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Principals Who Supervise Teachers of the Deaf: A Mixed Methods Study

Tanya Hilligoss
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, tanyahilligoss@yahoo.com

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Principals Who Supervise Teachers of the Deaf:

A Mixed Methods Study

by

Tanya Sue Hilligoss

A DISSERTATION

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Principals Who Supervise Teachers of the Deaf:

A Mixed Methods Study

Tanya Sue Hilligoss, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2014

Advisor: Marilyn Grady

School principals are responsible for supervising educational staff. Since the majority of students who are deaf or hard of hearing are served in public schools, it is important for principals to understand how to supervise teachers of the deaf. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of school principals who supervise teachers of the deaf in public schools in the United States.

In this mixed methods study, data was collected separately and sequentially, using an explanatory sequential design. Information was gathered from state-level personnel using a web-based survey for quantitative data. Data collected included: a) number of students in special education, b) number of students identified as deaf or hard of hearing, and c) number of public school building principals. Attempts were made to gather data from all fifty states by grade level for each group—elementary, middle, and secondary. To gather qualitative data, in-depth interviews were conducted with three school principals and one special education director at their respective building sites. Three in-vivo themes emerged from the findings: "A Good Navigator," " I'm There," and "It's a Win-Win."

The findings of the study may be useful for principals who supervise teachers of the deaf, administrators who supervise programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, higher education institutions who are preparing future school principals, and teachers of the deaf.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my 13-year old daughter, Mallory Elyse. My hope is that through the hours, days, weeks, and years you have seen me work on this research, I have inspired you to set attainable goals, work hard, and achieve your dreams.

Mallory, be confident in yourself and your abilities. You are an intelligent, ambitious, and determined person who I know will make the most out of life and be successful in whatever you choose. I hope I have instilled in you the value of an excellent education. Through all the ups and downs that will come your way over the years, your education is the one thing that no one can take away from you and will always give you a solid foundation to take you to the next step in life.

Thank you for disciplining me to complete my coursework and this paper while you simultaneously worked on your homework. Thank you for showing me how to use my digital recording device when I brought it home from the store and did not know how. Thank you for refilling my coffee cup and bringing me snacks when I was deep in thought and did not want to stop writing. And most of all, when I got tired and crabby from working so hard on this paper (yeah…I know I did sometimes…sorry), thank you for making me laugh.

Thanks so much, Mal---I love ya, kiddo!

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Chapter 1

Introduction

For the study, I examined the role of school principals in their supervision of teachers of the deaf. Background information about students who are deaf or hard of hearing, programs for students with hearing loss, roles of teachers of the deaf, and school principals is presented in the following sections.

Understanding the Role of the Teacher of the Deaf

Wald (1998) stated that in addition to knowing and understanding decisions made by special education and general education staff, school administrators also must be educated about decisions made by teachers of the deaf.

School principals' backgrounds may be in general education with little training in special education and even less, or no, knowledge of needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, a low incidence disability. Further, the majority of students with a hearing loss have additional disabilities, making it critical for administrators to understand both the field of special education and deafness if one of their responsibilities is supervision of such programs. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states "…a free appropriate public education (FAPE) must be available to any individual child with a disability who needs special education and related services…" (Federal Register, August 14, 2006). As a school administrator who has experience teaching students with hearing loss and administering programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, it is of concern that there are individuals leading programs for students with disabilities who do not have a clear understanding of students' specialized needs.

Consideration of the Field of Deaf Education

"Deaf education is the oldest field in special education" (Woolsey, Harrison & Gardner, 2004, p. 263). There have been dramatic changes in the field of deaf education due, in part, to hearing technology, such as cochlear implants, early intervention services, and universal newborn hearing screening (Lenihan, 2010). For administrators of these programs, it is their responsibility to keep up-to-date with trends in this field.

It is important for principals to understand the unique learning needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Federally, the term "deafness" is defined as "…a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a child's educational performance" (Federal Register, August 14, 2006, p. 46549). To contrast, "hearing impairment" is defined as "…an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness…"(Federal Register, August 14, 2006, p. 46549). The use of the terms are diverse and vary depending on how individuals refer to themselves as members of the Deaf community, etiology and severity of the hearing loss, age of onset, educational program, communication modality, and general feeling about their hearing loss (www.nad.org). In addition to understanding student needs, administrators need to understand and support teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing who have specialized skills in working with this population of students.

It is not uncommon for students with hearing loss to have additional disabilities. In fact, of students who are deaf or hard of hearing being served in public schools,

approximately one-third have additional disabilities (Luckner & Bowen, 2006). This

presents a further reason for principals to support teachers of the deaf. Supervisors of

these programs need to continually support professional learning opportunities for

teachers and learn and implement research-based strategies for students with hearing loss.

This also presents a challenge because although the number of students with hearing loss

and additional disabilities is increasing, research in this area is decreasing (Guardino,

2008).

Research Problem

A current problem is school principals supervising teachers of the deaf who have

no background in working with or supervising a teacher of the deaf, nor experience with

programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. School principals are often placed

in a position to supervise a teacher of the deaf when they have limited or no experience in

the field of deaf education.

Purpose of the Study

This study focused on principals who supervise teachers of the deaf. The choice

of a mixed methods research design for this study was based on the importance of

gathering national data related to the numbers of students identified as deaf or hard of

hearing and the number of school principals, in addition to gaining a real-life

understanding of principals who supervise teachers of the deaf. An explanatory sequential

mixed methods design was used, and it involved collecting quantitative data first and then

explaining the quantitative results with in-depth qualitative data. In the first, quantitative

phase of the study, survey data was collected from state-level personnel. The second,

qualitative phase was conducted as a follow up to the quantitative results to further explain the survey results. The plan was to fill a gap in the available database on deaf and hard of hearing school-age children and explore supervision of teachers of the deaf with school principals at their school sites.

Research Questions

The central question of this study was: How are the number of students who deaf or hard of hearing in public schools identified in data reported by states and how does that data relate to principals' experiences in supervising teachers of the deaf?

Sub-questions of this study included:

1. How are the number of public school programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing identified, in addition to the number of principals supervising those programs?

2. What situations influence school principals' understanding of supervising teachers of the deaf?

3. What is the significance of school principals' roles in supervising teachers of the deaf?

Summary

School principals are responsible for the supervision of teachers. They may be required to supervise teachers in positions for which they have no background or experience. These teachers may include special educators. This study is focused on supervision of teachers of the deaf, serving students in the low incidence disability category of deaf and hard of hearing. The research states that as of 2007, nearly 86% of

U.S. students who were deaf or hard of hearing were educated in public schools and of those at least 80% were reported to be in classes with their hearing peers (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Populations). With the majority of students who are deaf or hard of hearing now attending public schools, principals need to have an understanding of supervising a teacher of the deaf. The lack of data in this area, supported by information received from state-level personnel across the United States and interviews with school principals, were the focus of this study.

Although there is existing literature about the role of principals in public schools and there is literature about teachers of the deaf, there are deficiencies in the literature about principals who supervise teachers of the deaf. This study will make an important contribution to the fields of school administration and deaf education, benefiting teachers of the deaf and school principals.

Chapter 2

Overview of Relevant Literature

History of Deaf Education

In the past, students who were deaf or hard of hearing were educated in separate schools or programs (Foster & Cue, 2008-09). They attended institutions or private schools (Cawthon, 2007). In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed. Those in the field of deaf education were unprepared for the changes the law would bring. Students were "lumped" into a group including all students with disabilities when, according to some, their needs should have been considered separately (Steffen, 2004).

What is unique about teaching students who are deaf or hard of hearing? They require a special skill set from teachers who have specialized training in communication and language skills (National Agenda, 2005) and academic and social needs. According to the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) website, there must be qualified and certified staff who can communicate directly with students with hearing loss. They stated,

> In order for an educational placement to be appropriate, the child
> must be provided, when appropriate, qualified and certified teachers,
> psychologists, speech therapists, assessors, administrators, interpreters,
> and other personnel who understand the unique nature of deafness and are
> specifically trained to work with deaf and hard of hearing children. These
> personnel should be proficient in the primary communication and

language mode of deaf and hard of hearing children (National Association of the Deaf, 2012).

In 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was signed into effect (U.S. Department of Education). This law also did not take into consideration the unique needs of children who are deaf or hard of hearing (Steffen, 2004). Teachers of the deaf who are considered highly qualified under NCLB are in high demand; but, there is a shortage of staff. The shortage is only expected to worsen (National Agenda, 2005). Although there is much criticism about NCLB, one positive aspect of the act is that it does make schools accountable for student learning and does not focus solely on placement (Cawthon, 2007).

By 2007, nearly 86% of U.S. students who were deaf or hard of hearing were educated in public schools and of those at least 80% were reported to be in classes with their hearing peers (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Populations). There continues to be an increase in the number of students who attend their home school district (Cawthon, 2009).

Low Incidence Disability

"Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA),

the approximately 50,000 deaf children identified as receiving

special education services comprise a little less than 1% of the

almost 7 million children receiving special education services;

by contrast, they comprise one-tenth of 1%, or 1 in 1,000,

of the 50 million children in American public schools" (Moores, 2005).

"Deafness" and "hard of hearing" are referred to as low incidence disabilities. Low Incidence" is defined by the National Center on Accessible Instructional Materials as disabilities which do not exceed 1% of the school-aged population. They are relatively rare disabilities and because of this they often pose challenges for local school districts to meet students' needs.

The percentage of students with hearing loss, in relation to other disability categories, stayed consistent from 2005-2010, at 1.2%. The actual number of students identified with a hearing impairment served under IDEA, ages 3-21, is indicated below (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012).

Table 1. Students Identified as Deaf of Hard of Hearing

	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Hearing Impairment	**79,000**	**80,000**	**79,000**	**78,000**	**79,000**

Schools may encounter students who are deaf or hard of hearing infrequently, which means they may have little knowledge of how to best educate these students or what services are needed. (National Center on Accessible Instructional Materials, 2012). Oftentimes, not even special education teachers understand the unique needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing because of their low incidence. Hearing loss is perhaps one of the most complex special education verifications. Factors to consider when working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing include the vast range of etiologies and degrees of hearing loss, age of onset of the loss, language and communication

method, and their background in education (Thurlow, 2010). "Because deafness is a low

incidence disability, there is not a widespread understanding of its educational

implications, even among special educators (U.S. Department of Education)."

The combination of a low incidence disability, a shortage of teachers of the deaf,

and few school principals having training or experience in working with this population

of students, make deaf education a challenging field. Unfortunately, "the needs of deaf

children may be lost within the much greater disability or general public school

population" (Moores, 2005, p. 77).

Table 2 provides a comparison between the total number of students with

disabilities and those with hearing loss as a primary verification (IDEA Data Center,

2011).

Table 2.

