons for Learning, 2004).

Anchoring Activities

Many students may finish their assignments ahead of others and occasionally will sit idle waiting on the teacher to tell them what to do next. To avoid boredom and disruption of other students' work and possible behavior problems, teachers may make a list of activities that a student can do to at any time when they have completed present assignments or it can be assigned for a short period at the beginning of each class as students organize themselves and prepare for work. These activities may relate to specific needs or enrichment opportunities, including problems to solve or journals to write (New Horizons for Learning, 2004).

These activities could also be part of a long-term project that a student is working on. These activities may also help the teacher with time to provide specific help and small group instruction to students requiring additional help to get started. Students can work at different paces but always have productive work they can do. In the past and even today, these activities are called seat work, and should not be confused with busy work because these activities must be worthy of a student's time and appropriate to their learning needs (New Horizons for Learning, 2004).

Least Restrictive Environment

For much of the time since passage of P. L. 94-142, concern in schools has been devoted to providing a continuum of services for children with disabilities (Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995; Taylor, 1988; The Council for Exceptional Children, CEC, 1993). The concept of the least restrictive environment (LRE) has meant, operationally, placement in a program that is as close to general education class placement as practicable. Judgments made about placement are based on decisions made by persons who are guided by social

considerations, rather than medical or psychological criteria (Green, 2004). Culling, Sabornie, and Crossland (1992) describe social mainstreaming as an important goal of integration, including peer acceptance, friendships, and participation in group activities. The beliefs, values, orientations, and personal views of decisions makers have determined placement decisions, and this has often been influenced by how individual communities or faculties react to the notion of placing students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

It has become increasingly difficult to argue for self-contained placements. While the LRE concept has implied physical integration of children, this concept also implies social integration. The overriding concern is that children with disabilities will develop more normal social skills if they are integrated in general education, which may outweigh academic needs for some pupils. The LRE provisions in law have become the basis for expansion of inclusion in the last few years.

The concept of the LRE is at the heart of the debate over inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms, and the LRE is the mechanism for justifying general education placement. To the courts, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the LRE for most children is recognized as the regular classroom in the general education program. In IDEA 97 there is considerable attention to the least restrictive environment and particular emphasis on placement in the general education curriculum with appropriate services.

Benefits of Least Restrictive Environment

The benefits of learning in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for children with special needs can be great, including increased motivation, higher self-esteem,

improved communication and socialization skills, and greater academic achievement (Green, 2004; Moore & Gilbreath, 1998)**.** While some children with special needs require a special class, the LRE for most is in a general education class with appropriate supports and services – an inclusion class. Children with special needs in inclusion classrooms, particularly in their home school, tend to form friendships more readily and develop better social skills, especially if teachers promote interaction (Moore & Gilbreath, 1998; U. S. Department of Education, 2000).

Exposure to the general education curriculum, taught by teachers trained in that curriculum, gives the child with special needs an opportunity to aim for the same goals as their peers, and results in higher academic achievement than the lower expectations often applied in a self-contained special education class. Nor are the children with special needs the only ones to benefit from their inclusion in general education classes. Rather than being disadvantaged by being in an inclusion classroom, children without special needs who are educated alongside their disabled peers generally have a greater awareness of diversity, act more responsibly, and demonstrate improved academic performance (Moore & Gilbreath, 1998; U. S. Department of Education, 2000).

Academic Skills Acquisition

Studies of students with mild special needs placed in the general classroom report increased academic skill acquisition to varying degrees (Fishbaugh & Gum, 1994). Program models with substantial gains were found (Wang & Birch, 1984) and models in which gains were shown in some, but not all, curriculum areas were also found (Affleck, Madge, Adams, & Lowenbraun, 1988), or for some, but not all, students (Manset & Semmel, 1997). The small groups associated with cooperative learning and with peer

tutoring were associated with academic benefits for students with and without special needs in a variety of curriculum areas (Lew, Mesch, Johnson, & Johnson, 1986). For example, in one study all students (regular, remedial and special education) in an inclusive school (in comparison to a non-inclusive control school) demonstrated significantly superior gains in several areas, including reading, vocabulary and language (Jenkins, Jewell, Leicester, O'Connor, Jenkins, & Troutner, 1992).

Educational Impact

Parents of students without special needs want to know whether their child's learning will suffer, and whether he/she will receive less attention from the teacher in an inclusive classroom. In a well-run inclusion class, research indicates they should not be concerned (Peltier, 1997). A study comparing the teacher's use of time in classrooms with and without students with more severe special needs found no negative impact on instruction (Hollowood, Salisbury, Rainforth, & Palombaro, 1995). Research demonstrates that general education classrooms including students with mild special needs, the academic success of students without special needs is actually increased (Manset & Semmel, 1997). Researchers suggest that the instructional practices used in inclusion classrooms, which reflect the expertise of both general and special educators, benefit all the students in the class (Lew, Mesch, Johnson, & Johnson, 1986; Mandlawitz, 2003). For example, as stated above, learning in small instructional groups has been found to be associated with academic benefits for students with and without special needs in a variety of curriculum areas (Mathur & Rutherford, 1991). Even in small instructional groups including a severely disabled student, the students without special needs

performed as well as their peers in groups not including a disabled member (Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis, & Goetz, 1994).

Impact on Development and Behavior

Research studies of normally-developing children show that their development does not slow as a result of being in a classroom with children with special needs (Bricker, Bruder, & Bailey, 1982; Odom, Deklyer, & Jenkins, 1984; Sharpe, York, & Knight, 1994). Nor do typically-developing students adopt the inappropriate behavior of some students with special needs in their inclusive elementary classroom (Staub, Schwartz, Gallucci, & Peck, 1994).

In fact, the rest of the class has much to gain from including people with special needs. Studies have found that students in inclusive classrooms have positive experiences with their disabled peers and develop improved attitudes towards those with different abilities (Helmstetter, Peck, & Giangreco, 1994; Stainback, Stainback, Moravec, & Jackson, 1992). Teachers report that accommodation of disabled students in inclusion classes naturally gives rise to conversations about fairness and equity that enhance the values and social skills of all students (Evans, Salisbury, Palombaro, & Goldberg, 1994). Surveys of non-disabled students educated in inclusion classrooms reported improvement in self-concept and reduced fear of human differences (Helmstetter et al., 1994; Peck, Donaldson, & Pezzoli, 1990). These results were confirmed by other surveys of parents' reports of their children's outcomes in inclusion classes (Giangreco, Edelman, Cloninger, & Dennis, 1993).

Relatively few studies found poor results for students in inclusion classrooms mostly involved students placed in general education classrooms without proper supports

(Baines, Baines, & Masterson, 1994), or special education services (Zigmond & Baker, 1995). Therefore, they are not inconsistent with the research reported above showing gains to students both with and without special needs in inclusion classrooms with prepared teachers, adequate supports and effective instructional techniques.

Chapter Summary

Research demonstrates that being educated in an inclusive classroom benefits virtually all students in the class. Children's social growth is enhanced and the typical students' academic progress is not slowed and may be promoted in a good inclusion class. With a prepared teacher, a well-designed, student-centered curriculum and the use of effective instructional models, virtually all students in the class will have the opportunity to learn and achieve. Future research should focus not on whether to do inclusion, but how to do it well. Chapter III presents the methodology and describes how the research questions in this study are analyzed.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter III presented the research design, population and sample, instrumentation, and procedures. Data analyses were described. A summary concluded this chapter. The primary purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions and beliefs of middle school principals and assistant principals regarding effective strategies for meeting the needs of all students, the support in the school district for educational change, and inclusive education.

The following research questions were explored:

1. To what extent do demographic factors influence the perceptions of middle school administrators in school districts that met AYP and did not meet AYP promote the three policy areas: effective strategies, support for educational change, and inclusive education for the inclusion of students with disabilities?

2. To what extent do middle school administrators in school districts that met AYP and did not meet AYP promote effective strategies for inclusion of students with disabilities?

3. To what extent do middle school administrators in school districts that met AYP and did not meet AYP provide support for educational change to promote inclusion of students with disabilities?

4. To what extent do middle school administrators in school districts that met AYP and did not meet AYP promote inclusive education for students with disabilities?

Two school districts (one urban and one rural) that met AYP were compared with two school districts (one urban and one rural) that did not meet AYP. Middle school administrators' perceptions of inclusion were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to answer the research questions. Two school districts (one urban and one rural) that met AYP were compared with two school districts (one urban and one rural) that did not meet AYP. Middle school administrators' perceptions of inclusion were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to answer the research questions.

The overarching question was whether differences existed between two urban and two rural school districts' middle school administrators' perceptions of the provisions of services to students in three policy areas, including effective strategies, educational change, and inclusive education. This study utilized a quantitative research design to compare the responses of 30 middle school administrators to determine if differences exist regarding these three policy areas. The inclusion of special education students in the general classroom, especially full-inclusion, has generated much debate among parents, students, school administrators, and policymakers.

All middle school principals and middle school assistant principals in four selected districts in Georgia were recruited as voluntary participants in this study. The criteria for selection were that each school district has met or not met the academic performance component of Georgia's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), had to be either rural or urban, or be either small or large school districts as an indication of their approach and delivery of services to the education of students of special needs were appropriate. According to the Georgia Department of Education's "2006-2007 AYP

Status for Students with Disabilities," two school districts did not meet academic performance for AYP; two school districts met academic performance for AYP; two school districts were rural school districts and two schools districts were urban; two school districts were large and two school districts were small in student population.

Superintendents were notified requesting permission for their school districts to voluntarily participate in this study. Two school districts were located in urban areas and two school districts were located in rural areas. Middle school administrators were asked to complete surveys that were personally picked up by the researcher from each school district representative upon the completion of surveys. These participants did not have access to any information in this study, nor did they know the identity of individuals who returned surveys. Only the principal investigator and advisor know the identity of school districts participating in this study. No identities of middle school administrators were known to anyone, including the researcher. Based on the return rate of surveys completed, eight middle school principals and 22 assistant middle school principals voluntarily participated in this study.

Research Design

The research design for this study was a mixed design of quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data were collected through the use of a survey entitled "Inclusion Education Survey" that included demographic information such as age, gender, level of education, years of experience as a middle school principal, years of experience as an assistant principal, years of full-time regular education teaching experience, number of special education credits in formal training, number of in service hours in inclusive practices (Fisher, Sax, & Grove, 2000; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995),

certification in special education, and number of relevant content areas in formal training in special education. Qualitative data included an open-ended question section to provide each administrator the opportunity to write comments regarding their personal experience with an individual with special needs outside the school setting. Other questions were: identify three of the most effective strategies you believe are important to inclusion; discuss how effective strategies could be used to assist students with special needs in the classroom; and could these strategies be used to support effective inclusion, why or why not? A portion for other comments was included as part of this qualitative analysis.

Each research question was analyzed using the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test for differences among the means of the three policy areas of effective strategies, educational change, and inclusive education (alpha = .05). Scheffe's test was applied for post hoc analysis. The level of significance was accepted at .05. Scheffe's test revealed whether statistically significant differences existed between middle school principals and assistant principals' perceptions regarding aforementioned three policy areas.

Population and Sample

The researcher recruited and selected four Georgia school districts consisting of two school districts that met AYP and two school districts that did not meet AYP to voluntarily participate in this study. The Executive Director of special education programs for each of the school districts identified the middle schools within the school districts. It was expected that 30 administrators from these four school districts would respond to the recruitment letter and return consent letters. The criteria for selection were that each school district met the academic performance indicator in the State's AYP

status that indicated that their approach and delivery of services to the education of students of special needs were appropriate.

Four school districts were compared to determine middle school administrators' perceptions of inclusion. Thirty administrators, including 8 middle school principals and 22 middle school assistant principals voluntarily participated in this study. These administrators represented middle schools in two urban and two rural school systems that enrolled middle school students only, normally grades 6 through 8. The schools in these two districts varied in sizes ranging from less than 250 to over 1,000 students, and the average class size ranged from 25 to 30 students. Most schools identified between 6% and 15% of the student population as students with special needs and represented varying degrees of inclusion.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire by Galis and Tanner (1995) (with permission) was modified to explore the three policy areas of effective strategies, educational change, and inclusive education. Twenty-four statements representing these three policy areas (dependent variables) were rated according to a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 is strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. Initially, this instrument, which the researcher entitled "Inclusive Education Survey" (see Appendix A), was reviewed by a panel of eight experts from state, university, and local levels to establish face and content validity. Recommendations from the panel were consistent in suggesting changing of wording on specific terms and about the length of the instrument. Recommendations were incorporated into the survey. Reliability was determined and estimated before disseminating it to participants. A pilot study was conducted with 20 educators who were

similar to the sample group and they were asked to respond to the instrument. Each item was examined using a repeated measure design. The t-test for correlated sample means was used to test for significant differences between the first and second response. Two items that exceeded the critical *t value* of 2.093 were removed. Reliability coefficients for the three policy areas were effective strategies (.76), educational change (.74), and inclusive education (.81). However, the researcher utilized all 25 responses of this instrument.

Each item was examined by using the repeated measure design. The t-test for correlated sample means was used to test for significant differences between the first and second response. Items that exceeded the critical *t* value of 2.093 were removed from the instrument (Alpha = .05, df = 19). Two items were removed as a result of this analysis. Phase II of the reliability check involved applying Chronbach's Alpha to data from each section in the final study. According to de Vaus (1986), this test for uni-dimensionality is used to determine the correlation coefficient between a response and the responses to the other items in the subset. Any response with the item-to-scale coefficient less than .30 was dropped from the data. An alpha coefficient on each subset of .70 was desirable according to de Vaus. Furthermore, any item whose omission would increase the subset alpha to .70 or higher was dropped. The reliability coefficients for the three sections were as follows: inclusive education (.81), effective strategies (.76), and support for change (.74) (Galis & Tanner, 1995).

The survey contained questions with the three policy areas: effective strategies, support for educational change, and inclusive education. Ten questions (1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 13, 15, 18, 20, 24) were effective strategies on modifications, grading according to ability,

consistent academic and behavioral expectations, special education being a valuable

service, grouping students to allow a wide variety of abilities in each class, and slow

learners receiving special help outside of the classroom. Support for educational change

consisted of six questions (3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 21) that included a broad continuum of

services for meeting the needs of all students, having input into the program for students

with special needs, regularly talking and planning with colleagues, and opportunities for

mutual planning and staff development. Inclusive education had eight questions (4, 9,

11, 14, 16, 19, 22, 23) regarding inclusion as an effective strategy and beneficial to other

students in the class, serving students with special needs regardless of disability, support

from school and school district, inclusion of students with special needs in regular

classrooms, and inclusion being disruptive to students without special needs (see

Appendix C).

Research Question One was analyzed using descriptive statistics to describe the

frequencies of urban and rural middle school administrators' demographic data.

Demographic data included age, gender, years of experience as a middle school principal

or assistant principal, years of full-time regular education teaching experience, level of

education, years of full-time special education teaching experience, number of special

education credits in formal training, number of in-service hours in inclusive practices,

certification in special education, number of relevant content areas in formal training, and

personal experience with an individual with special needs outside school settings. In

addition, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run to test for differences in

between-subjects and within groups effects of school districts that met AYP compared

with school districts that did not meet AYP.

Research Questions Two, Three, and Four were analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in order to test for differences in the between-subjects and within groups effects of school districts that met AYP compared with school districts that did not meet AYP for effective strategies for meeting students' needs, support for educational change, and inclusive education.

While Galis and Tanner (1995) deleted some questions in phase II of the reliability check and did not use these questions in the analysis of data, the researcher used all 24 questions because of the small sample size in this study. Galis and Tanner's study consisted of much larger sample populations. Therefore, Research Question Two on effective strategies for meeting students' needs consisted of questions 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 13, 15, 18, 20, and 24. Research Question Three on support for educational change involved questions 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, and 21. Research Question Four on inclusive education includes questions, 4, 9, 11, 14, 16, 19, 22, and 23 (see Appendix C).

Procedures

Four school districts (two urban and two rural) were compared to determine administrators' perceptions of inclusion and to compare school districts based AYP status in the area of SWD. Eight middle school principals and 22 middle school assistant principals are expected to voluntarily participate in this study. These administrators represented middle schools in urban and rural school systems that enroll middle school students only, normally grades 6 through 8. The schools in these four school districts vary in sizes ranging from less than 250 to over 1,000 students, and the average class size ranged from 25 to over 40. These schools identified between 6% and 15% of the student population as students with special needs and represent varying degrees of inclusion.

Surveys were hand-delivered by the researcher to each school district. A designated official in each district distributed surveys to all middle schools administrators in the district. Each participant received a packet that included a cover letter requesting his or her participation and a survey. The researcher personally picked up completed and returned surveys from each designated official in that school system.

Surveys were coded numerically to represent the different school districts: two urban (U1 and U2) and two rural R1 and R2). Each principal and assistant principal was also coded based on the school district. For example, School District A, Principal A-1, A-2…A-10, Assistant Principal AP-1, AP-2, AP-3…AP-10 until all four districts had been identified. After ten days, no further contact or reminders were sent to collect surveys. Only the researcher knows which districts have been identified as School District U1, U2, R1, and R2. The researcher knows the identity of districts with codes in order to compare districts that met AYP or did not meet AYP in the area of students with disabilities (SWD).

No compensation was paid to participants. Anonymity was given to all participants. Only the researcher and advisor had access to the identity of school districts. Confidentiality was assured, however participants' responses were analyzed and comments were used in the analysis of data.

Three dependent variables were examined in this study (see Table 2): effective strategies for meeting students' needs; support for educational change; and inclusive education. Each dependent variable contained a group of statements from the survey. All questions were included on the survey for analysis. The survey contained 24 questions and demographic data such as age, gender, level of education, and years of experience as

a middle school principal or assistant principal. At the end of the survey, an area for comments asked administrators to discuss their personal experience with an individual with special needs outside the school setting. Three open-ended questions on inclusion were also added: (1) identify three of the most effective strategies you believe are important to inclusion; (2) discuss how effective strategies could be used to assist students with special needs in the classroom; and (3) could these strategies be used to support effect inclusion? Why or why not? An area was provided for general comments. The independent variable was inclusionary practices of full inclusion and pull-out inclusion models.

Table 2

Dependent Variables

Variables	Group of Questions
Effective Strategies	1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 13, 15, 18, 20, 24
Support for Educational Change	3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 21
Inclusive Education	4, 9, 11, 14, 16, 19, 22, 23

All middle school principals and middle school assistant principals from four selected Georgia school districts (two urban and two rural) were asked to participate in a survey for this research. These principals and assistant principals received a recruitment letter to participate in the study and completed a survey that took approximately 30 minutes to complete. After recruitment letters were received, each principal and assistant

principal received two copies of informed consent letters, one to sign and keep and return

the other copy to the researcher and directions for completing the "Inclusive Education

Survey" were given. Surveys were hand-delivered to each participating school district. A

representative in each school district disseminated the surveys to all middle school

principals and assistant principals. After ten days, the researcher personally visited each

county to collect the surveys from the designated school district official. No further

contact was made with school officials or participants.

<div align="center">Data Collection and Analyses</div>

Quantitative data were gathered in this study through the use of a questionnaire,

"Inclusive Education Survey" by Galis and Tanner (1995) that was used to explore the

three policy areas of effective strategies, educational change, and inclusive education.

Data were input into the SPSS program to run a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA)

to determine differences among the means of the three policy areas. The ANOVA

analysis was followed by Scheffe's post hoc analysis to determine which school districts

were significantly different from the others on the three policy areas for middle school

administrators. The post hoc analysis revealed significant differences between middle

school administrators in school districts that met AYP and school districts that did not

meet AYP. Demographic data were analyzed using descriptive research statistics of

frequencies and percents. To preserve anonymity, no phone calls were made or letters

neither mailed nor were additional mail reminders distributed. Qualitative data from

open-ended questions were analyzed using administrators' responses in Chapters IV and

V.

Chapter Summary

Chapter III presented the methodology for this mixed research design study, the research design, population and sample, and instrumentation. Procedures were described and data collection and analyses were presented. Chapter IV presented the analyses of the findings in this study. Chapter V presented the summary, conclusions, and implications based on this study's findings.

CHAPTER IV

REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to compare four school districts' Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) academic performance status to determine the perceptions of middle school principals and assistant principals regarding three policy areas: effective strategies for inclusion of students with special needs; support for educational change to promote inclusion of students with special needs; and inclusive education for students with special needs. Two school districts comprised Group 1: one urban and one rural school district that met AYP. Two school districts comprised Group 2: one urban and one rural school district that did not meet AYP. Middle school administrators' perceptions of inclusion were collected through the use of an Inclusive Education Survey.

Quantitative Analyses

Findings for Demographic Data for Administrators

As depicted in Table 3, there were 30 middle school administrators who participated in this study.

Table 3

Administrator Position

	Frequency	Percent
Middle School Administrators	30	100.0

Less than half of the administrators in this study were from 46 to over fifty years old. Forty percent were between 34 and 45 years old and slightly over 13% were 28 to 33 years old (see Table 4).

Table 4

Age

	Frequency	Percent
28-33 Years Old	4	13.3
34-39 Years Old	6	20.0
40-45 Years Old	6	20.0
46-50 Years Old	7	23.3
Over 50 Years Old	7	23.3
Total	30	100.0

More than two-thirds of the participants in this study were female administrators. The remaining were male administrators (see Table 5).

Table 5

Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Male	10	33.3
Female	20	66.7
Total	30	100.0

The majority of the administrators had Educational Specialists' degrees and above (73.3%). Less than one-fourth had Master's degrees. A small percentage of administrators only had Bachelor's degrees and no advanced degrees (see Table 6).

Table 6

Level of Education

	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor's Degree	2	6.7
Master's Degree	6	20.0
Educational Specialist & Above	22	73.3
Total	30	100.0

Slightly over one-third of the administrators in this study had 6 to 16 years of experience. Less than half had one to five years of experience. A small percentage had 17 to over 22 years of experience (see Table 7).

Table 7

Years of Experience as a Middle School Administrator

	Frequency	Percent
None	6	20.0
1-5 Years	13	43.3
6-16 Years	9	30.1
17-Over 22 Years	2	6.6
Total	30	100.0

Less than half of these administrators have 6 to 16 years of experience as full-time regular education teachers. Another less than half have one to five years of experience. Less than one-fourth has 17 to over 22 years of experience as full-time regular education teachers (see Table 8).

Table 8

Years of Full-time Regular Education Teaching Experience

	Frequency	Percent
1-5 Years	12	40.0
6-16 Years	13	43.3
17-Over 22 Years	5	16.7
Total	30	100.0

Similar to years of experience as full-time regular education teachers, the majority of these administrators have one to five years of full-time special education teaching experience. Less than one-third have up to 16 years while a small percentage have over 22 years of experience in special education (see Table 9).

Table 9

Years of Full-time Special Education Teaching Experience

	Frequency	Percent
1-5 Years	19	63.3
6-16 Years	9	30.0
17- Over 22 Years	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

In terms of the number of special education credits in formal training, the majority of these administrators have over half of these administrators have none to five credits. Less than one-fourth of these administrators have up to 16 credits. One-third have over 22 credits (see Table 10).

Table 10

Number of Special Education Credits in Formal Training

	Frequency	Percent
0-5 Credits	14	46.7
6-16 Credits	7	23.3
17-Over 22 Credits	9	30.0
Total	30	100.0

As depicted in Table 11, the majority of administrators earned up to 16 credits. Less than one-fourth earned over 22 credits.

Table 11

Number of In-service Hours in Inclusive Practices

	Frequency	Percent
0-5 Credits	10	33.3
6-16 Credits	14	46.7
17-Over 22 Credits	6	20.0
Total	30	100.0

The majority of administrators were not certified in special education. Less than half were certified as shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Certification in Special Education

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	12	40.0
No	18	60.0
Total	30	100.0

Slightly over half of these administrators have one to two relevant content areas in formal training in special education. Nearly one-fourth has over eight areas (see Table 13).

Table 13

Number of Relevant Content Areas (Math, Science, Language Arts, Social Studies) in Formal Training in Special Education

	Frequency	Percent
1-2 Areas	16	53.3
3-4 Areas	4	13.3
5-6 Areas	3	10.0
Over 8 Areas	7	23.4
Total	30	100.0

Analysis of Dependent Variables

Eighty-seven surveys were hand-delivered and picked up by the researcher from the assigned individual in each school district. Four school districts voluntarily participated in this study. One school district did not respond to the researcher's invitation to participate in this study. Thirty surveys were completed and picked up from each school district by the researcher. Each strategy (effective strategies for meeting students with disabilities needs, support for educational change, and inclusive education) provided a foundation for creating research questions in this study.

Findings for Research Question One

Research Question One: To what extent do demographic factors (age, level of education, and years of experience as a middle school administrator) influence the perceptions of middle school administrators in school districts that met AYP and did not meet AYP promote the three policy areas: effective strategies, support for educational change, and inclusive education for the inclusion of students with disabilities?