Comparison by State: Total Students with Disabilities and Total Identified Hearing Impaired (HI)
Ages 6-21 Served Under IDEA, Fall 2011

State	Total	HI
Alabama	72,794	897
Alaska	15,889	145
Arizona	111,963	1,495
Arkansas	51,515	525
California	605,549	10,605
Colorado	74,885	1,304
Connecticut	60,324	561
Delaware	16,936	224
Florida	321,477	3,555
Georgia	162,884	1,697
Hawaii	17,156	308
Idaho	23,485	264
Illinois	256,013	3,423
Indiana	145,975	2,075
Iowa	60,523	423
Kansas	55,211	509
Kentucky	81,363	630
Louisiana	71,095	1,156
Maine	28,247	184
Maryland	90,449	985
Massachusetts	149,745	1,052
Michigan	188,948	2,508
Minnesota	107,992	2,025
Mississippi	53,836	658
Missouri	109,091	1,132
Montana	14,336	69
Nebraska	39,654	571
Nevada	41,519	453
New Hampshire	26,264	215
New Jersey	207,010	1,477
New Mexico	41,534	514
New York	388,237	4,291
North Carolina	168,980	1,934
North Dakota	11,302	94
Ohio	235,160	2,191
Oklahoma	90,480	999

Oregon	71,805	810
Pennsylvania	262,241	2,621
Rhode Island	21,842	148
South Carolina	88,762	1,022
South Dakota	15,279	128
Tennessee	110,689	1,325
Texas	398,919	6,227
Utah	62,377	531
Vermont	12,081	98
Virginia	144,521	1,228
Washington	114,758	1,141
West Virginia	38,771	385
Wisconsin	107,719	1,492
Wyoming	11,990	151

The majority of students with a hearing loss have additional disabilities (Cawthon, 2009). The actual number of students with hearing loss and additional disabilities may be difficult to determine because some children with hearing loss are verified under different categories, such as multiple disabilities or deaf-blindness (Ahearn, NASDE in Forum, 2011). Algozzine and Ysseldyke (2006) stated the percentage of students identified as hearing impaired is undoubtedly higher than it seems because students may likely be served under a special education verification label that is not "hearing impaired."

What does it mean to have additional or multiple disabilities? The Federal Register (2006) defined the term "multiple disabilities" as meaning "…concomitant impairments,..the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments…" (p. 46550).

Guardino (2008) identified several problems impacting students with hearing loss and additional disabilities receiving appropriate services. First, it is not uncommon for students to be misidentified. They may be given more than one verification, but none of which specifically address hearing loss. Next, students may be misidentified or identified late. Third, students with hearing loss and additional disabilities may be placed in inappropriate educational settings which leads to the final problem of receiving inadequate services. Guardino noted that "although professionals have an increased need to understand how to serve deaf students with multiple disabilities, current research does not match teachers' needs" (p. 55).

McCain and Antia (2005) stated there is confusion about the characteristics of having additional disabilities and how they interact with hearing loss. Davis stated, "A disability in addition to hearing loss does not simply add new barriers, instead these needs may be considered compounded, creating unique needs for each individual student" (p. 242). When students are identified as "multiply disabled" there is a greater chance their individual needs will be overlooked because they are lumped into a group based on that verification and alleged strategies for all students who are given that label (Ewing & Jones, 2003).

Administration of Programs for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

"There is a lack of interested and qualified persons to assume leadership positions in deaf education…"(Andrews & Covell, 2006-07, p. 465). In addition, there is a "severe shortage of highly qualified teachers of the deaf" (CEASE position paper,

2005, p. 2). These findings suggest why there are few school principals with a background in deaf education.

As more students are educated in general education settings, it becomes critical for administrators of programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing to understand the needs of this population. Heumann and Hehir (1998) reported that the Office of Special Education Programs recognized school administrators were responsible for all students, including those in the regular classroom and those students with disabilities. School principals need to understand the unique needs and challenges associated with working with students with hearing loss. For example, principals need to be aware that even a mild hearing loss can have an adverse effect on a student's educational performance (Haller & Montgomery, 2004). In addition, general education teachers have not received much training in special education, let alone deaf education, so they have relied on teachers of the deaf to make curriculum and assessments accessible (Cawthon, 2009). There were multiple language and communication forms for students with hearing loss, including manual sign language systems, and it was important to realize that part of the complexity of teaching these students was that communication methods had to be converted to English print (Thurlow, 2010). Finally, a statistic that has held true for several years in the field of deaf education is that the average reading level of students who are deaf or hard of hearing has been "capped" between third and fourth grade (Gilbertson & Ferre, 2008).

A study conducted by Luckner, Goodwin-Muir, Johnson-Howell, Sebald and Young (2005) presented a needs assessment survey about the field of deaf education to school

administrators, parents, educational professionals, and university faculty. Results showed that "the number-one research and training need as stated by participants was educating administrators about appropriate services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing" (p. 365). This was due to a number of changes in the field:

- Hospitals nationwide implementing newborn hearing screening

- The number of small children receiving cochlear implants

- Fewer students with severe/profound hearing loss in classrooms, meaning fewer sign language interpreters

- Closing of residential schools for the deaf resulting in students being educated in general education classrooms

- An increasing number of students with culturally diverse backgrounds who are deaf or hard of hearing

Inclusion of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

In a study by Praisner (2003), nearly 27.8% of elementary principals reported having no experience with students who were deaf or hard of hearing, although they did feel the least restrictive placement in general education classrooms was most appropriate (74.5% respondents).

Based on a study by Luckner and Muir (2002), ten factors were identified to promote success for students who are deaf or hard of hearing in general education settings:

- Family Involvement

- Self-Determination

- Extracurricular Activities

- Friendships and Social Skills

- Self-Advocacy Skills

- Collaboration and Communication with General Education Teachers

- Pre-teach/Teach/Post-teach Content and Vocabulary Learned in the General Education Classroom

- Collaboration with Early Identification and Early Intervention Service Providers

- Reading

- High Expectations

In the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD) position paper (adopted February 13, 2007) titled "The Full Continuum of Educational Placements for All Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing," one section identified what educational administrators, teachers, and education support personnel need to do when working with students with hearing loss. This included:

- Advocate strongly for communication and language driven educational options for deaf and hard of hearing students

- Embrace the notion that a truly "least restrictive environment (LRE)" is not a generic concept of a "one-size fits all," but rather a concept where the child's individual communication, language, and educational needs determine LRE, not the other way around

- Understand that the full continuum of alternative placements is fundamental to the provision of a free and appropriate education in the LRE

- ▪ Act upon the notion that LRE for deaf children means a <u>L</u>anguage <u>R</u>ich
    <u>E</u>nvironment

- ▪ Actively participate in and provide leadership in encouraging states to develop a
    statewide plan for the education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing based
    on "The National Agenda" and "NASDE Guidelines" (p. 3).

In addition, Bruce, DiNatale, and Ford (2008) stated that administrators of programs
for students who are deaf or hard of hearing can support changes to not only assist
students with hearing loss in the general education classroom, but also to serve students
with additional disabilities in their classrooms.

Supporting Teachers of the Deaf

Nationwide, there has been a shortage of teachers of the deaf for several years
(Johnson, 2004). A concern is that school principals often have difficulty finding a
teacher of the deaf so they fill a vacancy with a speech-language pathologist or special
education teacher. However, a teacher who specializes in teaching students with hearing
loss is critical, particularly for those with additional disabilities (Lenihan, 2010). For
both administrators and teachers, "A disturbing trend is that program directors are
opening and reopening unsuccessful searches for qualified leaders and are hiring teachers
and superintendents with no experience with deaf and hard of hearing students" (Tucker
& Fischgrund, 2001, p. 465).

In a study by Lartz and Litchfield (2005-06), administrators were asked to identify
competencies to prepare teachers of the deaf. Their findings revealed a number of
important aspects of educating students with hearing loss. Teachers serving students in

early intervention services need to have expertise in young child development in addition to hearing loss. Administrators said they needed to stay aware of the constant changes in technology. They said teachers of the deaf need to know strategies and techniques for working with students with hearing loss. Administrators in the study indicated educators need to have a diverse background in working with students with varying academic and communication needs. Although this study confirmed outcomes typically addressed in higher education programs, it should be noted the study participants were administrators who may not have had any experience supervising a deaf education program.

Teachers of the deaf do not have many opportunities to attend professional development opportunities focusing on assessments and accommodations for students with hearing loss. Certified teachers of the deaf would like more direction about appropriate accommodations for assessments. Few assessments have been designed specifically for the deaf and hard of hearing population (Cawthon, 2009). For example, tests that ask questions about sounds cannot be valid for students with hearing loss (Steffan, 2004). With all of the testing requirements of No Child Left Behind, it is critical for administrators to understand students who are deaf or hard of hearing are to be included in statewide assessments (Andrews & Covell, 2006-07).

Antia, Stinson and Gaustad (2002) identified the importance of the school administrator's role in programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. They stated principals are frequently responsible for teachers of the deaf, support personnel working with students with hearing impairments, and likely have input about the involvement of students in extracurricular activities. They can support teachers of the

deaf in several ways. They can allow them adequate time to collaborate with classroom

teachers. Joint planning times and providing opportunities for educators to communicate

about students' needs is critical. By providing this time, it is more likely that specific

strategies and interventions will be implemented, whether or not the teacher of the deaf is

present on a regular basis. Principals in these programs can support the importance of

socialization for students with hearing loss. They can promote involvement in

extracurricular activities. This may require principals to coordinate transportation and

arrange for support staff, such as sign language interpreters.

In a study by Scheetz and Martin (2008), they asked administrators what constitutes a

"master teacher" in the field of deaf education. Overall, there was a lack of consensus.

There are research studies about characteristics of master teachers in the field of general

education and researchers in the field of deaf education agree those apply to teachers of

the deaf but in addition, place emphasis on the following: conceptual flexibility,

assessment, instructional techniques, and collaboration.

The role of supervision in programs for students with hearing loss is complex.

Principals must understand the unique needs of the population, the special skill set of

teachers of the deaf, and the challenges of various aspects of programming for students

who are deaf or hard of hearing, including those with additional disabilities.

School Principals and Supervision of Special Education Programs

"Quality administrators provide effective leadership for quality instruction"

(Okpala, Hopson, Chapman, & Fort, 2011, p. 133). The field of special education

provides challenges typically not present in general education. For example, as many as

40% of special education teachers choose to leave their position in the first three years of teaching. This can be attributed to lack of administrative support, demands of the job, and overwhelming paperwork requirements (Billingsley, 2004).

It is often the new, novice administrators who are given the responsibility of supervision of special education programs. Many principals do not feel prepared to lead special education programs in their buildings. They are often overwhelmed with how complex roles and responsibilities are (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran & Walter-Thomas, 2004). More and more, the responsibility of supervising special education programs is on principals, whereas historically it has been managed by district office staff (Hines, 2008). The principal has to be the one who models collaborative planning and implementation by staff. Although the classroom teacher may have specific curriculum and content knowledge, the special education teacher will bring his/her skills in individualizing for students with special needs. It becomes the principals' role to help the teachers balance each other. One way an administrator can promote collaboration is through staff development opportunities. By doing this, the principal models the high expectations for students with disabilities and encourages staff to learn new instructional strategies (Hines, 2008). School principals need to lead by example (Bakken & Smith, 2011). In one study about the rural administrators' role in special education, researchers were concerned about principals' lack of knowledge in special education and their inability to effectively lead faculty. They had little formal education or experience working with students with special needs. Because principals are responsible for programming and activities in their

respective buildings, it is important they understand their role in special education

(Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006).