The researcher selected four school districts (two urban and two rural school districts) that met AYP and did not meet AYP were compared to determine middle school administrators' perceptions of inclusion of students with disabilities within three policy areas of effective strategies for inclusion of students with disabilities, support for educational change to promote inclusion of students with disabilities, and to promote inclusive education for students with special needs. Urban School District 1 and Rural School District 1 met AYP. Urban School District 2 and Rural School District 2 did not meet AYP.

Means of Effective Strategies and Demographic Data

Research Question One analyzed means for middle school administrators' age, level of education, and years of experience as administrators. Middle school administrators rated each item of effective strategies using a Likert-type scale of 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = don't know, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. For ages 28-39, ratings were high (4.0 to 5.0).

 Age. Administrators in the age range of 40 to 45 years had ratings uncertain area for "keeping academic expectations consistent for all students is important" than other areas. This age group was uncertain. Ages 40 to 50 administrators were uncertain about "same behavioral expectations" and "receive special help outside the regular classroom." Ratings were high for all age groups (except ages 28-33 administrators were uncertain) for all other indices with the exception of "grouped by ability." Middle school administrators disagreed with this statement (see Table 14).

Table 14

Means of Effective Strategies and Age

Age	N	Modifications	Ability	Title I	Consistent academic expectations	Small class size	Same behavior expectations	Valuable service	Wide ability levels	Special help	Grouped by ability
28-33	4	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.7	4.7	4.0	5.0	4.7	4.7	3.2
34-39	6	5.0	4.0	4.3	4.8	5.0	4.3	5.0	4.3	4.5	2.5
40-45	6	4.0	5.0	4.1	3.6	4.3	3.0	4.5	4.5	3.5	2.0
46-50	7	4.4	4.8	4.5	4.1	4.5	3.4	4.8	4.5	3.8	2.1
50+	7	4.7	4.4	4.0	4.1	4.7	4.0	4.8	4.1	4.1	2.5
Total	30	4.6	4.6	4.2	4.2	4.6	3.7	4.8	4.4	4.1	2.4

 Gender. As indicated in Table 15, there were twice as many females middle school administrators as males. Female administrators were uncertain

about "consistent academic expectations" than in other areas. Both male and female administrators rated other areas high indicating importance. However, both groups disagreed with the statement "grouped by ability" (see Table 15).

Table 15

Means of Effective Strategies and Gender

Gender	N	Modifications	Ability	Title I	Consistent academic expectations	Small class size	Same behavior expectations	Valuable service	Wide ability levels	Special help	Grouped by ability
Male	10	4.6	4.8	4.3	4.0	4.7	4.0	4.7	4.4	4.2	2.3
Female	20	4.6	4.5	4.2	4.4	4.6	3.6	4.9	4.4	4.0	2.5
Total	30	4.6	4.6	4.2	4.2	4.6	3.7	4.8	4.4	4.1	2.4

Level of Education. Similar to administrators aged 40 to 50 years old, administrators with educational specialists and above degrees were uncertain about "same behavioral expectations" and "receive special help outside the regular classroom." Middle school administrators with all degrees agreed with the remaining statements in effective strategies with one exception, "grouped by ability." All administrators with various degrees disagreed and strongly disagreed with this statement as shown in Table 16.

Table 16

Means of Effective Strategies and Level of Education

Level of Education	N	Modifications	Ability	Title I	Consistent academic expectations	Small class size	Same behavior expectations	Valuable service	Wide ability levels	Special help	Grouped by ability
Bachelor's Degree	2	5.0	5.0	4.5	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	4.5	4.5	2.0
Master's Degree	6	4.8	4.6	4.0	4.0	4.8	4.0	4.8	4.1	4.5	1.8
Educational Specialist and Above	22	4.4	4.6	4.2	4.2	4.5	3.6	4.8	4.5	3.8	2.6
Total	30	4.6	4.6	4.2	4.2	4.6	3.7	4.8	4.4	4.1	2.4

Years of Experience as a Middle School Administrator. All middle school administrators were uncertain about "same behavioral expectations." Administrators with no experience and administrators with 17 to over 22 years of experience were uncertain about "receive special help outside the regular classroom." Administrators with 6 to 16 years of experience were uncertain about "consistent academic expectations." With the exception of 93% disagreement among administrators on "grouped by ability," all administrators regardless of years of experience agreed with the remaining statements for effective strategies except where noted in the aforementioned analyses (see Table 17).

Table 17

Means of Effective Strategies and Years of Experience as a Middle School Administrator

Years of Experience	N	Modifications	Ability	Title I	Consistent academic expectations	Small class size	Same behavior expectations	Valuable service	Wide ability levels	Special help	Grouped by ability
None	6	5.0	4.6	4.0	5.0	5.0	3.8	5.0	4.3	3.5	2.8
1-5 Years	13	4.4	4.8	4.0	4.2	4.6	3.7	4.6	4.3	4.1	2.2
6-16 Years	9	4.5	4.4	4.5	3.8	4.6	3.7	4.8	4.5	4.5	2.3
17-22+	2	5.0	4.0	4.5	4.5	4.0	3.0	5.0	4.5	3.0	3.0
Total	30	4.6	4.6	4.2	4.2	4.6	3.7	4.8	4.4	4.1	2.4

Means of Support for Educational Change and Demographic Data

      Middle school administrators rated each item of support for educational change using a Likert-type scale of 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = don't know, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree.

      Age. Middle school administrators aged 28-33 and 46-50 were uncertain about "input;" ages 34-39 were uncertain about "mutual planning and collaboration;" ages 40-45 and 46-50 were uncertain about "talk and plan;" and ages 34-39 and over 50 years old were uncertain about "staff development opportunities." Regardless of age on the remaining statements, administrators agreed except where noted (see Table 18).

Table 18

Means of Support for Educational Change and Age

Age	N	Continuum of Services	Input	Support from Supervisors	Talk and Plan	Mutual Planning and Collaboration	Staff Development Opportunities
28-33	4	4.0	3.5	4.4	4.2	4.7	4.0
34-39	6	4.8	4.6	4.6	4.1	3.6	3.8
40-45	6	4.5	4.0	4.3	3.8	4.3	4.6
46-50	7	4.2	3.4	4.1	3.7	4.1	4.4
50+	7	4.1	4.2	4.4	4.1	4.2	3.7
Total	30	4.6	4.6	4.2	4.2	4.6	3.7

      Gender. As indicated in Table 19, there were twice as many females middle school administrators as males. Male administrators were uncertain about "staff development opportunities" than in other areas. Female administrators were uncertain about "input" and "talk and plan." Both male and female administrators rated other areas high indicating agreement.

Table 19

Means of Support for Educational Change and Gender

Age	N	Continuum of Services	Input	Support from Supervisors	Talk and Plan	Mutual Planning and Collaboration	Staff Development Opportunities
Male	10	4.1	4.1	4.6	4.7	4.5	3.7
Female	20	4.5	3.9	4.3	3.6	4.0	4.3
Total	30	4.3	4.0	4.4	4.0	4.2	4.1

Level of Education. Middle school administrators with Bachelor's degrees were uncertain about "input" and "talk and plan." Administrators with Master's degree were uncertain about "staff development opportunities." Administrators with advanced degrees were in agreement on all indices of support for educational change as shown in Table 20.

Table 20

Means of Support for Educational Change and Level of Education

Level of Education	N	Continuum of Services	Input	Support from Supervisors	Talk and Plan	Mutual Planning and Collaboration	Staff Development Opportunities
Bachelor's Degree	2	4.5	3.0	4.5	3.5	4.0	4.0
Master's Degree	6	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.1	4.1	3.5
Educational Specialist and Above	22	4.4	4.0	4.4	4.0	4.2	4.3
Total	30	4.3	4.0	4.4	4.4	4.0	4.1

Years of Experience as Middle School Administrators

Middle school administrators with no experience administrators were uncertain about "talk and plan" while administrators with over 22 years of experience strongly disagreed about "talk and plan." Administrators with one to five years and 6 to 16 years of experience were uncertain about "input." Administrators with 6 to 16 years were also

uncertain about "staff development opportunities." Administrators with over 22 years experience as administrators were uncertain about "support from supervisors." Overall, middle school administrators were in agreement with support for educational change except where noted (see Table 21).

Table 21

Means of Support for Educational Change and Years of Experience as a Middle School

Administrator

Years of Experience	N	Continuum of Services	Input	Support from Supervisors	Talk and Plan	Mutual Planning and Collaboration	Staff Development Opportunities
None	6	4.8	4.5	4.5	3.8	4.1	4.1
1-5 Years	13	4.3	3.7	4.5	4.0	4.0	4.3
6-16 Years	9	4.5	3.9	4.5	4.3	4.4	3.8
17-22+ Years	2	4.5	4.5	3.0	2.5	4.0	4.5
Total	30	4.3	4.0	4.4	4.0	4.2	4.1

Means of Inclusive Education and Demographic Data

Middle school administrators rated each item of support for educational change using a Likert-type scale of 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = don't know, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree.

Age. All age groups agreed with "inclusion of students with special needs can be beneficial to other students," "school and school district are strong supporters of inclusion," and "all students should be included in regular environments." All age groups strongly disagreed with "inclusion in the regular classroom will hurt the educational progress of regular education students" and "placement of a student with a disability into a regular classroom is disruptive to regular education students." All age groups with the exception of over 50 years old were uncertain about "students should be served in regular

classrooms regardless of their disability." Age group over 50 disagreed with this statement (see Table 22).

Table 22

Means of Inclusive Education and Age

Age	N	Effective Strategy	Beneficial to other students	Served in regular classes	Strong supporter	Spend Time with Students	Regular Environments	Hurt educational progress of student without disability	Disruptive to other students
28-33 Years	4	4.0	4.5	3.0	4.7	3.7	4.2	2.5	3.5
34-39 Years	6	4.5	4.6	3.3	5.0	3.1	4.6	1.3	1.6
40-45 Years	6	3.8	4.5	3.0	4.3	2.6	4.1	1.1	1.6
46-50 Years	7	4.5	4.5	3.0	4.4	3.4	4.7	2.4	3.1
Over 50 Years	7	4.4	4.1	2.5	4.8	3.1	4.4	4.5	2.1
Total	30	4.3	4.4	2.9	4.6	3.2	4.4	1.7	2.3

Gender. As indicated in Table 30, there were twice as many females middle school administrators than male. Both male and female middle school administrators agreed on "inclusion of students with special needs into regular classes is generally an effective strategy," "inclusion of students with special needs can be beneficial to other students," "school and school district are strong supporters of inclusion," and "all students should be included in regular environments." Male administrators strongly disagreed with "students should be served in regular classrooms regardless of their disability." Female administrators were not so sure. Both male and female administrators were uncertain about "regular teachers must spend a great deal of time with students with special

needs." Both male and female administrators strongly disagreed with "inclusion in the regular classroom will hurt the educational progress of regular education students" and "placement of a student with a disability into a regular classroom is disruptive to regular education students" (see Table 23).

Table 23

Means of Inclusive Education and Gender

Gender	N	Effective Strategy	Beneficial to other students	Served in regular classes	Strong supporter	Spend Time with Students	Regular Environments	Hurt educational progress of student without disability	Disruptive to other students
Male	10	4.3	4.4	2.6	4.7	3.1	4.1	1.6	2.6
Female	20	4.3	4.5	3.1	4.6	3.2	4.6	1.8	2.2
Total	30	4.3	4.4	2.9	4.6	3.2	4.4	1.7	2.3

Level of Education. As depicted in Table 24, middle school administrators in all levels of education agreed on "inclusion of students with special needs into regular classes is generally an effective strategy," "inclusion of students with special needs can be beneficial to other students," "school and school district are strong supporters of inclusion," and "all students should be included in regular environments." Administrators with Bachelor's degrees and Educational Specialist's and above were uncertain about "students should be served in regular classrooms regardless of their disability" and "regular teachers must spend a great deal of time with students with special needs." Administrators with Master's degrees disagreed with both statements. All levels of education administrators strongly disagreed with "inclusion in the regular classroom will hurt the educational progress of regular education students" and disagreed with "placement of a student with a disability into a regular classroom is disruptive to regular education students."

Table 24

Means of Inclusive Education and Level of Education

Level of Education	N	Effective Strategy	Beneficial to other students	Served in regular classes	Strong supporter	Spend Time with Students	Regular Environment	Hurt educational progress of student without disability	Disruptive to other students
Bachelor's Degree	2	4.5	4.5	3.0	5.0	3.0	4.5	1.0	3.5
Master's Degree	6	4.0	4.5	2.5	4.5	2.5	4.6	1.6	2.0
Educational Specialist and Above	22	4.3	4.4	3.1	4.6	3.4	4.3	1.8	2.3
Total	30	4.3	4.4	2.9	4.6	3.2	4.4	1.7	2.3

Years of Experience as a Middle School Administrator. All years of experience as middle school administrators agreed on "inclusion of students with special needs into regular classes is generally an effective strategy," "school and school district are strong supporters of inclusion," and "all students should be included in regular environments." All administrators agreed on "inclusion of students with special needs can be beneficial to other students" with the exception of disagreement in those administrators with over 22 years of experience. All administrators with the exception of those with one to five years of experience were uncertain about "students should be served in regular classrooms regardless of their disability." Those administrators with one to five years disagreed with this statement. Administrators with no years of experience and 6 to 16 years of experience were uncertain about "regular teachers must spend a great deal of time with students with special needs." Administrators with one to five years experience disagreed with this statement while administrators with more than 22 years agreed with it.

The majority of administrators disagreed with "inclusion in the regular classroom will hurt the educational progress of regular education students" while administrators with one to five years of experience agreed with it. The majority of administrators disagreed with "placement of a student with a disability into a regular classroom is disruptive to regular education students" while administrators with over 22 years were uncertain about it (see Table 25).

Table 25

Means of Inclusive Education and Years of Experience as a Middle School

Administrator

Years of Experience	N	Effective Strategy	Beneficial to other students	Served in regular classes	Strong supporter	Spend Time with Students	Regular Environment	Hurt educational progress of student without	Disruptive to other students
None	6	4.6	4.6	3.3	4.6	3.5	4.5	1.6	2.3
1-5 Years	13	4.1	4.6	2.6	4.6	2.5	4.3	4.6	1.9
6-16 Years	9	4.1	4.3	3.2	4.5	3.7	4.6	1.8	2.9
17-22+ Years	2	4.5	3.5	3.0	5.0	4.5	4.5	2.5	3.0
Total	30	4.3	4.4	2.9	4.6	3.2	4.4	1.7	2.3

Findings for Research Question Two

Research Question Two: To what extent do middle school administrators in school districts that met AYP and did not meet AYP promote effective strategies for inclusion of students with disabilities?

As shown in Table 26, 24 statements represented the dependent variables from the questionnaire. Administrators rated each statement according to a 5-point Likert scale: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = no opinion, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. The

means of effective strategies for students with disabilities is demonstrated in Table 26. Urban School District 1 and Rural School District 1 met AYP. Urban School District 2 and Rural School District 2 did not meet AYP.

All middle school administrators, regardless of AYP status agreed on "progress should be graded according to ability rather than only with standardized measures," "maximum class size should be lowered when including students with disabilities," "special education provides a valuable service for students with special needs," and "students should be grouped in ways which allow a wide variety of abilities in each class." Urban 1 administrator was approaching agreement on "programs, like Title I are effective" and "slow learners should receive special help outside the regular classroom" whereas other administrators agreed.

Urban 2 middle school administrator was uncertain about "it is important to make modifications for students who need adaptations to benefit from a particular instructional environment" and "keeping academic expectations consistent for all students is important," Other administrators agreed with these statements. All administrators were somewhat uncertain about "it is important to keep behavioral expectations the same for all students" with the exception of Rural 2 administrator who agreed with this statement. Rural 2 administrator was uncertain about "in most cases, students should be grouped by ability" while other administrators disagreed with this statement (see Table 26).

Among these statements, overall Rural 2 administrators had the highest average mean (M = 4.5) followed by Urban 1 (M = 4.1), and Urban 2 (M = 4.0). Rural 1 (M = 3.6) average mean indicated uncertainty overall (see Table 26).

Overall, administrators in Rural School District 2 that did not meet AYP had the highest average mean in effective strategies. This agreement may have been due to the small number of administrators who completed in the survey. The lowest means occurred for administrators in all four school districts in the area of "students should be grouped by ability" which means that administrators disagreed with this statement.

Table 26

Means of Effective Strategies of Urban and Rural Administrators and AYP Status

Statement	AYP U1			AYP R1			NON-AYP U2			NON-AYP R2		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
It is important to make modifications for students who need adaptations to benefit from a particular instructional environment.	10	4.9	.316	13	4.7	.599	5	3.4	2.19	2	5.0	.000
Students' progress should be graded according to ability rather than only with standardized measures.	10	4.6	.516	13	4.5	.877	5	4.8	.447	2	5.0	.000
Programs, like Title I are effective.	10	3.9	.737	13	4.3	.767	5	4.6	.547	2	4.0	.000
Keeping academic expectations consistent for all students is important.	10	4.7	.438	13	4.1	1.28	5	3.5	2.19	2	5.0	.000
Maximum class size should be lowered when including students with disabilities.	10	4.8	.421	13	4.6	.650	5	4.6	.547	2	4.5	.707
It is important to keep behavioral expectations the same for all students.	10	3.8	.632	13	3.8	1.34	5	3.0	1.87	2	4.5	.707
Special education provides a valuable service for students with special needs.	10	4.9	.316	13	4.6	.480	5	5.0	.000	2	5.0	.000
Students should be grouped in ways which allow a wide variety of abilities in each class.	10	4.0	.516	13	4.3	.650	5	4.6	.547	2	4.5	.707
Slow learners should receive special help outside the regular classroom.	10	3.7	1.33	13	4.0	1.29	5	5.0	.000	2	4.5	.707
In most cases, students should be grouped by ability.	10	2.3	1.25	13	2.5	1.45	5	2.0	1.22	2	3.5	2.12
Average Means		4.1			3.6			4.0			4.5	

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run to test for differences among the means of each of the three strategies: effective strategies, support for educational change, and inclusive education. Scheffe's test was applied for post hoc analysis with $p <$ .05 level of significance. Questionnaire items included in the subset of effective strategies were questions 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 13, 15, 18, 20, 24 (see Appendix C). Significant differences were found for the variable "make modifications for students who need adaptations" with respect to effective strategies for students with disabilities ($F = 3.122$, $p = .043$) as noted in Table 26. No other differences were found for the remaining questions for effective strategies for students with disabilities.

Scheffe's post hoc analysis revealed a significant difference among administrators in Urban 1 (U1), Rural 1 (R1), Urban 2 (U2), and Rural 2 (R2) on the importance in making modifications for students who need adaptations to benefit from a particular instructional environment (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004; Robertson & Valentine, 1998). Rural 2 administrators showed the strongest agreement with the effective strategy statements. While Rural 1 administrators agreed with the effective strategies, their agreement was not as strong as the other three groups of administrators (see Table 27).

Table 27

ANOVA for Effective Strategies

	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	*F*	*p*<.05
It is important to make modifications for students who need adaptations to benefit from a particular instructional environment.	Between Groups	8.792	3	2.931	3.122	.043*
	Within Groups	24.408	26	.939		
	Total	33.200	29			

Findings for Research Question Three

Research Question Three: To what extent do middle school administrators in school districts that met AYP and did not meet AYP provide support for educational change to promote inclusion of students with disabilities?

Similar to the findings for effective strategies, Rural 2 administrators had the highest average mean (M = 4.2) for support for educational change followed closely by Rural 1 (M = 4.1) and Urban 2 (M = 4.0). Urban 1 administrators were somewhat uncertain about having support from their supervisors. Middle school administrators agreed on "I have support from my supervisor(s) to try new ideas and implement creative strategies," "Efforts are made to provide opportunities for mutual planning and collaboration among personnel in my school and school district," and opportunities for staff development are provided by my school and school district which meet my needs for professional development." Rural 1 administrators were uncertain about "our school/school district has a broad continuum of services for meeting the needs of all students" whereas other administrators agreed and strongly agreed.

Administrators whose school districts made AYP agreed with having "input into the program of students with special needs who are placed in the regular classroom." Conversely, administrators whose school districts did not make AYP were uncertain about this statement. Rural 1 administrators agreed that they had "opportunities to talk and plan with my colleagues on a regular basis" while other administrators expressed that they were uncertain about this statement (see Table 28).

Table 28

Means of Support for Educational Change of Urban and Rural Administrators

and AYP Status

Statement	AYP U1			AYP R1			NON-AYP U2			NON-AYP R2		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Our school/school district has a broad continuum of services for meeting the needs of all students.	10	4.7	.483	13	3.8	.987	5	4.8	.447	2	5.0	.000
I have input into the program of students with special needs who are placed in the regular classroom.	10	4.6	.516	13	4.0	.912	5	3.0	1.87	2	3.5	2.12
I have support from my supervisor(s) to try new ideas and implement creative strategies.	10	4.4	1.07	13	4.5	.518	5	4.2	.447	2	4.5	.707
I have opportunities to talk and plan with my colleagues on a regular basis.	10	3.7	1.33	13	4.5	.518	5	3.4	1.34	2	3.5	2.12
Efforts are made to provide opportunities for mutual planning and collaboration among personnel in my school and school district.	10	4.0	.816	13	4.3	.630	5	4.2	.836	2	4.5	.707
Opportunities for staff development are provided by my school and school district which meet my needs for professional growth.	10	4.0	.816	13	4.0	.954	5	4.4	.547	2	4.5	.707
Average Means		3.4			4.1			4.0			4.2	

As depicted in Table 29, a significant difference was found in support for educational change for inclusion of students with disabilities ($F = 3.786$, $p = .022$). Questionnaire items included in the subset of support for educational change included questions 3, 5, 10, 12, 17, 21 (see Appendix C). Scheffe's test revealed that administrators in Urban 1, Urban 2, and Rural 2 School Districts were in agreement with each other but different from Rural 1 school administrators who viewed their school and school district has a broad continuum of services (Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995; Taylor, 1988; The Council for Exceptional Children, CEC, 1993) for meeting the needs of all students less positively or between no opinion and on the high end of agreement than did the other three groups whose ratings were much higher. The means ranged from 3.8 to 5.0 for all administrators in all four districts on support for educational change.

Table 29

ANOVA for Support for Educational Change

	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	*F*	*p*<.05
Our school and school district have a broad continuum of services for meeting the needs of all students.	Between Groups	6.374	3	2.125	3.786	.022*
	Within Groups	14.592	26	.561		
	Total	20.967	29			

Findings for Research Question Four

Research Question Four: To what extent do middle school administrators in school districts that met AYP and did not meet AYP promote inclusive education for students with disabilities?

No significant differences were found in inclusive education for students with disabilities on any of the statements. Questionnaire items included in the subset of inclusive education were questions 4, 9, 11, 14, 16, 19, 22, 23 (see Appendix C). Scheffe's test revealed that administrators in Urban 1, Urban 2, Rural 1 and Rural 2 School Districts were in agreement with each other on each of the eight statements. The means ranged from 1.0 to 5.0 for administrators in the four school districts on support for educational change. Administrators rated some areas of inclusive education lower than any areas in effective strategies and support for educational change.

As demonstrated in Table 30, again Rural 2 administrators had the highest average mean (M = 3.9) for inclusive education among all other administrators. While Rural 2 administrators' average mean was approaching overall agreement, other administrators' average means were uncertain. Middle school administrators agreed with "inclusion of students with mild disabilities into regular classes is generally an effective strategy," "the inclusion of students with special needs into the regular classroom can be beneficial to the other students in the class," "my school/school district is a strong supporter of inclusive education," and "all students should be included in regular environments to the greatest extent possible."

Rural 1 (AYP) and Rural 2 (Non-AYP) administrators were uncertain about "students should be served in regular classes regardless of disability" while Urban 1

(AYP) and Urban 2 (Non-AYP) administrators disagreed with this statement. Urban 2 administrators disagreed with "regular teachers must spend a great deal of time with students with special needs" and other administrators were uncertain about this statement.

Rural 2 administrators were uncertain about "inclusion in the regular classroom will hurt the educational progress of the regular education student" and "placement of a student with a disability into a regular classroom is disruptive to regular education students." Other administrators disagreed with these statements (see Table 30).