School principals should be familiar with the Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act (IDEA) and how it relates to No Child Left Behind (NCLB). They should

be aware of court cases as well as rights of parents and students, the IEP process, and

overall information about special education (Lasky & Karge, 2012).

Clearly, instructional leaders who understand students with

disabilities, IDEA, NCLB requirements, and effective practices

are better prepared to provide students and their teachers with

appropriate classroom support. They recognize the importance

of comprehensive academic planning, ongoing monitoring of

progress, and data-based decisions regarding students' programs.

They have the knowledge, skills, and commitment to facilitate

academic and structural integrity in classrooms so that students,

teachers, specialists, paraprofessionals, and others can work

effectively (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran & Walther-Thomas, 2004, p. 4).

Perceptions of the School Principal

How a principal addresses and perceives special education in the building has an

important influence on how services are delivered in that school. It appears principals

hold higher expectations for students with disabilities and their involvement in general

education more than previously thought (Praisner, 2003). "Principals must develop,

enhance, and monitor the professional skills and knowledge of their faculty and they must

work with their communities to create a common cluster of expectations promoting

implementation of those skills and knowledge" (DiPaola et al., 2004, p.3). For many

principals, their roles have changed to include supervision of special education programs

and services. In order for inclusion initiatives to move forward, principals must have an

understanding and acceptance of the concept (Praisner, 2003).

 School principals have an overwhelming number of tasks to tend to on a daily

basis. One study conducted in Iowa, focusing on high school principals, concluded that

even though they state they want to spend time on student achievement and consider it to

be most important, it is the one area leaders get to spend the least of their time doing; less

than 30%. This includes such tasks as professional growth activities and spending time

in classrooms. Most of their time is spent on discipline issues, completing required

paperwork, and attending school activities (Gilson, 2008). Hopkins (2003) stated that

most of what school principals spend their time doing has little to do with actual

education of children. In studies conducted by Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith,

Dutton, and Kleiner (2000) and Sirotnik and Ericson (1996), they stated negative

assumptions should not be made; administrators do want to learn about the unique needs

of children with special needs.

The Role of Higher Education

The opportunity to earn a degree in special education administration has developed

since 1965. Crockett (2002) stated that Leo Connor was "a pioneer in the field of special

education administration" (p. 158). He initiated programs at the university level in

special education and in 1965-66, four universities in the U.S. offered postgraduate

training in this area. In the early years, administrative classes typically did not overlap; general education administrators completed a set of classes and special education administrators completed others. "Too often, principals who are prepared well to administer general education programs are made responsible for a broad range of special education programs in areas in which they have had minimal training and/or experience" (Anderson & Decker, 1993, p. 3). In a study by Okpala, Hopson, Chapman and Fort (2011), school principals were asked how their leadership expertise was developed. Participants overwhelmingly agreed their expertise was learned on the job, while information they learned through field experiences and classes gave some information.

According to Powell and Hyde (1997), few administrators have knowledge about students with disabilities. However, research has shown principals who do have formal education in administration of programs for students with disabilities are more receptive to working with students with disabilities and staff. The more training they have received in this area, the more positive their attitudes were toward inclusion of students with disabilities. "The reality is that school administrators need to take part in the development and implementation of inclusion programs and therefore need to be adequately prepared to do so" (p. 142).

For teachers as well, there are few higher education programs that offer training to work with students who are deaf or hard of hearing (Benedict, Johnson & Antia, 2011). There has been a decline in the number of colleges and universities offering training programs in deaf education. The Council on the Education of the Deaf (CED) accredits teacher preparation programs in this field but they do not give specific guidelines or

curriculum content for the programs. This organization focuses on skills and knowledge of skills for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, as opposed to aligning with state education standards (Cawthon, 2009).

Research and Deaf Education

Even though general school administration preparation programs now include more information about special education, they often do not address the low incidence disabilities in any depth, including hearing impairments. In addition, there appears to be a lack of interest in research in the area of deaf education and even more so in the area of deaf education and students with multiple disabilities, which accounts for a large percentage of the population of students with hearing loss (Benedict, Johnson & Antia, 2011). In "The National Agenda: Moving Forward on Achieving Educational Equity for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students" (2005), one of the goals of professional standards and personnel preparation includes: "High-quality alternative pathways to credentialing teachers, administrators, and support personnel to work with deaf and hard of hearing students must be provided" (p. 35). The rationale is:

Undergraduate and graduate preparation programs cannot be

the only source for filling critical teacher, administrative, and

support personnel vacancies, particularly with ethnic-minority

and ethnic-minority deaf personnel. It is critical that alternative

programs be available and held to high standards and ensures

that their graduates demonstrate acquisition of critical knowledge

and skills. It is also important schools provide mentoring support

for new professionals. (p. 35)

In addition, students with hearing loss may have additional challenges because the causes of hearing loss many times lead to additional disabilities (Bruce, DiNatale & Ford, 2008). Finally, due to No Child Left Behind, school principals may have even less time to focus on research because they feel the need to put resources into instructional time (Befort, Lynch, James, Carroll, Nollen & Davis, 2008).

Faculty in Higher Education

Schirmer (2008) stated that faculty in the area of deaf education are in short supply. Most programs employ only one or two faculty members and there are very few researchers in the area of students with hearing loss. The Commission on Education of the Deaf has reported that both the quality and quantity of research in this area needs significant improvement. The research that has been completed has tended to be opinion-based or explanations of programs and was mostly descriptive. Few studies have been published about effective instructional strategies for students with hearing loss. Schirmer cited only 20 intervention studies between the years of 1970-2004. She stated this problem may be due in part to "…agencies such as the U. S. Department of Education or private foundations do not support research in the area of deafness and other low-incidence disabilities at the same level that they do research in general education or high-incidence disabilities" (p. 412). Evidence of the lack of research by higher education faculty and students was further confirmed by Schirmer when she noted the number of dissertations earned in the field of deaf education in the past 40 years; "1 in 1969, 39 in the 1970's, 40 in the 1980's, 30 in the 1990's, and 17 from 2000 to 2005" (p. 413). In

addition, Schirmer examined the number of publications higher education faculty in deaf

education had contributed during the period of 2000-2005; "41 had published nothing, 24

accomplished 1 publication, and 13 presented 2 publications. Thus, 71% had 0 to 2

publications" (p. 413). The research conducted on students who are deaf or hard of

hearing and multiple disabilities was mostly qualitative and did not include quantitative

studies (Guardino, 2008). McCain and Antia (2005) added they had not seen effective

research published in the areas of assessment, outcomes, or accommodations for students

who are deaf or hard of hearing.

For this study, I gathered data from state departments of education regarding number

of students identified as deaf or hard of hearing, number of principals in public schools,

and number of principals supervising programs for students who are deaf or hard of

hearing. In addition, I interviewed school principals who supervise a teacher of the deaf,

to fill a gap in the literature concerning the principals' role in deaf education.

Chapter 3

Research Methods

Researcher Bias

Stake (2010) stated the importance of recognizing researcher biases and their effects on the research. Teddlie and Tashakkori said "the use of mixed methods in research…acknowledges that the values of the researcher play a large role in interpretation of results" (2003, p. 713). As a school administrator who is a certified teacher of the deaf and has served students in programs designed for those who are deaf or hard of hearing, my experiences influence my research.

With my background and experiences in the field of deaf education, it is fitting for me to reflect on the meaning from the data I collected. The use of reflexivity requires one to be critical about yourself as a researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). I acknowledge the following biases:

1. My teaching certification includes an endorsement to teach students who are deaf or hard of hearing and I understand the unique skillset of a teacher of the deaf. I have had experiences of school principals serving as my immediate supervisor while in the position of teacher of the deaf.

2. I am a certified school administrator. I know firsthand the classes required for such certification at my university and understand there was no coursework specific to the education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing included in the school administration program.

3. With my education and experiences in deaf education, I understand the complexities of programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, including the role of the teacher of the deaf, history of Deaf culture, technological advances in hearing technology, and communication modality choices that often provoke controversy in the field.

Research Design

This is a mixed methods study. The worldview in this research is constructivism because of the understanding of the phenomenon of supervision of teachers of the deaf, formed through participant interviews and their viewpoints.

A mixed methods study encompasses both quantitative and qualitative research. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) stated that the "quantitative researcher seeks to understand the relationship among variables…" (p. 7). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) explained quantitative methods as gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data. Simply put, quantitative data presents numerical information. In quantitative studies, a research hypothesis is stated and predicts results of the study before it is conducted.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) said that the "qualitative researcher aims to explore a problem, honor the voices of participants, map the complexity of the situation, and convey multiple perspectives of participants" (p. 7). Qualitative methods are described as presenting narrative data after information is gathered, analyzed, and interpreted (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

Characteristics of Mixed Methods Research

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) defined mixed methods research as a relatively new field, just slightly more than 20 years old. They discussed the "definition of core characteristics of mixed methods research as the researcher doing the following:

- Collects and analyzes persuasively and rigorously both qualitative and quantitative data (based on research questions);

- Mixes (or integrates or links) the two forms of data concurrently by combining them (or merging them), sequentially by having one build on the other, or embedding one within the other;

- Gives priority to one or to both forms of data (in terms of what the research emphasizes);

- Uses these procedures in a single study or in multiple phases or a program of study;

- Frames these procedures within philosophical worldviews and theoretical lenses; and

- Combines the procedures into specific research designs that direct the plan for conducting the study." (p. 5)

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) explained mixed methods research as two data sets that are merged. This type of research shows the complexity of the problem and brings together similar results from both quantitative and qualitative research strategies, but identifies different aspects. Quantitative data makes generalizations, or gives a 'big picture' of the problem while the qualitative piece gives detailed, or in depth,

understanding of a few specific details of the problem in the study. Mixed methods

research provides more evidence to the problem than either quantitative or qualitative

research alone, and it is a practical approach to research. Mixed methods research takes

extensive time and effort for the researcher but overall demonstrates the complexity of

the problem.

Mixed methods research has not been regularly used in the field of special

education. Collins, Sutton, and Onwuegbuzie (2005) stated researchers in special

education had not adopted this method to the same degree as other fields. They stated

that from 2000-2005, only 10.8% of articles published in the *Journal of Special

Education* utilized mixed methods research in a single study.   In a similar study by

Collins, Onwuegbuzie, and Sutton (2006), it was shown that a reason for a lack of mixed

methods research in special education was the labor intensity of the method which

includes more time, effort, and resources to implement.