Table 30

Means of Inclusive Education of Urban and Rural Administrators and AYP Status

Statement	AYP U1			AYP R1			NON-AYP U2			NON-AYP R2		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Inclusion of students with mild disabilities into regular classes is generally an effective strategy.	10	4.5	.527	13	4.0	.759	5	4.6	.547	2	4.0	.000
The inclusion of students with special needs into the regular classroom can be beneficial to the other students in the class.	10	4.6	.699	13	4.3	.480	5	4.6	.547	2	4.5	.707
Students should be served in regular classes regardless of disability.	10	2.8	1.13	13	3.2	1.64	5	2.4	1.94	2	3.5	2.12
My school/school district is a strong supporter of inclusive education.	10	4.7	.483	13	4.6	.630	5	4.4	.547	2	5.0	.000
Regular teachers must spend a great deal of time with students with special needs.	10	3.3	1.41	13	3.4	1.05	5	2.2	1.09	2	3.5	2.12
All students should be included in regular environments to the greatest extent possible.	10	4.5	.527	13	4.3	.854	5	4.8	.447	2	4.5	.707
Inclusion in the regular classroom will hurt the educational progress of the student with a disability.	10	2.0	1.56	13	1.7	.832	5	1.0	.000	2	3.0	2.82
Placement of a student with a disability into a regular classroom is disruptive to students with special needs.	10	2.3	1.33	13	2.4	1.33	5	1.8	1.78	2	3.5	2.12
Average Means		3.5			3.4			3.2			3.9	

Open-Ended Questions Analysis

Description of Administrators

Certification in Special Education

The majority of administrators in this study had certification in special education. These administrators are currently middle school principals and assistant principals and therefore have experience in working with students with special needs. Levels of certification include orthopedically impaired, mental retardation, K-12 consultative, K-12 language arts and social studies, leadership certification in mental retardation, interrelated, pre-school handicapped, and director of special education, learning disabilities, and emotional behavior disorder.

Personal Experience with an Individual with Special Needs Outside School Setting

In addition to being certified in special education, several administrators had family members with mental instability, mild intellectual disabilities, deaf, and orthopedically impaired, a relative that is a child with special needs, a deaf neighbor and a friend's relative who has Down syndrome, and worked with students with disabilities in church, and Special Olympics. Others reported that they either served as an administrator over the special education department, or was a director of a special needs camp during the summer for children and their siblings with various disabilities. Another administrator reported assisting students with special needs with wheelchair basketball.

Open-Ended Questions on Inclusion

For qualitative analysis, three open-ended questions were included at the end of the survey. Administrators included principals and assistant principals in this analysis.

These administrators were asked to provide comments on effective strategies fro inclusion of students with special needs, support for educational change to promote inclusion of students with special needs, and promote inclusive education for students with special needs. The results of this qualitative analysis revealed that the majority of administrators were certified in a special area of students with special needs and had prior or current experience working with students, family, and friends with special needs.

Furthermore, these administrators encouraged special education teachers to use the top three effective strategies of differentiation instruction, collaboration, and co-teaching (Fisher, Sax, & Grove, 2000; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995; Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996). Many of these administrators were also supportive of the three policy areas of support for educational change to promote inclusion of students with special needs as evident in the themes that emerged in the open-ended questions.

Effective Strategies for Students with Disabilities

Administrators were asked to identify three of the most effective strategies that they believed were important to inclusion. Overwhelmingly, these administrators listed differentiated instruction as the most important effective strategy to use with students with special needs. One administrator said, "Differentiating instruction is the number one strategy used. Think Pair-Share grouping students with special needs with students who have high ability levels; small group/cooperative grouping is effective with this group when students have the ability to apply prior knowledge and experiences to the assignments; using manipulatives is also helpful." Another stated, "Differentiated instruction focuses on individual student needs. Differentiated instruction provides students with special needs with opportunities for success and participation; co-teaching

provides small group instruction; behavior management guides in goal setting and produces an increase in social skill development." Another administrator said, "By differentiating instruction, teachers should be able to reach and teach all students in the classroom; thereby impacting students with special needs."

The second most effective strategy cited by middle school administrators was "cooperative groups and collaboration using differentiated instruction and pre and post-tests to establish goals for learning." Collaboration includes also common planning time for co-teachers who work together in a collaborative environment (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004; Robertson & Valentine, 1998) that includes general education and special education students (Price, Mayfield, McFadden, & Marsh, 2001). These administrators stated that common planning time allows co-teachers to discuss student progress and make plans for differentiated instructional planning for all students.

Common planning time for co-teachers (general education and special education teacher) was the third most effective strategy for these administrators. One administrator admitted that "As administrators, we need to build a master schedule and planning time for both general education and special education teachers in order for them to build a relationship and plan lessons that are differentiated to the various ability levels of students in their classes." A master schedule would include common planning for co-teachers who may not have common planning times to plan and reflect on the day's lessons for all students.

The National Education Association recommends that inclusive class size be no higher than 28 and that in classes including students with learning disabilities, this

population should make up no more than 25% of the class (Deno, Foegen, Robinson, & Epsin, 1996; McLeskey & Waldron, 2000; Roach, 1995; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). This arrangement could mean extra faculty in schools using co-teachers. Scheduling the amount of time needed for collaborative planning, especially at the middle and secondary levels where a co-teacher may be working with as many as six different teachers during the course of the school day, is another difficulty (NEA, 2007).

The administrators in this study said that teachers should have opportunities to "prepare for inclusion and provide inclusion for students who will benefit from it." Furthermore, teachers should be given the opportunity to "plan and practice instruction together prior to delivery." Another term for co-teaching (Fisher, Sax, & Grove, 2000; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995; Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996) is team teaching or parallel teaching where teachers alternate between teaching and observing and assisting children with disabilities. These administrators reported that having small classes consisting of general education and special education students combined would be "helpful to general education teachers' acceptance of special education students into their classes."

With the top three effective strategies of "differentiated instruction, collaboration, and co-teaching (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989; Fisher, Sax, & Grove, 2000; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995; Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996), administrators reported that other effective strategies for students with disabilities include communication between co-teachers, good working relationships between and among teachers, team support, parental involvement, accelerated learning, giving and building information prior to unit, using data to drive instruction, graphic organizers, and setting

high expectations so that all students are able to meet standards and academic

challenges." Children with disabilities should "engage in cooperative learning" with other

students in general education classrooms (Dugan et al., 1995; Hunt et al., 1994; Idol et

al., 1986; Logan et al., 1997). As a result, children can assist each other in peer tutoring

activities.

Administrators reported that these strategies are "research-based" and stated that

these strategies really work since they have tried them over the years. In order for these

strategies to be effective for students with disabilities, a "behavior management system

for discipline should be in place" for all teachers' classrooms and classes should be kept

small in size. Staub and Peck (1995) found that including students with disabilities in

general education classes did not produce any hard to general education children.

Additionally, general education students did not pick up undesirable behaviors from

students with disabilities.

Small classes would allow for flexible grouping in differentiation (DiMartino,

2004; Heacox, 2002; New Horizons for Learning, 2004; Tomlinson, 1995, 1999;

Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006) where students would participate in "workshop framework

moving in and out of small groups." Students with disabilities need to be given

opportunities to participate in the general education setting as much as possible.

One administrator was concerned about the competency of teachers to deliver

instruction to both groups of students (general education and special education). Another

stated that if teachers were not trained during staff development in how to use these

strategies, then they may not be as successful. Hines (2001) reports that both general and

special education teachers feel that knowledge barriers exist in inclusive classrooms. In

many cases, general educators do not feel that they have received the necessary training for working with students with special needs. Conversely, special educators may be at a disadvantage in middle level classes if they are not content experts and may thus be placed in more of a consultant's role (Hines).

Another administrator commented that these "strategies will work if teachers are trained and refreshed frequently and if teachers know the IEPs of their students very well." Praisner (2003) investigated relationships regarding attitudes toward inclusion and focused on variables such as training and experience and models for teacher training. Praisner's study and other researchers supported these findings that students with severe special needs made much greater progress in the general education classrooms as compared with their peers in special education classrooms (Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis, & Goetz, 1994).

An administrator said, "Inclusion teachers help create units and hands-on activities." Others tended to agree that "Teachers (general education and special education) need to be given opportunities to plan together." Researchers found that general education and special education teachers spend very little time planning for inclusion implementation (Deno et al., 1996; McLeskey & Waldron, 2000; Richardson & Jording, 1999; Roach, 1995; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995). Another administrator stated, "Each teacher should work with all students; each teacher should be trained to work with students with disabilities; each teacher should have an equal opportunity to instruct the students with special needs."

Support for Educational Change to Promote Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

The second question posed was could these strategies be used to support educational change? Why or why not? Administrators were all positively assured that students could benefit from using these strategies as support for educational change to promote inclusion of these students. Several administrators mentioned parental involvement as a strategy and stated that, "Students can benefit from effective teachers and strong support from their parents." Another administrator addressed the issue of differentiating instruction and various learning styles (Clough & Nutbrown, 2005). Others commented that these strategies have been proven to be effective in inclusion settings and encourage learning for all students since these strategies "allow each student the opportunity to be serviced in their needs improvement area." One administrator commented that "These strategies support the structure of the collaborative model."

These strategies can be used as support for educational change because "students already have two teachers which is a plus. They have the best of both worlds." The main objective is to make sure that "general education and special education teachers are trained on these inclusion strategies and how to make them work in general education classrooms." Not only will these strategies be used to support effective inclusion but more importantly, these strategies will "improve the learning of students with special needs and general education students as well." One administrator cautioned others to say that simply improving students' academic needs is not an exclusive concern, but inclusion strategies also "applies to improved socialization skills" for both groups of students, including general education students and students with special needs.

An administrator was concerned that many students with special needs were often ashamed and embarrassed, especially in middle schools of being in special education classes and seemed to enjoy being mixed in with general education students' classes to avoid being recognized as "special." This administrator stated that inclusion "reduces the stigma of being an 'SWD' or students with disabilities" since "all students receive improved instruction in a classroom with a special education teacher and a co-teacher in general education." Co-teaching (Fisher, Sax, & Grove, 2000; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995; Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996) helps both teachers to better understand the overall curriculum and how to adjust curriculum activities to fit the needs of both groups of students and more importantly, it "provides a support system for both teachers." One administrator stated, "Co-teaching strategies are very important and can be very effective if utilized. These strategies provide different outcomes for various students participating in the same activity (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989; Fisher, Sax, & Grove, 2000; Vaughn & Schumm, 1995; Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996). The content area is easily reinforced for students with special needs." Co-teaching "gives teachers a starting point for teaching students and it allows teachers to track student progress together." Additionally, "students will benefit from the knowledge and experience of both teachers," stated another.

An administrator commented that these "strategies are crucial for providing supporting for educational change in inclusion programs" to promote inclusion of students with special needs." However, one administrator warned, "There must be buy-in from all parties, including general education and special education teachers. Students

need to be exposed to their general education peers and curriculum in order to show academic and behavioral progress."

Finally, an administrator said, "Yes, most definitely these strategies will work by incorporating them into the instructional process for all students (general and special needs) who would benefit from inclusion. These strategies should be considered supportive inclusion strategies."

Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities

The final question for administrators was to discuss how effective strategies could be used to provide inclusive education for students with special needs in the classroom. An administrator commented that using a "wide variety of teaching methods with vigorous instruction" would produce "effective strategies and modifications that should be tailored to fit each child's individual needs" (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004; McDonnell and Hardman, 1989; Riley, 1993; Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1989). Another administrator was concerned about high achievement standards for all students. General and special education teachers should have "high expectations of students' abilities, then students would have high expectations for themselves." As a result, students' "disabilities would not impact their potential to learn." Collaborative planning among the teachers would ensure that each child is taught according to their individual needs." Perhaps, "individual students require varied instructional practices each strategy should be attempted to ensure that all students are benefiting from the inclusive setting," commented another administrator. "Collaborative planning and utilizing both teachers as instructors in the classroom will allow all students access to the expertise of both teachers and the benefits that each brings," noted an administrator.

Inclusive education for students with disabilities helps to keep attention and focus; students have the advantage of two teachers in the learning environment (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004; Robertson & Valentine, 1998). An inclusive education ensures "that this is the proper environment for the student in order to foster learning and success," stated an administrator (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004; Robertson & Valentine, 1998). Other administrators agreed that "Effective strategies can enhance learning and provide opportunities for growth and development. A student's self-esteem is enhanced. Teachers reach students' learning modalities and multiple intelligences." Furthermore, "These strategies can address individual differences and needs" in an inclusive education setting and "can remediate deficiencies and even help students to "recover poor grades."

In order to promote inclusive education for students with special needs, schools should "ensure that general education teachers are aware of the special education student's modifications and accommodations (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004; McDonnell and Hardman, 1989; Riley, 1993; Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1989) that can lead to academic success. Using cooperative groups (Idol, Nevin, & Paolucci-Whitcomb, 1986), pairing students, or using peer tutors are great ways to assist students with special needs."

Placing students with special needs in inclusive education settings helps "improvement in test scores and develops a solid knowledge-base to build on for transfer of learning" (Idol, 2006). In addition, inclusive education settings challenge both sets of students and provides opportunities to see examples and receive samples of learning from general education students." An administrator stated, "Teachers should possess

knowledge in teaching these strategies and be able to deliver instruction to students of all levels, including students with special needs." Another administrator commented, "These strategies target low and slow learners as well as students with IEPs. Students can learn from other students that have a firm understanding of the assignment. The student with the firm understanding can elaborate on his or her understanding of the content as well." One administrator concurred that when students become "engaged in what they are learning they can build upon prior knowledge, and learning becomes meaningful to the student."