This study fits into mixed methods research because it shows the complexity of

principals supervising teachers of the deaf by also providing data about the low incidence

disability of hearing loss, unique role of teachers of the deaf, and a general overview of

the complexity of programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.   In the study,

the qualitative data obtained in the interviews enhanced the study with a second source of

data. Data was collected sequentially. The quantitative, survey data was collected and

analyzed before the interviews, therefore the research process had two phases. Both data

sets were utilized because they both play an important role in the study, although the

qualitative data, which reports the views of school principals who supervise teachers of

the deaf, helped to explain the results of the quantitative data gathered from surveys and provided a more in-depth look at the research problem.

Explanatory Sequential Design

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) explained the use of explanatory sequential design in mixed methods research. This type of research begins with quantitative research which addresses the research questions in the study. It is followed subsequently by qualitative research. The qualitative research helps to explain the quantitative data and explains the study more in-depth and with additional information. There is a connection from quantitative to qualitative research by mixing the data. The diagram below represents the overall explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 139).
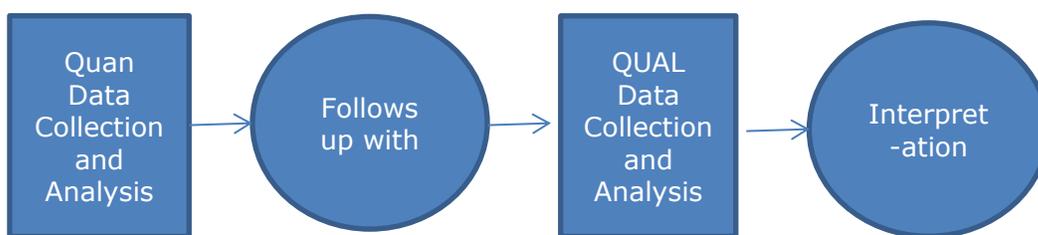

Figure 1. Explanatory Sequential Design

In the explanatory sequential design, the data analysis used connected data between quantitative and qualitative to explain results. Data was obtained in the following order:

1. Collected quantitative data using survey data

2. Analyzed quantitative data by summarizing information gathered from state-level data into a table

3. Designed qualitative research based on quantitative data, identifying questions addressing survey data in more detail

4. Collected qualitative data by interviewing school principals at their respective school buildings

5. Analyzed qualitative data utilizing hand-coding and themes

6. Interpreted how quantitative and qualitative data were connected and how they answered the mixed methods questions identified at the beginning of this study

There are strengths in the use of an explanatory sequential design of mixed methods research. This design appeals to quantitative researchers who may be skeptical of mixed methods research because it begins with quantitative data collection. The study is easier to implement because it is conducted one phase at a time. For reviewers who read the study upon completion, it is easier to understand because there is a defined quantitative chapter followed by a qualitative chapter. The qualitative research is designed based on what is learned from the quantitative research results.

One of the challenges to explanatory sequential design is that the qualitative piece is limited to a small number of participants because of the need to seek in-depth information to tell a story. It takes a great deal of time to conduct a study using mixed methods design because the quantitative and qualitative studies are conducted separately.

The researcher must carefully analyze the quantitative data to decide what to expand from for the qualitative part of the research study.

The explanatory sequential design was the ideal choice for this study because data was analyzed in different phases. The qualitative data provided a better understanding of the research problem than the quantitative results alone would have. Although the quantitative data attempted to provide background information identifying number of students with disabilities, number of students with hearing loss, and the number of principals throughout the U.S., the qualitative data addressed the central question of the study focused on principals' supervision of teachers of the deaf.

Phenomenology

The qualitative section of the study was conducted with a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is defined as a group of people who have experienced something, a phenomenon, they have in common. Moustakas (1994) stated, "Phenomenology, step by step, attempts to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment, setting aside presuppositions, and reaching a transcendental state of freshness and openness, a readiness to see in an unfettered way, not threatened by the customs, beliefs, and prejudices of normal science by the habits of the natural world or by knowledge based on unreflected everyday experience" (p. 41). The qualitative section of a phenomenological study was not to make generalizations, but rather it was designed to gain an in-depth understanding of a few people.

The phenomenological method in particular can be challenging, because the method of inquiry constantly changes and does not have a standard set of questioning

strategies or techniques (vanManen, 2006). It may be complicated because the researcher must put her own experiences and opinions aside and look at an issue from another person's point of view. In phenomenology, this is referred to as the epoche.

Moustakas (1994) defined epoche as "… an experience in itself…allowing things, events, and people…to look and see them again, as if for the first time" (p. 85). The researcher must ask open-ended questions and guide the conversation based on information from the participant so they can listen and take in a new perspective.

As Moustakas (1994) defined, data collected in a phenomenological study is gathered through an interactive manner, usually obtained through interviews. The process is meant to be a casual and relaxed interaction so often begins with social conversation. Moustakas indicated principles of transcendental phenomenology which includes:

- Examining entities from many perspectives until the "essence" of the phenomenon is revealed;

- Seeking meaning from "appearances" and arriving at "essences" through "intuition and reflection on conscious acts of experience;"

- Committed to "descriptions of experiences," rather than analyses or explanations

- The investigator has a "personal interest" in the study; and

- The primary evidence of scientific investigation is the researcher's "thinking, intuiting, reflecting, and judging." (p. 58-60)

In a phenomenological study, participants are asked two general questions: What have you experienced in terms of this phenomenon, and what situations have typically influenced your experiences about the phenomenon? In this study, the research questions addressed the following: a) what are school principals' experiences in supervising teachers of the deaf, b) what situations influence school principals' understanding of supervising teachers of the deaf, and c) what is the significance of the school principals' roles in supervising teachers of the deaf.

The philosophical assumption in this research method is most often described as what we experience. The philosophical tenents of this study, the principles believed to be in common with the participants, included the experiences each participant has had supervising a teacher of the deaf.

Phase One: Quantitative Research

All public schools in the U.S. are required to publically report data about their performance to the local district, state government, federal government, and community constituents. With this knowledge, a survey was created and emailed to a representative in each state regarding the number of students receiving special education services, number of students identified as deaf or hard of hearing, and number of principals in public schools. Web surveys were utilized because they are convenient. They can be sent to multiple individuals at the same time, are faster to send than U.S. mail, and can be completed when respondents choose to do so. Once received, an email can remain in an "inbox" until completed or purposely deleted, unlike traditional mail that may be

misplaced (Cook et all, 2000). Surveys completed online are also a cost savings (Kaplowitz, 2004).

Participants

Ten closed-ended questions constituted the survey (Appendix A) that was emailed to contacts at each state department of education. The email gave information stating a study was being conducted about principals who supervised teachers of the deaf. Individuals were contacted without prior notice. Initially the surveys were emailed to those identified as consultants or contacts for programs servings students who are deaf or hard of hearing. One method for acquiring names of state department of education staff who supervise programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing was by obtaining a list from a local department of education staff member. Of the fifty states in the nation, eleven of those on the list provided did not identify supervisors of deaf education programs. Four of the states listed two contacts and three states identified three individuals who served in this capacity. Of the other thirty-nine, one name was determined to be incorrect because the individual no longer was employed in that position and three of the individuals' email addresses were undeliverable. Of the eleven remaining states who did not have representatives on the list, a different contact person was able to provide additional names of individuals who may have been able to provide the data themselves or refer to another person in their state who would have this information. On the second attempt to contact appropriate state-level personnel, few provided additional data or referred to a different individual within their state who they believed may have the requested information.

Data Collection

Participants were contacted by email to complete a web-based survey containing ten close-ended queations regarding supervision of teachers of the deaf. Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009) identified several guidelines for designing web surveys. Within these guidelines, they recommended making the survey organized, meaningful, and accessible to participants in addition to keeping in mind the technological capabilities of the respondents.

Instrument

The web-based survey in this study included the following questions:

1.   How many students, ages 6-21 in your state, are identified as having a disability (total of all categories) and served by special education in public schools?

2.   Of that population, how many students in your state, ages 6-21, are identified as deaf or hard of hearing and served by special education in public schools?

3.   Of the students who are deaf or hard of hearing in your state, how many are educated in public schools at each level—elementary, middle school, high school?

4.   How many public school districts, serving students with disabilities ages 6-21, are in your state?

5.   Of those districts, how many serve students who are deaf or hard of hearing?

6.   How many public school buildings, serving students with disabilities ages 6-21, are in your state?

7.   Of those buildings, how many serve students who are deaf or hard of

hearing?

8. How many public school principals, serving students with disabilities, ages 6-21, are in your state?

9. Of those principals, how many are in buildings who serve students who are deaf or hard of hearing?

10. Of the principals working in buildings serving students who are deaf or hard of hearing, how many are found at each level of building---elementary, middle school, high school?

Survey responses were recorded and a table was created to show the results of each question.

Phase Two: Qualitative Research

To expand on results of the survey data gathered in the quantitative phase of the study, three public school principals, located in three different states, were identified to take part in in-depth, face-to-face interviews at their school sites. All of the principals supervise teachers of the deaf. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Codes and themes were identified and put into a coding table (Appendix B).

Participants

The sampling was purposeful for the qualitative phase of the study. Convenience sampling was used to obtain names of participants who were available, convenient, and represented the homogeneous group to be studied which was principals who supervise a teacher of the deaf.   A reputational approach was used to identify school principals for the study.

The three participants in this study were from three different states in the U.S. The sample size was purposeful because it supported a phenomenological approach by gaining an in-depth understanding of the central question for a small group of individuals. The participants' experience in educational administration in public schools included various years and levels of administrative experience. They ranged in age, gender, and size of school district. Participants agreed to be a part of the study because they were supervising a teacher of the deaf and interested in the findings of the study.

Principal 1 worked in a rural farming community. He was principal of the elementary school. He served in a principal role for thirteen years and simultaneously during those years served as either the director of special education or the curriculum and assessment director. Prior to serving as a principal he was a classroom teacher for seven years, teaching both second and fourth grade, and also served as a reading specialist. Throughout his coursework to become a school administrator, he took six classes in special education. He admitted most of his knowledge of special education was learned on the job. Principal 1 never had formal education in deaf education, however, he said he had background knowledge in the disability category because his wife completed coursework in this field of education. Through her educational experiences, Principal 1 accompanied his wife to BINGO nights with deaf and hard of hearing individuals and attended church services for people with hearing loss. He estimated he has met six people who are deaf or hard of hearing either personally or professionally.

In his role as principal, he had experience organizing sign language classes for the community which included parents and patrons. Principal 1 supported the local teacher

of the deaf and students with hearing loss in the district by attending trainings offered specific to hearing loss and supporting staff and students in attending activities designed to support individuals with hearing loss, including opportunities outside of the school day. He fondly remembered hiring a sign language interpreter for the first time in the history of the school district. He initially researched job descriptions and salary schedules for the position and now has had several years of experience as not only the supervisor of the teacher of the deaf but also the supervisor of a sign language interpreter. When he was aware of an upcoming absence for either the teacher of the deaf or interpreter, he worked with larger school districts in the area to locate a substitute.

In this rural school district, Principal 1 supervised one teacher of the deaf who served students throughout the district, ages birth to twenty-one, therefore she was in multiple school buildings throughout the day. The district currently has fewer than ten students identified as hearing impaired. The teacher of the deaf was fluent in sign language and used this communication modality with some of the students while using spoken language with others. The state school for the deaf has been closed in this state for a number of years. School districts, including administrators, and teachers of the deaf are supported by regional programs for the deaf, who provide professional development opportunities, family support, and social networking opportunities for students.

Principal 2 worked at one of many elementary schools in a large urban district. She was in her fifth year as building principal and prior to that served as a vice principal for two years. All of her experience were at the elementary level. Before serving in an administrative role, Principal 2 was a fifth grade classroom teacher for

sixteen years. She completed only the required courses in special education and none in deaf education while earning her administrative certification. Regarding individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, Principal 2 was familiar with the students in her school. She has not known anyone personally with a hearing loss.

Principal 2 supervised four teachers of the deaf. Three teachers were housed in the building and a fourth was an itinerant teacher who served other schools in the district but had an office in the school. Two of the teachers were proficient in sign language and communicated with students consistently in this modality. The other two teachers rarely used sign language. In the building where Principal 2 was the administrator, they served students with hearing loss from preschool through elementary years. At the time of the interview there were approximately twenty-five students who were identified as deaf or hard of hearing. Within the school district, the building was the main site for elementary students to attend who had hearing loss. Although Principal 2 stated there were students identified as hearing impaired in other elementary schools in the district, although they may not have needed as intensive of programming as was provided at this school.

There was a school for the deaf in this state although Principal 2 stated they did not have any regular communication with staff there. Special education leadership was found at the district level, although Principal 2 said, in the area of supervision of teachers of the deaf, there was little guidance provided. She said, "We're pretty isolated over here. People usually leave us alone."

Prior to Principal 3 being contacted for an interview, a conversation took place with the Director of Special Education for this suburban Midwestern school district. At the Director's request, both administrators from the district participated in the interview.

Principal 3 worked at the elementary level in a Kindergarten through fifth grade building. This was her fifth year as principal in the building. Prior to this role, she served as principal in another community for eight years. All of her experience had been at the elementary level. Principal 3 taught for eighteen years before becoming an administrator. The coursework she recalled in the area of special education was approximately three or four classes with no classes specific to deaf education. Within the five years she had served as principal of this building, she estimated ten or twelve students with hearing loss had attended the school.

The Director supervised a number of special education staff who served students ages birth through twenty-one. This was her twenty-third year in the position. Prior to working in the district she was a teacher for eight years in another district. The Director had both a bachelor's and master's degree in special education, a specialist degree in educational administration, and had taken additional coursework in the areas of early childhood, behavior, and transition. She had not had any formal coursework in deaf education; although she had participated in trainings offered at the state school for the deaf located in a nearby community.

Principal 3 supervised three teachers of the deaf in her building. One teacher led a classroom for students who were deaf and utilized sign language as a communication modality. Another teacher worked with students who had an auditory-

oral approach to instruction. A third teacher was hired for a special situation in which she served a student on a 1:1 basis. The significant differences in communication modalities utilized with students was controversial among the families and teachers of the deaf. This presented quite a challenge in supervision for Principal 3. She acknowledged she did not have a background in deaf education so her approach to supervision of the teachers of the deaf was to listen to their discussions, ask numerous questions, and provide feedback. Principal 3 viewed supervision of the teachers of the deaf and programs for students with hearing impairments as a learning experience and trusted the teachers as professionals.

The Director provided information about the relationship with the state school for the deaf, located in a nearby community. Although the school for the deaf historically served all students with hearing loss on their campus, they had recently changed their service model and now provided only outreach support to school districts on a consultative basis. The specific programs for students with hearing loss, one for students who used sign language and the other for students who utilized hearing technology and was oral, were contracted to neighboring districts to continue to lead the respective programs. In the building where Principal 3 served as the administrator, the auditory-oral program was housed.

Data Collection

The administration of interviews and results received took place in the spring of 2014. Participants were initially contacted by telephone to determine their interest in the study (Appendix C). Once they verbally agreed to participate, a date, time, and location

for the interview was established. A follow-up confirmation email was sent to each

participant to verify the appointment (Appendix D). The email stated the study was

being conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation and their participation was voluntary.

An interview protocol was created to document information obtained in the

interview (Appendix E). In addition to demographic information, specific questions

addressing each principal's background, experiences, and knowledge of special education

was addressed, in addition to the focus of the interview--supervision of teachers of the

deaf.

Interviews

Permission was obtained from the Institutional Review Board to conduct the

study (Appendix F). Interviews took place in each principal's respective building on a

date and time that was convenient for the participant. Interviews occurred either in the

principal's office or an adjoining conference room following a brief introduction in an

effort to make everyone comfortable. An Informed Consent form was signed prior to the

start of each interview (Appendix G). All interviews were digitally recorded which

allowed the researcher to take notes and be an active listener while participants were

talking. Principals were encouraged to answer the open-ended questions and ask any

clarifying questions during the interview. Each interview was approximately forty-five

minutes to one hour in duration.   The interviews were transcribed verbatim by a

professional transcriptionist. The transcripts were analyzed and hand-coded. Codes were

grouped into themes and presented as part of the coding table. Hand-coding of

transcripts, including in vivo coding and quotes, were used to analyze qualitative data. Evidence was grouped and labeled so they reflected broader perspectives.

Data Analysis

Quantitative results of the study from the web-based survey were put into a data chart. No respondent answered all ten questions asked on the survey. Individuals who never responded to the survey may have chosen not to for a variety of reasons including lack of interest in the study, lack of time to complete the survey, the survey not being received by the correct person or no desire to forward the survey to another, more appropriate individual. It is possible some individuals did not respond due to fear of the security of the internet. "It is unclear whether people's apprehension over whether it is 'safe' to respond to a survey from an unknown party will remain a barrier to response (as people become more familiar with the Internet there are also more scams being run on it)" (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009, p. 443-444). The email contained the web-based survey; no prior notice was sent.

Validation

The results of the quantitative data utilized construct validity. Results were compared with the research questions and it was determined the web-based survey instrument measured what it intended to measure. The reliability of quantitative data was maintained by cross checking data entry. A random percentage of data was checked to verify information had been entered correctly.

In the qualitative section of the study, the researcher brings in personal experiences to enhance the study. Individuals familiar with supervision of teachers of the

deaf and programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing were asked to examine

the data.

Chapter 4

Quantitative Results

Survey Data

Initially, survey data was analyzed to determine demographic information about students with disabilities, students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and public school principals throughout the United States.

The following diagram demonstrates how data was analyzed sequentially, with quantitative data collected first (Creswell, Shope & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 289).

| Stage 1: Separate QUAN data analysis | → | Stage 2: Identify QUAN results to use | → | Stage 3: Apply select QUAN results to qual phase |
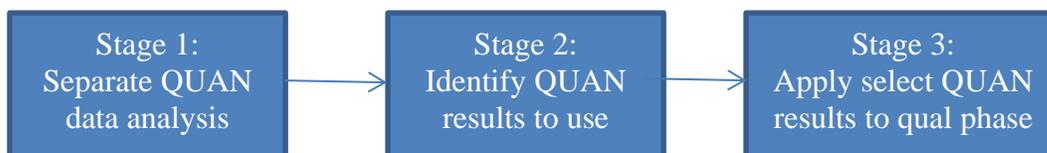
Figure 2. Sequential Data Analysis

Twenty-six of the fifty states responded to the survey for a response rate of 52%. Twenty-four state personnel provided data and two others responded but did not provide data. Of the later, one representative replied they would not provide data unless a fee was paid to them in advance. The other replied they "don't keep data that will answer several of your questions." Individuals from the twenty-four states that responded partially answered the ten questions, however no one answered all ten questions.

The states who responded to the survey with at least partial data are indicated in the shaded boxes below (italicized represents responded but did not provide data):

Table 3. Survey Response from States

Alabama	Hawaii	Massachusetts	New Mexico	*South Dakota*
Alaska	Idaho	Michigan	New York	Tennessee
Arizona	Illinois	Minnesota	North Carolina	Texas
Arkansas	Indiana	Mississippi	North Dakota	*Utah*
California	Iowa	Missouri	Ohio	Vermont
Colorado	Kansas	Montana	Oklahoma	Virginia
Connecticut	Kentucky	Nebraska	Oregon	Washington
Delaware	Louisiana	Nevada	Pennsylvania	West Virginia
Florida	Maine	New Hampshire	Rhode Island	Wisconsin
Georgia	Maryland	New Jersey	South Carolina	Wyoming

The response rate of 52% was a positive result. A study in organizational research conducted by Baruch (2008) revealed the average response rate for data collected in organizations was 35.7%, stating that using electronic data gave a response just as high or higher than traditional mail. When there is not a relationship with people to whom surveys are sent, they do not necessarily feel a need to respond. Kaplowitz, Hadlock and Levine (2004) noted response rates differ on web surveys than traditional mail. It takes less time to create web-based surveys and typically they do not have traditional elements of personalized letters and follow-up notes, causing individuals to not be as engaged. In addition, people worry about security when providing information via the internet.   Another reason for a low response rate on web surveys may be that emails end up in a "spam" folder. However, many individuals are expected to use the internet and email to communicate as part of their employment and/or for social media purposes. So, there is likely a familiarity with web-based surveys for the majority of individuals involved in this study.

Of the 24 respondents who provided data, seven states referred to their state Department of Education website for additional data. Six states required a formal records

request form to be completed before data could be shared. In these cases, the form was either emailed to the researcher or the researcher was referred to a website to complete the form and submit the request electronically. After the requests were submitted, all six states reported the information to the researcher.

Table 4. Data Collection from States

State	Referred to Website	Formal Records Request	No Additional Referral or Requests Made
Arizona		x	
Arkansas			x
California			x
Connecticut		x	
Georgia			x
Iowa	x		
Kansas		x	
Louisiana			x
Michigan		x	
Minnesota	x		
Mississippi			x
Missouri	x		
Nebraska			x
New York	x		
North Carolina	x		
North Dakota			x
Ohio	x		
Oregon			x
Pennsylvania			x
Texas			x
Washington	x		
West Virginia			x
Wisconsin			x
Wyoming			x

There were inconsistencies of respondents' job titles and positions which included the following: Education Specialist, Data Consultant or Data Specialist, Special Assistant Attorney General for the Department of Education, Director of Outreach for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Programs, Deaf/Hard of Hearing Program Consultant, Special Education Coordinator, Special Education Supervisor, Special Education Adviser for the Department of Education, Deaf-Blind Project Coordinator, Section Chief for Sensory Support, and Director of IDEA Data and Research. While most states' responses were from the Deaf/Hard of Hearing Administrator or state consultant, others forwarded the survey request to their Data Specialist or other representative.