Additional Comments from Administrators

"Thanks for allowing me to be a part of this study. These strategies are researched-based. They are sound and they are teacher and student-friendly. These are fail safe strategies. I can attest to them. These strategies are workable and they are credible. I've used them and I encourage continued teacher use. The passage of the NCLB has its drawbacks but it focuses on students with special needs receiving needed interventions to be successful on Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) and make academic gains. Inclusion can be an effective educational environment (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004; Robertson & Valentine, 1998) when teachers have been trained in how to implement it successfully."

<div align="center">Chapter Summary</div>

The primary purpose of this study was to compare four school districts' Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) academic performance status and to determine the perceptions of middle school administrators regarding three policy areas: effective strategies for inclusion of students with special needs; support for educational change to promote

inclusion of students with special needs. Two school districts comprised Group 1: one urban and one rural school district that met AYP. Two school districts comprised Group 2: one urban and one rural school district that did not meet AYP. Middle school administrators' perceptions of inclusion were collected through the use of an Inclusive Education Survey.

Research Question One revealed that younger administrators were more receptive and open to the three policy areas of effective strategies, support for educational change, and inclusive education than older administrators, yet all administrators were supportive of the three policy areas. Significant differences were found for administrators with advanced degrees in effective strategies statement of making modifications for students who need adaptations to benefit from a particular instructional environment. Research Question Two revealed significant differences for the variable "make modifications for students who need adaptations" with respect to effective strategies for students with disabilities. No other differences were found for the remaining questions for effective strategies for students with disabilities. Research Question Three revealed a significant difference in "Our school and school district have a broad continuum of services for meeting the needs of all students" in the variable support for educational change for inclusion of students with disabilities. Research Question Four revealed no significant differences in inclusive education for students with disabilities on any of the statements. Overall, middle school administrators were supportive of students with disabilities in all three policy areas regardless of their AYP status.

The findings revealed that younger administrators were more receptive and open to the three policy areas of effective strategies, support for educational change, and

inclusive education than older administrators, yet all administrators were supportive of the three policy areas. Significant differences were found for administrators with advanced degrees in effective strategies statement of making modifications for students who need adaptations to benefit from a particular instructional environment. Another significant finding was found for support for educational change in the statement, "Our school and school district have a broad continuum of services for meeting the needs of all students" (Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995; Taylor, 1988; The Council for Exceptional Children, CEC, 1993).

Georgia law provides a mandated policy that all students should be educated in the least restrictive environment (Georgia Department of Education, 2006). The administrators in this study recognized the importance of making modifications for students (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004; McDonnell and Hardman, 1989; Riley, 1993; Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1989) and adapting effective teaching strategies, supporting educational change, and promoting inclusive education to meet the needs of a diverse population. Policy must be directed toward improving teaching for learning for all students. Achieving a challenging, appropriate learning experience for every student is a major issue of the 21st century (Green, 2004).

Effective strategies for inclusion, support for educational change, and inclusive education for students with special needs were presented. Research demonstrates that being educated in an inclusive classroom benefits virtually all students in the class. Children's social growth is enhanced and the typical students' academic progress is not slowed and may be promoted in a good inclusion class. With a prepared teacher, a well-designed, student-centered curriculum and the use of effective instructional models,

virtually all students in the class will have the opportunity to learn and achieve. Future research should focus not on whether to do inclusion, but how to do it well.

Chapter I presented the purpose of the study, statement of the problem, and research questions. The significance of the study, the setting for school districts, limitations, delimitations, methodology, and definitions were presented. Chapter II presented the educational reform and restructuring of inclusion. The review of literature included research on inclusion and the least restrictive environment for children with special needs, benefits of inclusion, service delivery models to support inclusion programs, and inclusion roles of teachers. Chapter III presented the methodology and described how the research questions in this study were analyzed. Chapter IV described the analysis of data and findings for four research questions in this study. Chapter V presents the summary, conclusions, and implications.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

The primary purpose of this quantitative research design study was to compare four school districts' Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) academic performance status to determine the perceptions of middle school administrators regarding three policy areas: (1) effective strategies for meeting the needs of all students; (2) the support in the school district for educational change; and (3) inclusive education toward students with disabilities. Two school districts comprised Group 1: one urban and one rural school district that met AYP. Two school districts comprised Group 2: one urban and one rural school district that did not meet AYP. The perceptions of middle school administrators within these two groups were compared in the aforementioned policy areas. Two school districts (one urban and one rural) that met AYP were compared with two school districts (one urban and one rural) that did not meet AYP. Middle school administrators' perceptions of inclusion were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to answer the research questions. The overarching question was whether statistically significant differences existed between middle school administrators' perceptions of the provisions of services to students in three policy areas, including effective strategies, educational change, and inclusive education. This study utilized a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) research design to test for differences among the responses of middle school administrators to determine if differences exist among the three policy areas. The Scheffe's test was applied for post hoc analysis ($p < .05$). Descriptive statistics were used to describe demographic data of age, gender, level

of education, and years of experience as a middle school principal. Means of demographic data for administrators were run for the three policy areas: effective strategies, support for educational change, and inclusive education. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine significant differences between the means of urban and rural districts that met AYP and that did not meet AYP to determine the extent of demographic factors that influence the strategies of administrators to promote effective inclusion of students with special needs for three policy areas.

Research Question One findings revealed that younger administrators were more receptive and open to the three policy areas of effective strategies, support for educational change, and inclusive education than older administrators, yet all administrators were supportive of the three policy areas. Significant differences were found for administrators with advanced degrees in effective strategies statement of making modifications for students who need adaptations to benefit from a particular instructional environment. Research Question Three revealed a significant finding for support for educational change in the statement, "Our school and school district have a broad continuum of services for meeting the needs of all students." Research Question Four revealed no significant differences among the three policy areas. Overall, middle school administrators were supportive of students with disabilities in all three policy areas regardless of their AYP status.

<div align="center">Conclusions</div>

Based on the findings for demographic data, these administrators were well-educated with Educational Specialists' degrees and Doctorate Degrees and had from one to five years of experience as middle school administrators. The majority of

administrators were between 40 and over 50 years old and typically female. More than half were certified in special education and had prior experience working with family, friends, and students with disabilities in the school setting, family setting, or in the community. Many administrators had previously taught special education classes and were assigned to work as directors and assistant principals of special education programs.

Furthermore, these administrators had formal training and had courses in content areas (language arts, social studies, interrelated, emotional behavior disorders, learning disability, and mildly intellectual deficient certification) in the field of special education. As a result, the researcher concluded that the administrators in this study were sensitive to, and cognizant and respectful of the inclusive needs of students with disabilities based on their prior knowledge, training, and experiences with students, family, and friends with special needs.

Georgia law provides a mandated policy that all students should be educated in the least restrictive environment (Georgia Department of Education, 2006). The administrators in this study recognized the importance of making modifications for students (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004; McDonnell & Hardman, 1989; Riley, 1993; Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1989) and adapting effective teaching strategies, supporting educational change, and promoting inclusive education to meet the needs of a diverse population. Policy must be directed toward improving teaching for learning for all students. Achieving a challenging, appropriate learning experience for every student is a major issue of the 21st century (Green, 2004).

Effective strategies for inclusion, support for educational change, and inclusive education for students with special needs were presented. Research demonstrates that

being educated in an inclusive classroom benefits virtually all students in the class. Children's social growth is enhanced and the typical students' academic progress is not slowed and may be promoted in a good inclusion class. With a prepared teacher, a well-designed, student-centered curriculum and the use of effective instructional models, virtually all students in the class will have the opportunity to learn and achieve. Future research should focus not on whether to do inclusion, but how to do it well.

Conclusions for Research Question One: Three Policy Areas and Demographic Data

To test Research Question One, descriptive research with means of demographic data (age, level of education, and years of administrative experience) were analyzed according to the three policy areas: effective strategies, support for educational change, and inclusive education.

For effective strategies, the researcher concluded that administrators with the highest level of education generally disagreed with the importance of keeping academic expectations consistent for all students and slow learners receiving special help outside the regular classroom. This could mean that these administrators were more supportive of these two statements as well as they might have conducted research on these topics and may have been more knowledgeable of the impact of inclusion for students with special needs and thus, recognized the importance of using effective strategies with these students.

Another conclusion was that administrators with one to five years of experience as middle school administrators generally agreed on effective strategies for students with special needs. As a result, years of experience did not matter on effective strategies

whereas, administrators' level of education indicated differences in agreement on effective strategies.

Support for educational change produced quite different results. While older administrators tended to agree on effective strategies, the majority of administrators for support for educational change were much younger. This could mean that younger administrators were more exposed to recent ideas on educational change and were more open to ideas in providing this support (Fullan, 1991, 2001; McAdams, 1997; Moffett, 2000; Shields & Knapp, 1997; Wagner, 2001).

This finding is contrary to Gallis and Tanner's (1995) findings where older educators who had been in the field for many years felt more strongly and gave more support for educational changes and viewed inclusive education more positively than their less experienced peers. It appears that younger administrators in this study who were less experienced than experienced administrators may have been recent graduates who were more receptive and open to fresh ideas on support for educational change and inclusive education.

The researcher expected older administrators with more experience and self-confidence with a greater capacity for accepting the challenges of education change such as inclusive education would have had greater means than their less experienced counterparts. The reverse findings happened and similar to Gallis and Tanner's (1995) study, the cause is not clear. Further qualitative research is needed through focus groups and in depth interviews to discover why younger administrators were more receptive to effective strategies than older administrators.

Administrators in education with more than 15 years of experience were used to one method of inclusive education. Since 2001 with the passage of NCLB, younger administrators are faced with adhering to the mandates of NCLB, which includes students with disabilities and making AYP. Students with disabilities are tested on grade level or using some form of alternative assessment such as severe and profound students (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 2006). Other students with disabilities must take state assessments on grade level with general education students. Today, younger administrators' leadership career is based on making AYP for their schools since there is no other way to make progress unless it is through AYP. Schools that do not make AYP in the area of students with disabilities do not make AYP at all. If schools made AYP, then students with disabilities also made AYP in academic performance.

Similar to findings for support for educational change, younger administrators were more supportive of inclusive education for students with special needs than their older counterparts. An equal percentage of administrators with higher level degrees both agreed and disagreed with inclusive education which means that administrators' level of education is not a factor in accepting inclusive education. The majority of administrators with one to five years of experience agreed that inclusive education was beneficial for these students. The researcher concluded that younger administrators may have been exposed to more recent ideas on educational reform on inclusive education than older administrators. In addition, administrators with fewer years of experience as administrators agreed on inclusive education. Consequently, younger administrators with the fewest years of experience were more supportive of inclusive education for students with disabilities than their older and more experienced administrators.

Administrators in education with more than 15 years of experience were accustomed to one method of inclusive education. Since 2001 with the passage of NCLB, younger administrators were faced with adhering to the mandates of NCLB, which includes students with disabilities and making AYP. Students with disabilities are tested on grade level or using some form of alternative assessment (Smith, Polloway, Patton, & Dowdy, 2006) such as severe and profound students. Other students with disabilities must take state assessments on grade level with general education students. Today, younger administrators' leadership career is based on making AYP for their schools since there is no other way to make progress unless it is through AYP. Schools that do not make AYP in the area of students with disabilities do not make AYP at all. If schools made AYP, then students with disabilities also made AYP in academic performance (NEA, 2007).

More and more schools and school districts will fail to meet AYP in the future (NEA, 2007). This year, all states are required to test all children in each of grades 3-8 for the first time. Thus, more schools will test more children. This will increase the number of subgroups that exceed the minimum number "N" size, resulting in more subgroups' scores counting for AYP, and making it more likely a school will fail to make AYP. In addition, the proficient threshold (the percentage of students required to score at proficient or above on the state's reading and math test) will continue to rise over the next several years, eventually reaching the mandated 100 percent proficiency level in the 2013-2014 school years. This will make it even more difficult for many schools and school districts to meet federal standards.

Conclusions for Research Question Two: Effective Strategies

Based on the small sample size of middle school administrators in these four school districts that met AYP and did not meet AYP, Rural 2 that did not meet AYP consistently had the highest average means in effective strategies, support for educational change, and inclusive education. Middle school administrators were somewhat uncertain about "it is important to keep behavioral expectations the same for all students" with the exception of Rural 2 (Non-AYP) administrators who agreed with this statement. Kochhar, West, and Taymans (2000) note that for students with disabilities, inclusion facilitates more appropriate social behavior because of higher expectations in the general education classroom; promotes levels of achievement higher, or at least as high as those achieved in self-contained classrooms; offers a wide circle of support, including social support from classmates without disabilities; and improves the ability of students and teachers to adapt to different teaching and learning styles.