Information collected from the surveys is displayed in Table 5. Specific comments from respondents are noted, if they were provided. A mark of "---" indicates data was not provided:

Table 5. State Data Gathered from Surveys (Ages 6-21) 2012-2013

State	Students with Dis. in State	DHH Student in State	DHH Student in State in Public School: EL MS HS	Public School District in State	District serving DHH Student	Public School Bldgs	Bldgs Serving DHH Student	Prin. in State	Prin. in Bldgs with DHH Student	Prin. in Bldgs: EL MS HS
AZ	97,820	754	559 --- 195	208	80	1,403	426	1,340	420	557 --- 195
AR	51,515	525	226 123 166	260	133	1,080	299	1,080	299	Not enough info
CA	686,352	13,937	4034 2678 3599	More than 1000	393	Do not have no.	Do not have no.	Do not have no.	Do not have no.	Do not have no.
CT	56,452	410	165 137 108	193	106	1,071	278	1,029	290	Unable to provide data

GA	176,962 (age 3-21)	2,275	469 267 236	Est. 190	142	Est. 2,000	1,008	Est. 2,000	1,008	469 267 236
IA	---	1,332	545 787 (MS + HS)	250	---	---	---	---	---	---
KS	66,327	552	---	285	Assume 285	1,433	1,433?	---	Difficult to answer	---
LA	107,298	1,142	---	121 (incl. charter schools and school for deaf)	All, but only 88 had DHH students invol.	UNK	UNK	UNK	UNK	UNK
MI	182,595	2,513	940 666 799	859	496	3,759	1,182	---	---	---
MN	124,364	2,025	---	333	---	1,967	---	---	---	---
MS	54,616	656	Deny request	162	116	Deny request	Deny request	Deny request	Deny request	Deny request
MO	112,250	1,182	488 244 360	562	237	2,224	570	2,222	604	277 155 172
NE	40,190	610	272 152 186	249	122	943	323	943	323	Does not group bldgs by EL, MS, HS
NY	385,489	3,037	---	697	---	---	---	---	---	---
NC	184,424	1,896	---	214	---	2,197	---	2,424	---	---
ND	13,268	132	No info to share	No info to share	No info to share	No info to share	No info to share	No info to share	No info to share	No info to share
OH	235,160	3,292	---	615	---	---	---	---	---	---
OR	70,995	788	362 201 235	197	All serve, 108 currently enrolled	---	---	---	---	---
PA	262, 197	2,716	953 639 901	673	476	6,238	1,427	Do not collect	Do not collect	Do not collect
TX	396,554	6,043	2,474 1,604 1,965	1,245	Do not know	---	---	---	---	---
WA	114,758	1,141	---	295	---	---	---	---	---	---
WI	438,994 (age 3-21)	1644	843 302 447	424	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know
WV	39,004	438	Do not have	56	47	Do not have	Do not have	Do not have	Do not have	Do not have
WY	15,512	149	66 38 46	48	48	351	All have potential	370 (incl. APs)	All have potential	201 61 84

Various reasons were provided regarding the difficulty in obtaining the data requested for the study.   One state noted they could not respond due to masked data,

which is defined as the numbers of students with disabilities in a particular category

being so small, typically less than 10, that it may be considered a breach of

confidentiality to provide the data because students could potentially be more easily

identified. Tracking the number of students with hearing loss may be difficult due to

some students having additional disabilities. North Carolina House Bill 317 states,

"Whereas, children who are deaf or hard of hearing may be classified as having a primary

disability other than hearing loss for purposes of special education and, therefore, may

not be tracked within existing Department of Public Instruction databases as having a

hearing loss…"

The greatest difficulty in obtaining quantitative survey data was finding the

number of principals in each state, and at which level they served as administrator.

Based on a phone call with a representative from a local professional organization for

educational administrators, it was stated that it was difficult to know the number of

principals in a given state if they are not collected at the state level because principals'

membership to professional organizations is not mandatory. Therefore, looking at data

from the National Association of Elementary School Principals or the National

Association of Secondary School Principals, for example, would not be accurate in

overall number of principals. It may also be difficult to get accurate data for this question

because of how the term "principal" is interpreted. Some districts report only the

principal of the building. Many buildings have several individuals with the word

"principal" in their title, such as "assistant principal" or "associate principal." In this

example, one district may report one principal while another reports three principals.

Following are specific comments noted in email responses. Positions of those answering the questions are listed, however, states are not identified for the purpose of confidentiality:

- "At the state level, we don't keep information about school buildings and principals." (Special Education Coordinator)

- "[The state department of education] collects the total data on public and nonpublic schools." "In order to provide you with the information that you seek in requests numbers 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10, [state department of education] would have to create a new document; therefore, [state department of education] does not have any documents which are responsive to those requests and must deny your request." (Special Assistant Attorney General)

- "I am sorry we aren't able to provide more data." (Special Education Consultant)

- "We do not collect specific data on principals at the state, building, or grade level and are unable to answer questions 8, 9, and 10." (Department of Education Special Education Adviser)

- "We have not been successful in finding DHH specific information. Unfortunately, it is not something we have on hand."   (Deaf/Hard of Hearing Consultant and Data Specialist)

- "I will answer what I can. Just because I can't give you the answer doesn't mean the data can't be accessed—it means I don't know how/where to get the data from, and don't have that much discretionary time to track it down for you." (Deaf/Hard of Hearing Outreach Director)

- "To find the building principals, I counted by our course codes. So depending on how the data is reported to us, the totals should be close, but may not be quite right. Ex: An elementary district may have their person coded as an administrator rather than a principal—so I would not be picking them up…I did want to point this out." (Data Specialist)

- "I have data that partially answers questions for the first five items but do not have data for the other questions…many programs serve students via itinerant services so we do not know how many districts actually have children who are deaf or hard of hearing enrolled." (State Deaf/Hard of Hearing Administrator)

- "…we don't have much of the data you want." (State Deaf/Hard of Hearing Administrator)

- "Sorry I cannot give you any exact numbers but in a state as large as [state] it is not that easy." (Deaf-Blind Project Coordinator)

- "I would only be able to provide you with the December 1, 2012 child count information. We do not have information that we are able to share beyond that point." (Department of Education Special Education Coordinator)

Summary

In this mixed methods study, the quantitative data provided background information about the number of students with disabilities and highlighted the low incidence percentage of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Survey results demonstrated the lack of data regarding the number of principals in particular, but more

importantly, it showed the inconsistency or total lack of data collected at a state level

regarding students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Chapter 5

Qualitative Results

Although the quantitative data provided critical background information regarding the study, the qualitative data provided an in-depth perspective of principals who supervised teachers of the deaf. Below is a figure that explains the significance of the data collected (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 139).

Figure 3. Significance of Data

The findings of the study provided a description of the results from four in-depth, face-to-face interviews with three school principals who supervised teachers of the deaf at their building site and one district-level special education director, per her request to accompany the building principal during the interview. The interviews were coded randomly by number (Principal 1, Principal 2, Principal 3, and Director) in order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity as was addressed in the informed consent documents that each interview participant signed. Each participant's role as a supervisor of teachers of the deaf was unique, although the commonality was that none of the administrators had a background in deaf education. The size of each school district varied, as did the structure of each program that supported students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Themes were determined after interviews were transcribed and hand-coded (Appendix H).   The following in-vivo themes emerged: a) "A Good Navigator," b) "I'm There," and c)"It's a Win-Win."

"A Good Navigator"

Although none of the principals had a background or experience in deaf education, they all believed they were suitably qualified to serve as supervisors of teachers of the deaf. They indicated they led their staffs and schools to appropriately serve students with hearing loss.

Principal 3 noted a distinct difference in supervising teachers of the deaf compared to classroom teachers. She said the teachers of the deaf tailor instruction more carefully than general education teachers and make language development a priority. She said teachers of the deaf understand the significant differences in communication modalities for students with hearing loss. The Director added that typically instruction provided by teachers of the deaf involved much more intensive programming than that provided for hearing students. Principal 1 credited teachers of the deaf for being more in tune to student accommodations and serving as greater advocates for students than classroom or even special education teachers. He stated,

> I think they're just really more passionate about their focus of deaf
>
> education, hearing impaired, and providing supports there. I also think
>
> they're more in tune and aware of supports outside of school for their
>
> students in terms of other agencies, regional supports, finding materials,
>
> supports for parents, those sorts of things versus our…maybe typical

resource teacher.

Principal 1 typically observed the teacher of the deaf working with students in a 1:1 or small group setting rather than a whole classroom. Principal 2 noted teachers of the deaf possess specialized skills such as sign language and a higher emphasis on use of visuals for instruction. She stated, "I think they have to have some special talents as far as how they teach…they have to put a lot more into it than just the regular teacher, you know." Principal 1 joked that the teacher of the deaf definitely knew more than he did! In his role as a supervisor, he credited teachers of the deaf by saying, "I think they have a unique role in terms of the relationship with families and the community that stretches far beyond what our other teachers are expected to do." He relied on the teacher of the deaf to connect with students and families, research evidence-based practices for students who were deaf or hard of hearing, locate or request materials appropriate for instruction, and communicate pertinent information with him.   Principal 2 said equipment and materials for students who are deaf or hard of hearing can be expensive and fellow administrators may have questions about spending funds on a disability category that impacts so few students. He said he was creative in finding ways to get the resources needed by the teacher of the deaf for her students.

Principal 3 acknowledged she supervised teachers of the deaf by utilizing her background as a classroom teacher and familiarity with supervising staff to observe and ask questions to learn about the role of teacher of the deaf. She said,

It is easier for me to identify with a classroom teacher…When I supervise

a deaf education teacher, it's more about making the observation of how she

interacts with kids. And I do a lot more questioning of 'why did you choose

to do that'…she's the professional. So I do more questioning to help me

understand how and why she arrived at the instruction and the direction

that she took.

The Director supported that comment by confirming she also did not have a background

in deaf education and as a supervisor, she asked teachers of the deaf to be more reflective

about their teaching to help her gain an understanding of appropriate instruction.

Principal 3 stated she is "a good navigator" for teachers of the deaf. She listens to

them and provides feedback, while at the same time influences them by keeping them

well connected to the general education setting. Principal 2 said the positive culture she

has created in the building involved the teachers of the deaf and the students with hearing

loss. Teachers were encouraged to make suggestions and provided ideas for instruction,

particularly to involve students with hearing loss in the general education curriculum.

She deemed communication a key factor in supervising staff and in particular, teachers of

the deaf. Principal 1 said that as a leader, he "tries to figure out what kinds of support

they [teachers of the deaf] need and encourages them to connect and network with others

in the region and in the state." He believed it was his responsibility to take the lead in

supervision of the program for students who are deaf or hard of hearing but relied on

others for support. Examples of support he has provided included serving on an advisory

board for a regional program for the deaf, participating in training opportunities including

sign language classes, and keeping current with trends and research in the field

of deaf education by reading articles published in local, state, and national publications.