Significant differences were found for effective strategies in making modifications for students who need adaptations (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004; McDonnell & Hardman, 1989; Riley, 1993; Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1989). The researcher concluded that differentiation strategies include adjusting modifications for students with disabilities. Rural 2 administrators once again showed the strongest agreement with this statement. Although other administrators agreed, their agreement was not as strong as Rural 2 administrators. Similar to Galis and Tanner's (1995) study, participants most strongly agreed with the statement "It is important to make modifications (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004; McDonnell & Hardman, 1989; Riley, 1993; Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1989) for students who need adaptations to benefit

from a particular instructional environment." Galis and Tanner found significance in this statement for effective strategies in support for educational change.

One administrator said, "I think that effective strategies could work because they support the instruction for all learners and would therefore support inclusion" as these strategies "help to level the playing field" for students with special needs. This same administrator says, "One size does not fit all!! Actually, what I have found is that the strategies good for special students are usually good for all students."

Support for educational change to promote effective inclusion is supported by these strategies because the teacher is provided multiple opportunities to reach diverse populations of learners. There is no "one plan fits all" for determining how teachers should respond to the disruptive behavior of students with disabilities in inclusion settings. An initial starting point would include establishing classroom rules, defining classroom limits, setting expectations, clarifying responsibilities, and developing a meaningful and functional curriculum in which all students can receive learning experiences that can be differentiated, individualized, and integrated. Many publications describe effective classroom-based disciplinary strategies (Carter, 1993; Schloss, 1987), but few (Ayres & Meyer, 1992; Carpenter & McKee-Higgins, 1996; Meyer & Henry, 1993; Murdick & Petch-Hogan, 1996) address effective classroom-based disciplinary strategies for students with disabilities in inclusion settings.

Conclusions for Research Question Three: Support for Educational Change

Similar to effective strategies, Rural School District 1 (AYP) and 2 administrators' level of agreement was strongest for having support from supervisors to try new ideas and strategies with students with disabilities. Whereas Rural School District

2 (Non-AYP) had the highest mean for opportunities to regularly talk and plan with colleagues. The differences may lie in the location of school districts. Rural school districts may be more supportive and relaxed and comfortable in regularly talking, planning with colleagues, and trying new ideas than urban school districts that may have hectic and busier schedules with little time to talk and plan. Several administrators reported in the open-ended questions that "Collaboration includes also common planning time for co-teachers who work together in a collaborative environment that includes general education and special education students (Price, Mayfield, McFadden, & Marsh, 2001).

These administrators stated that common planning time allows co-teachers to discuss student progress and make plans for differentiated instructional planning for all students. For these administrators having a common planning time for co-teachers (general education and special education teacher) was the third most effective strategy. One administrator admitted that "As administrators, we need to build a master schedule with planning time for both general education and special education teachers in order for them to build a relationship and plan lessons that are differentiated to the various ability levels of students in their classes. A master schedule would include common planning for co-teachers who may not have common planning times to plan and reflect on the day's lessons for all students. Teachers should have opportunities to "prepare for inclusion and provide inclusion for students who will benefit from it." Teachers should be given the opportunity to "plan and practice instruction together prior to delivery."

In the variable support for educational change for inclusion of students with disabilities, a significant difference was found in "Our school and school district have a

broad continuum of services for meeting the needs of all students" (Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995; Taylor, 1988; The Council for Exceptional Children, CEC, 1993). Urban School District 1 and 2 and Rural School District 2 administrators agreed with this statement, however Rural School District 1 had an ambivalent stance on the matter and responded that they were not certain or did not know. Significance was found between these groups on this variable.

Conclusions for Research Question Four: Inclusive Education

Since no differences were found among administrators on inclusive education, the researcher concluded that AYP status made no difference in inclusive education for students with special needs. Thus, all administrators in this study were in agreement on inclusive education.

Administrators in all four districts agreed that "students should be grouped by ability as an effective strategy." Perhaps administrators meant that students should be placed in homogeneous classrooms according to ability levels. In that way, teachers are able to possibly maintain the same paced learning for all students. Whereas, heterogeneous grouping contains varying ability levels where students are able to learn from and help each other through peer tutoring strategies. Since administrators selected differentiation as the most effective strategy for students with disabilities, this strategy allows students to be taught based on individual ability levels and through flexible grouping (DiMartino, 2004; Heacox, 2002; New Horizons for Learning, 2004; Tomlinson, 1995, 1999; Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006) that serves as an opportunity for students to work with students of varying ability levels.

Urban 1, Rural 1, and Rural 2 administrators were uncertain about "regular education teachers must spend a great deal of time with students with special needs" while Urban 2 administrators disagreed with this statement. Tiner (1995) surveyed 120 teachers from six middle schools in one Colorado school district and found that teachers were most concerned with ensuring that all students have an opportunity to learn. Participants in the study voiced a concern that too much time was spent on special students and resulted in time taken away from others in the classroom. These findings have been echoed in the literature, but are these concerns valid?

Staub and Peck (1995) examined studies using control groups to compare progress of children who are not disabled in classrooms said to be inclusive with those in classrooms that do not include students with disabilities. No significant differences were found between the two groups of students. In addition, the presence of children with disabilities had no effect on either the time allocated to instruction or the levels of interruption. Other studies have obtained similar results. Hines and Johnston (1997) report results of a study of 25 general education middle school teachers whose schedule included regular, co-taught (inclusive), and mainstream settings. Instructional interactions across the three settings were analyzed, and results indicated that there was no significant statistical difference in instructional time across the three settings, "but significantly more time was spent in managerial interactions in mainstream classrooms than in regular or co-taught settings" (Hines & Johnston, 1997, p. 113). The co-taught classes had the fewest incidences of correcting student behavior by the general education teacher. On a corresponding survey, however, these same teachers perceived that they had less instructional time when students with special needs were present (Hines & Johnston).

Conclusions for Adequate Yearly Progress

Rural 2 administrators whose school district did not meet AYP for students with disabilities generally showed the strongest agreement level with effective strategies in making modifications (Galis & Tanner, 1995; Green, 2004; McDonnell and Hardman, 1989; Riley, 1993; Wiederholt & Chamberlain, 1989). While Rural 1 administrators whose school district met AYP agreed with effective strategies, their agreement was not as strong as the other three groups of administrators whose agreement was not as strong as Rural School District 2 administrators.

This finding leads the researcher to conclude that there is no significance in the perceptions of administrators from school districts that made AYP and those that did not. Research indicates that administrators support for inclusion has an impact on the inclusive setting. This could not be concluded from surveying administrators in these four school districts in Georgia.

More importantly, there were no differences among the school districts that met AYP and those that did not meet AYP in the three policy areas. The two administrators in the school district that did not meet AYP had stronger agreement in effective strategies but AYP status was not a significant factor in administrators' overall perceptions of inclusion of students with disabilities.

More schools failed AYP this year compared to last year. Of the 49 states and the District of Columbia (D.C.) reporting the number of schools not making AYP for at least one year in the 2005-06 school years, a total of 22,873 schools failed to make AYP, 25.8 percent of all public schools (NEA, 2007). This compares to 21,175 schools in those 49 states and D.C. last school year, an increase of 1,699 schools. Of these 49 states and D.C.,

21 saw decreases in the number of schools not making AYP (more schools made AYP), while the other 29 saw increases (fewer schools made AYP). This reverses the trend between the 2003-2004 school years and the 2004-2005 school years when the number of schools making AYP increased.

The number of schools found "in need of improvement" this year is slightly larger compared to last year. The number of schools failing to make AYP for two or more years has almost doubled since 2003-04. Of the 48 states and D.C. reporting the number of schools not making AYP for two or more years, a total of 10,669 schools failed to make AYP for at least two years. This compares to 10,573 schools in those same states last school year. Of these 48 states and D. C., 29 saw a decrease in the number of schools not making AYP for at least two years (fewer schools in need of improvement), 19 states saw an increase, and one state saw no change (NEA, 2007).

This trend is especially significant because those schools labeled "in need of improvement" who are receiving federal Title I aid for disadvantaged children face sanctions. The first time a school receives this label, all of its students (not just low-income students or those who failed to meet the AYP standard) are eligible to transfer to another school within the same school district. Districts must use up to 15% of their Title I funds to pay the costs of transportation for any students who decide to transfer. This school transfer provision is causing chaos and confusion for parents and educators, especially in districts where there are few spaces in other schools for these students to occupy (NEA, 2007).

There will be virtually no funds available next year to help turn around schools "in need of improvement." NCLB should not simply label and punish schools, but should

instead provide resources to help schools put in place proven programs to close achievement gaps. Under the law, schools labeled as "in need of improvement" are supposed to receive additional resources. However, since enactment of NCLB no funds have been provided for the School Improvement grants program authorized under Title I. While four percent of each state's Title I allocation is to be set aside for school improvement grants, NCLB prohibits a state from reducing a school district's Title I allocation to fund this set-aside. Because Congress has cut Title I funding for FY 06, the vast majority of districts will already face a reduction in their Title I allocation and most states will have little to no money available for school improvement (NEA, 2007).

Based on these findings for school districts that met AYP and those who did not meet AYP, proven reforms such as differentiated instruction and improved teacher training, and years of hard work by dedicated educators, are producing real results in many schools and school districts but the law as currently constructed fails to give parents and educators a fair and accurate picture of which schools are improving and why. The law's bureaucratic system of standardized tests, rankings, and sanctions is also interfering with ongoing efforts to boost achievement for all children and neglecting to focus attention and resources on those individual students who need the most need help— student with disabilities. Additional resources are needed to help improve schools that are facing sanctions, so the law becomes focused on building success, rather than labeling and punishing (NEA, 2007).

Implications

Educational policy makers and school districts must understand that "It is important to make modifications for students who need adaptations to benefit from a

particular instructional environment." Not only is it important to make modifications for students, it is legally mandated by NCLB. Another response that was found significant was, "Our school and school district have a broad continuum of services for meeting the needs of all students" (Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995; Taylor, 1988; The Council for Exceptional Children, CEC, 1993). Schools and school districts typically have a continuum of services; however, they usually need assistance in terms of resources to continue this continuum for all students. This assistance means additional resources from the federal government and additional time from school districts.

<div align="center">Implications for Future Research</div>

Based upon the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered for consideration for future research:

1. This study is limited to four school districts (two urban and two rural) in Georgia. It may be helpful to expand this study to determine whether AYP status of administrators' perceptions of three policy areas are similar to those responding to issues in other school districts in Georgia and ultimately in other states

2. The administrators responding to this study were all working at the middle school level. It may be beneficial to determine if administrators working at the elementary and high school levels have similar perceptions of the three policy areas based on AYP status of their school districts.

3. This study indicates that administrators who have been in the field longer as administrators feel that they have support for educational changes and view challenges such as inclusive education more positively than those administrators in this study did. It may be beneficial to test this question further. If it is true that

less experienced administrators have a greater capacity for change and difficult challenges, this capacity in less experienced administrators should provide growth opportunities for more less experienced administrators who are affected even more so by AYP and NCLB changes than more experienced administrators.

4. Educating all students in appropriate environments is a mandated policy in Georgia. Administrators in this study recognize the importance of making modifications for students and adapting effective strategies to meet the needs of students with disabilities. These administrators further recognize that they promote support for educational change and agree that inclusive education is better for all students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SURVEY

Inclusive Education Survey

By completing and turning in this survey you are giving your voluntary consent for the researcher to include your responses in the data analyses. Your participation in this research is strictly voluntary, and you may choose not to participate without fear of penalty or any negative consequences. Individual responses will be treated confidentially. No individually identifiable information will be disclosed or published, and all results will be presented as aggregate, summary data. If you wish, you may request a copy of the results of this research by writing to the researcher at:

Veronice Felton
1251 Nash Lee Drive, SW
Lilburn, GA 30047
(770) 427-4908
Nirrad1128@comcast.net

Thank you for your voluntary participation in this research study.