He was pleased that the state he was in did not appear to be a "knee jerk kind of state" in

regards to trends in deaf education. He was happy to let others try new programs and

instructional strategies first, review the research and recommendations, then make

changes as appropriate. Overall, Principal 1 described communication with the teacher of

the deaf was a priority and tried to be accessible for her and be an active listener.

Principal 2 said that in her district there was not a lot of information provided from the

district level so new information about working with students with hearing loss primarily

came from the teachers of the deaf. When she evaluated teachers, she admitted to not

knowing the specifics of deaf education but overall was looking for best practices in

teaching students. Principal 3 admitted she relied mostly on the Director for guidance

regarding trends in the field of deaf education. The Director gained most of her

information from the outreach department at the state school for the deaf. She recognized

there was controversy in communication modalities and overall instructional practices for

students with hearing loss but worked with teachers of the deaf to confront difficult issues

and have intensive conversations, even if it was uncomfortable. Principal 3 stated she

was respectful of varying philosophies of teaching students with hearing loss and worked

with her teachers of the deaf to do what was best for the students. She specified,

> One of my strengths is communication. I think another one would be
>
> transparency. I don't make decisions without involving the people that
>
> need to be a part of them. There's no hidden agenda or anything. It's
>
> a transparency type leadership…We're all in this together.

Principal 1 indicated that his role as a supervisor of a teacher of the deaf had influence on the success of students, the confidence of the teacher, and how well a program for students who are deaf or hard of hearing was accepted in the district. He noted how important it was for all supervisors to place importance on the role of teachers of the deaf:

> It's easy for a principal to think…particularly with an itinerant teacher or deaf or hard of hearing teacher…that it would be hands off. You know, like 'I don't know very much about that' and maybe just kind of stepping back and letting them do their own thing and not really asking questions or tying to provide those supports. And I do. I think that a principal does have influence and I think they should, because obviously you're looking at students in your building and I really think that…in my opinion, when you're working with students with hearing impairments, that relationship between the teacher of the hearing impaired and the general classroom teachers is really critical. It's something that can either be really positive or it can be a great challenge.

"I'm There"

All four school administrators noted they did a good job of supervising their teacher of the deaf. Professional development was mentioned as one way to support the teachers by all four participants. Administrators recognized the need for training in the specialized area of hearing impairments. Principal 1 acknowledged he provided financial support for the teacher of the deaf to attend conferences and workshops and would

attempt to hire a substitute teacher or interpreter when the teacher of the deaf needed to

be gone for the purpose of professional development. As the person who supervised the

only teacher of the deaf in a rural school district, Principal 1 stated he encouraged the

teacher to "build her own capacity and knowledge around hearing impairment and

instruction" through professional development opportunities. Principal 2 said she saw the

teachers of the deaf using district-provided professional development information and

making it applicable to the students they were teaching. She also supported the teachers

of the deaf by attending IEP meetings. The Director also noted the importance of

teachers of the deaf being involved in professional development activities. She explained

further that in their district they tried to connect the teacher of the deaf with a classroom

teacher, and with that relationship, they built a network of communication and trust to be

able to best plan for and meet the needs of students.

Principal 3 expressed that even though her background was not in deaf education,

it was important for her to understand the needs of the student and the teachers of the

deaf. She stated she was a good listener and tried to look at the positives and negatives of

all situations as they were brought to her attention. Without the background in deaf

education, she did feel one advantage was that she could look at situations objectively as

a neutral person.

Principal 3 said that her overall approach to teacher supervision was serving as a

leader of their school "family." She confirmed that as a building, the staff all worked

together and specifically for the teachers of the deaf and students they served, she said, "I

think I support them by letting them know it's not just an isolated program…it's very much integrated and we all work together for the best interest of all the kids in that program." Principal 2 echoed that response saying she felt she was an effective principal who supervised teachers of the deaf because she saw "…the growth of kids…we're all working together, collaboratively as a team."

Principal 1 supported the teacher of the deaf by meeting with her regularly. They began each meeting with an agenda they had mutually set, which served as the formal part of their meeting. They began with "celebrations" and "struggles" relating to students as well as the teacher's own learning and specific situations. As the meeting unfolded, it led to open discussions about certain situations, problem-solving, and planning for next steps. These meetings were scheduled once a month, however, both were open to meeting more often if that was necessary or canceling a meeting if there was nothing urgent on either of their agendas, out of respect for each other's time to not simply "have a meeting just to meet."

Specific to the formal teacher evaluation process, two of the three districts perceived evaluation of a teacher of the deaf as looking different than other teachers' evaluations. Principal 3 viewed supervision of teachers of the deaf in her building as a learning experience. She recognized that the teacher evaluation process for a teacher of the deaf cannot look the same as for a classroom teacher. "I do more asking questions and having them share with me what they're doing and why. And that's how I do my supervision with them." Principal 1 referred to supervision of the teacher of the deaf as "blended" supervision. He stated that because he served in a dual role of elementary

principal and special education director, but the teacher of the deaf was district-wide, he had to get input from others who worked with her, as the teacher of the deaf worked district-wide, not just in his building. He admitted he "has to rely on what other teachers are saying and what other principals are saying to look at the overall supervision and evaluation." On a contrasting view, Principal 2 said there was no difference in supervising a teacher of the deaf compared to other classroom teachers in the building. Throughout the interview, she made the following statement several times, "a good teacher is a good teacher."

Principal 1 referred to himself as the "gatekeeper" when it came to assisting in locating resources and educating others in the building about the special needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. He explained a recent situation in which the teacher of the deaf was looking into options for a transition-age student she was serving and felt that she was hitting a roadblock in terms of explaining exactly what was needed for the student and how to go about creating a program. The principal said he made a phone call on her behalf, was able to connect a helpful individual with the teacher of the deaf, and initiated that relationship with the other person. He stated:

> In terms of curriculum and supplies and materials…there's a lot of unique things that she might need or want to try and whatever we can do we try. She always will put together a great proposal and she doesn't ask for, never has, asked for the moon so to speak, but she's always been able to justify 'this is what I'm thinking we need right now' and we've always been able to provide those supports and materials for her.

All of the principals noted how important it was for them to ensure the teachers of the deaf were a part of their staff. Principal 2 has worked hard to build a positive culture in the building that included the program for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and teachers of the deaf. In the schedule the principal created, she buildt in time for team collaboration between classroom teachers and specialists, including teachers of the deaf, and encouraged active discussions in planning for students' needs. The Director commented how invested Principal 3 was by having the program for students who are deaf or hard of hearing in her building and how the teachers of the deaf were included as part of the staff. In fact, she saw no difference in classroom teachers compared to everyone else in the building; everyone has a significant role in the school "family" and teamwork was an expectation for everyone, including administration. Principal 1 said he modeled teamwork in his building, not only for all staff, but for other administrators in the district, especially when it came to working with teachers who were itinerant and not in the building full-time, such as the teacher of the deaf. He said he expected a high level of respect and collaboration from everyone. To enhance her role, the teacher of the deaf had a special talent of working with technology. In addition to serving as teacher of the deaf, she also served as the technology liaison in the district so all teachers worked with her in one capacity or another. This created an additional layer of communication and collaboration.

Principal 2 said she best supported the teachers of the deaf and the needs of students in her building by simply being a part of the program, asking questions, and taking the time to learn about the unique needs of students who are deaf or hard of

hearing. The Director added, "She's right in there learning things…she will always be asking and trying to understand and learn about the programs." Principal 1 saw his role as a supervisor of the teacher of the deaf as a go-to person, a resource, and as an avenue of communication. When asked what evidence he had that he was an effective principal who supervised the teacher of the deaf, he responded,

> I get feedback from the teacher of the deaf and other related
>
> service providers. They appreciate the time that I will dedicate
>
> to…you know, participating in not just formal meetings,
>
> but opportunities to communicate and collaborate and
>
> really discuss our needs. I would also say my active participation
>
> historically in…sign language classes or different kinds of
>
> trainings related to deaf and hearing impaired students, I'm there.
>
> I'm participating actively with the teachers in terms of learning
>
> those skills and just having an awareness. I'm not
>
> going to be at their level, but I'm developing an awareness
>
> of what they're doing.

"It's a Win-Win"

The idea of principals as supervisors of teachers of the deaf was viewed positively by all participants. Principal 1 explained how the role of the teacher of the deaf was different than that of a classroom teacher or even a special education teacher because typically, due to the specialization of the teacher of the deaf, they may serve students for multiple school years rather than one or two. Because of this, the teacher of the deaf is

able to see longitudinal growth of students. He commented he saw a higher level of commitment from teachers of the deaf to their students versus other teachers due to the nature of serving a student for multiple years. Part of the commitment also came in the form of building relationships with families. During several years, the student, their family, and the teacher of the deaf built a special relationship. Principal 1 stated not only had he seen growth in students with hearing loss during the years, but also growth in the teacher of the deaf as her skills had increased and her confidence level had grown tremendously.

Principal 3 found it valuable to supervise teachers of the deaf because they came to her with student success stories. Seeing the progress in reading skills and teachers of the deaf wanting to share their data with her was viewed as positive by Principal 2. She noted the specialized skills needed by teachers of the deaf to teach students with hearing loss. She explained the complication of translating sign language to written English and vice versa and how much longer a process it is to teach students with hearing loss how to read. As the supervisor of teachers of the deaf, she made the effort to understand the process and gave them valuable feedback about the progress in reading she saw with students. Principal 2 also noted that one of the areas where she could improve her supervision of teachers of the deaf was emphasizing the need to plan for transition activities and college with the students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Teachers of the deaf are spending a great deal of time delivering reading instruction which is the priority, however, she recognized they needed to make time to emphasize the importance of college and career planning as well.

When students who are deaf or hard of hearing are integrated with their hearing peers, everyone learns valuable lessons about people and the world we live in, expressed Principal 3 and the Director. The students with hearing loss learn skills that are critical to being successful in a hearing world and normally hearing peers learn acceptance of individuals with a disability. In addition, Principal 3 stated that by having a program for students who are deaf or hard of hearing in the building and serving as the supervisor for all of the teachers, she can help the teachers of the deaf to see the big picture of the general education classroom. She has guided the classroom teachers to support the program for students with hearing loss. She said,

> The general education teachers all embrace that [program
>
> for students with hearing loss]. So whether it's sign language
>
> or whether it's French…you know…all the kids are learning to
>
> count, they're learning their ABC's, they're learning. It's just a
>
> way of embracing everybody's differences here. It's just one
>
> more dimension to learning that we can put into place. It's just
>
> a win-win for everybody.

Principal 2 stated all students are capable of learning. She has the same expectation for her staff. She continues to learn trends in deaf education although admits she could more actively seek additional information. She would like to continue learning research-based strategies for students with hearing loss so she can have more discussions with the teachers of the deaf. She mentioned one of the ways she may do this is by talking with principals in other buildings and programs who supervise teachers of the

deaf. Principal 2 also indicated that by collaborating with other administrators of programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, she could give more specific feedback on teacher evaluations.