Veronice Felton, Doctoral Student
Georgia Southern University

Part I. Demographic Data

Age:
    a. 22-27
    b. 28-33
    c. 34-39
    d. 40-45
    e. 46-50
    f. Over 50

Gender:
    a. Male
    b. Female

Level of Education
    a. Bachelor's Degree
    b. Master's Degree
    c. Educational Specialist's Degree
    d. Doctorate Degree

Years of Experience as a Middle School Principal
    a. None
    b. 1-5
    c. 6-10
    d. 11-16
    e. 17-22
    f. Over 22 years

Years of Experience as an Assistant Principal
    a. None
    b. 1-5
    c. 6-10
    d. 11-16
    e. 17-22
    f. Over 22 years

Years of Full-time Regular Education Teaching Experience
    a. 0-5
    b. 6-10
    c. 11-16
    d. 17-22
    e. Over 22 years

Years of Full-time Special Education Teaching Experience
   a. 0-5
   b. 6-10
   c. 11-16
   d. 17-22
   e. Over 22 years

Number of Special Education Credits in Formal Training
   a. 0-5 credits
   b. 6-10 credits
   c. 11-15 credits
   d. 17-22 credits
   e. Over 22 credits

Number of In-service Hours in Inclusive Practices
   a. 0-5 credits
   b. 6-10 credits
   c. 11-15 credits
   d. 17-22 credits
   e. Over 22 credits

Certification in Special Education
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. If yes, list area of certification_____

Number of Relevant Content Areas in Formal Training in Special Education
   a. 1-2
   b. 3-4
   c. 5-6
   d. 7-8
   e. Over 8

Discuss your personal experience with an individual with special needs outside school setting.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Part II. Inclusive Education Survey

Directions: Please respond by considering how well each statement applies to you. Use the following scale for your responses:

1 = Strongly disagree   2 = Disagree   3 = Don't Know   4 = Agree   5= Strongly agree

1. It is important to make modifications for students who need
   adaptations to benefit from a particular instructional environment.   1 2 3 4 5

2. Students' progress should be graded according to ability rather
   than only with standardized measures.   1 2 3 4 5

3. Our school/school district has a broad continuum of services
   for meeting the needs of all students.   1 2 3 4 5

4. Inclusion of students with mild disabilities into regular
   classes is generally an effective strategy.   1 2 3 4 5

5. I have input into the program of students with special needs
   who are placed in the regular classroom.   1 2 3 4 5

6. Programs like Title I are effective.   1 2 3 4 5

7. Keeping academic expectations consistent for all
   students is important.   1 2 3 4 5

8. Maximum class size should be lowered when including students
   with disabilities.   1 2 3 4 5

9. The inclusion of students with special needs into the regular
   classroom can be beneficial to the other students in the class.   1 2 3 4 5

10. I have support from my supervisor(s) to try new ideas and
    implement creative strategies.   1 2 3 4 5

11. Students should be served in regular classes regardless of
    disability.   1 2 3 4 5

12. I have opportunities to talk and plan with my colleagues on
    a regular basis.   1 2 3 4 5

13. It is important to keep behavioral expectations the same
    for all students.   1 2 3 4 5

14. My school/school district is a strong supporter of inclusive education.

1 2 3 4 5

15. Special education provides a valuable service for students with special needs.

1 2 3 4 5

16. Regular teachers must spend a great deal of time with students with special needs.

1 2 3 4 5

17. Efforts are made to provide opportunities for mutual planning and collaboration among personnel in my school/school district.

1 2 3 4 5

18. Students should be grouped in ways which allow a wide variety of abilities in each class.

1 2 3 4 5

19. All students should be included in regular environments to the greatest extent possible.

1 2 3 4 5

20. Slow learners should receive special help outside the regular classroom.

1 2 3 4 5

21. Opportunities for staff development are provided by my school/school district which meet my needs for professional growth.

1 2 3 4 5

22. Inclusion in the regular classroom will hurt the educational progress of the student without a disability.

1 2 3 4 5

23. Placement of a student with a disability into a regular classroom is disruptive to students without special needs.

1 2 3 4 5

24. In most cases, students should be grouped by ability.

1 2 3 4 5

Open-ended Questions on Inclusion

1.   Identify three (3) of the most effective strategies you believe are important to inclusion._____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2.   Discuss how effective strategies could be used to assist students with special needs in the classroom._____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3.   Could these strategies be used to support effective inclusion? Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4.   Other comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY FROM AUTHORS

-------------- Forwarded Message: --------------
From: Ken Tanner <cktanner@uga.edu>
To: nirrad1128@comcast.net
Subject: Re: Permission to use questionnaire
Date: Mon, 21 May 2007 22:23:24 +0000

> YOU HAVE MY PERMISSION. My only request is that you PLEASE COMPLY
WITH ALL APA CITATIONS and give full credit to the authors.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> C. Kenneth Tanner.
>
> ---- Original message ----
> >Date: Mon, 21 May 2007 01:37:55 +0000
> >From: nirrad1128@comcast.net
> >Subject: Permission to use questionnaire
> >To: cktanner@uga.edu
> >Cc: veronice_g_felton@fc.dekalb.k12.ga.us
> >
> >Good Afternoon Dr. Tanner,
> >
> >My name is Veronice Felton, I am currently working on a dissertation through
> Georgia Southern University. I have included a copy of the purpose of the
> study and the statement of the problem for you to review. I am interested in
> using your questionnaire, Inclusive Education Survey by Galis and Tanner
> (1995). I would also like permission to modify the survey if necessary to meet
> the needs of my dissertation. This email is a request to use or modify your
> questionnaire to complete my dissertation entitled A STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL
> PRINCIPALS AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS PERCEPTIONS OF THE
PROVISION OF
> SERVICES TO STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES,
> EDUCATIONAL CHANGE, AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION. If you would allow
me to use this survey< I will send you a copy of the dissertation upon my completion of
the program.
> >
> >Thank you in advance for your assistance.
> >
> >
> >
> >
> >Purpose of the Study
> >The primary purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions and beliefs
> of middle school principals and assistant principals regarding effective
> strategies for meeting the needs of all students, the support in the school
> district for educational change, and the views of middle school principals and

> assistant principals related to inclusive education. The overarching question is
> whether middle school administrators have perceptions of the provisions of
> services to students in three policy areas "including effective strategies,
> educational change, and inclusive education which differ from other
> administrators perceptions.
> >The movement towards the inclusion of students with special needs,
> regardless of the severity of the disability, to the general education classroom
> has caused numerous questions about the roles and responsibilities of
> administrators in providing an appropriate education for all students (Daane,
> Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2002). Because inclusion requires the collaboration
> between teachers and principals, it is imperative that principals and
> assistant
> principals perceptions are recognized by policymakers (Daane et al., 2002). This
quantitative study seeks to investigate the perceptions of
> middle school principals and assistant principals on the special education
> policy
> of least restrictive environment, formerly known as mainstreaming and most
> recently recognized as inclusion.
> >
> >Statement of the Problem
> > The leadership provided by principals and assistant principals is
> pivotal in
> implementing educational opportunities for all students. However, the
> relationship between their leadership and the area of special education has not
> received much attention until recently. The research on inclusion is relatively
> limited and varies in methodology. This study will provide support for the
> continued need for special education to provide support for students with
> special needs by individualizing instruction within the context of inclusion and
> will show the potential benefits of such instruction for students with special
> needs. This study is significant because of the implications for determining the
> impact of inclusion as both an exemplary practice and a mandated practice. The
> results will be used to improve the quality of educational services for students
> with special needs within the general educational setting as well as to increase
> sensitivity among administrators to the importance of inclusion.
Significance of the Study
> >Principal leadership is pivotal for the improvement of educational
> opportunities for all students, especially those with unique learning needs
> (Sage & Burello, 1994; Walther-Thomas et al., 2000). The relationship between
> principal leadership and special education has not received much attention until
> recently. Research related to the roles and responsibilities of principals in
> effective schools generally does not make specific references to the needs of
> students with special needs and special education teachers (Educational
> Research Services, 1998, 2000; NAESP, 2001b; Institute for Educational
> Leadership, 2000; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).
> During the past decade, however, emerging research has demonstrated a
> significant relationship between special education teacher attrition and

> principal leadership (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). The present study will
consider the role of administration in the delivery of effective education for special
> needs students and thus will add to the research in the area of special needs education.
> Furthermore, the results of this study can serve as an impetus for future
> research in the area of educational programs for students with special needs.
> >The practice of inclusion is growing and varies in methodology (Galis &
> Tanner, 1995). The present study will focus on inclusion and point to the
> potential benefits of this practice for students with special needs as well as
> show the continued need for special education and its provision of
> individualized instruction for students involved in the inclusion model. It will
> provide information to general educators, special educators, parents,
> administrators and policy makers regarding inclusion in the general classroom
> and will illustrate the positive learning outcomes that result from special
> needs students being fully included in the general education classroom regardless
> of the severity of their disability.
> >   Research indicates that inclusion continues to be one of the controversial
> issues in American education (Richardson & Jording, 1999; Southwest
> Educational Regional Laboratory-SEDL, 1995). Richardson and Jording (1999)
> found that administrators spend very little time planning for inclusion
> implementation and that substantial differences of opinions exist among
> educators regarding inclusion implementation. They also found that special
> education instructors were less than enthusiastic about the assistance they
> receive from resource personnel who should assist them in implementing
> inclusion and acknowledged the need for additional training and staff
> development regarding inclusion. The present study will determine the
> perceptions of middle school principals and assistant principals in two school
> districts regarding the implementation of inclusion. The results can be used to
> increase sensitivity among principals and teachers to the importance of
> inclusion of special needs studen!
> >ts an
> >d to improve the quality of services for special education teachers and for
> students with special needs.
> > There is very little research addressing the effectiveness of inclusion
> (Galis
> & Tanner, 1995). It is crucial to determine if educating students with special
> needs in regular classrooms has quantifiable benefits for students with and
> without special needs. Studies which measure progress on IEP goals in regular
> classrooms and in pullout situations, which interview regular education students
> regarding the inclusion of students with special needs in their classes, which
> measure aggressive or inappropriate behaviors of students with disabilities over
> time in regular and pullout situations, or which measure the interactions of
> students with special needs with other students over time can add valuable
> information in the field. They would provide a rational foundation for
> addressing inclusion as a viable mode for providing services to students with
> special needs as opposed to the emotional approach to inclusion that is
> reflected in the majority of current literature (Galis & Tanner!

> >, 199
> >5).
> > Educating all students in the least restrictive environment is a
> philosophical
> and mandated policy goal for Georgia. Thus the administrators in the state
> recognize that policy must be directed toward improving learning for all
> students and understand the importance of making policy modifications and
> adapting teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students. This study can
> provide useful information to them as they carry out their responsibilities.
> >
> >
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> 125 River's Crossing
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> http://www.coe.uga.edu/sdpl

APPENDIX C

MATRIX OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SURVEY ITEMS

Matrix of Inclusive Education Survey Items

Policy Area   Item
Effective Strategies   1. It is important to make
                                         modifications for   students who
                                         need adaptations to benefit from a
                                         particular instructional
                                         environment.
                                         2. Students' progress should be
                                         graded according to ability rather
                                         than only with standardized
                                         measures.
                                         6. Programs, like Title I are
                                         effective.
                                         7. Keeping academic expectations
                                         consistent for all students is
                                         important.
                                         8. Maximum class size should be
                                         lowered when including students
                                         with disabilities.
                                         13. It is important to keep
                                         behavioral expectations the same
                                         for all students.
                                         15. Special education provides a
                                         valuable service for students with
                                         special needs.
                                         18. Students should be grouped in
                                         ways which allow a wide variety
                                         of abilities in each class.
                                         20. Slow learners should receive
                                         special help outside the regular
                                         classroom.
                                         24. In most cases, students should
                                         be grouped by ability.

Policy Area	Item
Support for Educational Change	3. Our school/school district has a broad continuum of services for meeting the needs of all students.
	5. I have input into the program of students with special needs who are placed in the regular classroom.
	10. I have support from my supervisor(s) to try new ideas and implement creative strategies.
	12. I have opportunities to talk and plan with my colleagues on a regular basis.
	17. Efforts are made to provide opportunities for mutual planning and collaboration among personnel in my school/school district.
	21. Opportunities for staff development are provided by my school/school district, which meet my needs for professional growth.

Policy Area	Item
Inclusive Education	4. Inclusion of students with mild disabilities into regular classes is generally an effective strategy.
	9. The inclusion of students with special needs into the regular classroom can be beneficial to the other students in the class.
	11. Students should be served in regular classes regardless of disability.
	14. My school/school district is a strong supporter of inclusive education.
	16. Regular teachers must spend a great deal of time with students with special needs.
	19. All students should be included in regular environments to the greatest extent possible.
	22. Inclusion in the regular classroom will hurt the educational progress of the student without a disability.
	23. Placement of a student with a disability into a regular classroom is disruptive to students without special needs.