Principal 1 noted that their district-approved teacher evaluation tool was effective. However, there was an interest in modifying it to reflect the specific needs of the teacher of the deaf, since that position is so specialized. He also suspected supervising a teacher of the deaf may be intimidating for some principals, especially for those who have more than one administrative title and several job responsibilities. He said,

I think sometimes principals may feel there's a lot on their plates.

Sometimes they can feel isolated and maybe are willing to pass

that [supervision of a teacher of the deaf] to someone else. I would

encourage the principals in the buildings…give them the information

maybe about the specific areas of disability. There's no possible way

that they're going to have all the knowledge and I think that's the

right approach. But I think it's, you know, what are the resources

that are out there, how do you encourage them to feel…particularly

in this area of supervision, how do you help them help the teachers?

Principal 1 continued by saying, although there may be few opportunities to be involved in organizations regarding students who are deaf or hard of hearing because it is a low incidence disability, do not be afraid to seek out opportunities to learn more about the special needs of this group of students. Principal 3 echoed that she had learned it is alright to rely on the help of others to learn about the unique needs of students with

hearing impairments and the role of supervision of teachers of the deaf. She relied on the

support of the district supervisor of special education, as well as the outreach staff at the

state school for the deaf. She commented, she wants to continue to

learn about students who are deaf or hard of hearing so she can help teachers of the deaf

be most effective in their positions. She wants to communicate the needs of teachers of

the deaf and students who are deaf or hard of hearing with the rest of the staff in the

building.

Chapter 6

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of school principals as they supervise teachers of the deaf. The central question of the study was: How are the number of students who deaf or hard of hearing in public schools identified in data reported by states and how does that data relate to principals' experiences in supervising teachers of the deaf? Sub-questions of the study included: How are the number of public school programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing identified, in addition to the number of principals supervising those programs? What situations influence school principals' understanding of supervising teachers of the deaf, and what is the significance of school principals' roles in supervising teachers of the deaf?

Survey Data

Overall, results of the survey data were disappointing. Although the response rate of 52% was positive, I expected to receive data from all 50 U.S. states. Because there are accountability expectations for states, I anticipated the data would be accessible.

Data provided was inconsistent between states. It appeared each state did not have a primary person responsible for collecting data concerning students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The number of students with disabilities was accessible. The number of students who were identified as having a primary disability category of "hearing impaired" was accessible. But, the number of students in each grade level---elementary, middle school, and high school was not accessible.

Data concerning public school principals was most difficult to obtain. Eighteen of the twenty-four states reported not collecting this data. Four states were able to provide numbers of principals in the state but were not able to disaggregate the data into grade levels. Only two states were able to provide both the number of principals and disaggregate by grade level.

Utilizing an explanatory sequential design in this mixed methods study, the quantitative data was collected first using the web-based survey. The background information from the survey was used to identify questions to ask participants during in-depth interviews conducted in the qualitative phase of the study.

"A Good Navigator"

None of the three principals interviewed had a background in deaf education. All three principals indicated confidence in their roles as supervisors of teachers of the deaf. The principals acknowledged that the teachers of the deaf were the experts in the area of serving students with hearing loss. The principals provided support to the teachers by asking questions, giving frequent feedback, observing them in classrooms, and obtaining resources as needed to support students with hearing loss.

The principals stated teachers of the deaf possess specialized skills that are notably different from those of classroom teachers and resource teachers. They worked hard to build a culture where not only the students with hearing loss were included in classrooms, but the teachers of the deaf were an integral part of the school staff.

"I'm There"

Principals supported teachers of the deaf attending professional development activities that were specific to students with hearing loss. They provided financial support as necessary and found resource for teachers to build capacity in their own learning.

It was critical for teachers of the deaf to be a part of the school culture. Common planning times were embedded into daily schedules to promote collaboration between classroom teachers and teachers of the deaf. The principals made a point of learning about students who are deaf or hard of hearing and hold frequent discussions with staff.

Teacher evaluation is a necessary part of any administrative position. Although the principals in this study reported they were doing an adequate job of documenting strengths and areas of growth for teachers of the deaf, they expressed interest in adapting or creating a tool specific to the needs of teachers of the deaf.

"It's a Win-Win"

Teachers of the deaf often serve the same students for several years in a row. This was typically viewed as beneficial, as teachers build a deeper connection with students and their families. Teachers of the deaf often have additional responsibility to involve students in community activities and focus on a social component of education that classroom teachers and resource teachers may not experience.

According to the individuals interviewed, it was critical to connect teachers of the deaf and students with hearing loss to the regular education classrooms. Learning the general education core curriculum in the classroom is critical for students with hearing

loss. Also important is hearing peers learning to accept individuals with disabilities in their everyday lives. A mutual understanding and respect for all learning was communicated by the principals during the interviews.

Collaboration, communication, and a continuing focus on student learning was evident throughout the interviews. According to these principals, teachers of the deaf, classroom teachers, support staff, and administrators create a positive learning environment and hold high expectations for all students.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study demonstrate the lack of data about public school principals supervising teachers of the deaf. Although research studies have been conducted on school administration and studies have focused on the role of the teacher of the deaf, I was not able to find any studies that have been conducted merging these areas. Since the majority of students who are deaf or hard of hearing attend public schools, it is critical for principals to understand their roles in supervision of teachers of the deaf and programs serving students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The significance of the findings in this study suggest the need for additional studies in this area.

Summary

There were many discrepancies in the survey data. The number of states who did not collect or have data about the number of principals in state was an important finding of the study.

Data may have been inconsistent due to how students were counted for data collection purposes. In some states, students whose primary verification was "deaf" or "hard of hearing" were counted in that disability category. Others who had a secondary or tertiary disability of deaf or hard of hearing may have been included as well. Students may have been identified in other special education categories such as multiply impaired, orthopedically impaired, or developmentally delayed as their primary verification, but, they also may have had a hearing loss.

The findings of the study suggest a major problem in research and data collection for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, discrepancies in state record collection systems, and lack of knowledge of principals who supervise programs and teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing. The findings indicate states are not collecting and/or reporting data in the same way and other states admit they do not collect information in those areas at all.

If accurate data cannot be obtained, it may be unrealistic to expect principals to have an understanding of supervising teachers of the deaf, which includes an overall understanding of students with hearing loss and programs for students with hearing loss. This may explain the lack of knowledge of deaf education by principals who supervise teachers of the deaf or hard of hearing.

Chapter 7

Limitations and Future Research

Forty-four states were unresponsive to the email request to participate in the web-based survey. Of the twenty-four who responded and provided information, it was inconsistent both within their state and in comparison to other states' data collection systems. Individuals with different job titles or responsibilities responded to the survey which added to the inconsistency. In three states, the person responsible for the programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing expressed interest in the questions that were being asked of them but admitted they were not able to retrieve the data themselves. They indicated the data was something they had never collected; or, it would have been too complicated to sort through the data to determine the answers.

It is unclear how numbers of students with hearing impairments are reported in each state. States may base the number of students in each disability category by the primary verification found on a students' multidisciplinary team form. States may provide their own "inside" data which may include not only students whose primary disability verification is deaf or hard of hearing, but may include students with a different disability verification, even if the student has an identified hearing loss.

One limitation in the collection of qualitative data was that only three principals were interviewed. It should be noted that a fourth person, a director of special education, requested to sit in on the interview and contributed to answering the questions. The details she provided enhanced the study. Another limitation of the interviews was that all of the principals were working at the elementary level.

Recommendations

There are other administrators who supervise teachers of the deaf other than "principals." Additional studies may include any certified administrator who supervises teachers of the deaf.

This study began with the assumption state data would be accessible since it is required for accountability purposes. The results of this national study revealed the inconsistency of data collection in the state. The data on school principals in each state, including their building level, number of students who are deaf or hard of hearing by each state, and their grade level was limited. The study findings indicate the lack of data collection for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Information from thr study may be beneficial to states as a form of professional staff development. Examining the structure and job responsibilities for state-level employees in each department of education may reduce the inconsistency or lack of data collected in the area of deaf and hard of hearing.

Higher education institutions that prepare school principals may choose to include additional instruction regarding special education in the coursework. Low incidence disabilities, including students who are deaf or hard of hearing should be included in the curriculum as well.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1.   How many students, ages 6-21 in your state, are identified as having a disability (total of all categories) and served by special education in public schools?

2.   Of that population, how many students in your state, ages 6-21, are identified as deaf or hard of hearing and served by special education in public schools?

3.   Of the students who are deaf or hard of hearing in your state, how many are educated in public schools at each level—elementary, middle school, high school?

4.   How many public school districts, serving students with disabilities ages 6-21, are in your state?

5.   Of those districts, how many serve students who are deaf or hard of hearing?

6.   How many public school buildings, serving students with disabilities ages 6-21, are in your state?

7.   Of those buildings, how many serve students who are deaf or hard of hearing?

8.   How many public school principals, serving students with disabilities, ages 6-21, are in your state?

9.   Of those principals, how many are in buildings who serve students who are deaf or hard of hearing?

10. Of the principals working in buildings serving students who are deaf or hard of hearing, how many are found at each level of building---elementary, middle school, high school?

Appendix B

Coding Table

CODING TABLE

Theme	Codes
"A Good Navigator"	Tuned in to accommodations
	Advocate for kids with disabilities
	Possess special talents
	Take the lead
	Focus on specialized skills
	Using best practices
	Willingness to explore
	Have to be deliberate about support
	Collaboration with teacher of the deaf
	Open communication is critical
	Provide support
	Teachers have additional responsibilities
	Staying involved with agency supports
	Being a good listener
	Strive to be accessible
	Locate resources
	Make changes as needed
	Bounce ideas off of me
	Building a positive culture
	Holding discussions about instruction
	Tailoring instruction
	Intensive programming
	Making deeper connections with kids
	Learning experience for me (principal)
	Set aside biases
	Doing what is best for students
	Rely on others for information and support
	Involvement of families
	Viewing multiple perspectives
	Confronting the issues
"I'm There"	Encourage professional development
	Building capacity and knowledge
	Providing unique things needed
	Make deaf educator part of staff
	Overall supervision
	Input from others
	Provide an avenue of communication

	Serve as a go-to person
	Give meaningful feedback
	Find a way to make it happen
	Dedicating time to discussions
	Actively participating with teachers
	Being aware of skills and responsibilities
	Adapt staff development to their specialty
	Reciprocal feedback
	Good teaching is good teaching
	Improving the learning environment
	Showing growth in students
	Weigh the pros and cons
	We all work together
	Asking many questions
	Vested interest in supervision
	We're team players
	Reduce or eliminate isolation
"It's a Win-Win"	Longitudinal growth with students
	Always talking about the same kids
	Level of commitment from the teacher
	Rewarding relationships with others
	Increase in skills
	Building confidence
	Entire staff is connected
	Fine-tuning their evaluation
	Principals wear many hats
	Awareness of what principals need to know
	Rewarding to see progress
	Hard work pays off
	Enlightening conversations
	Planning for students' futures
	Peers learning from each other
	Integrated learning
	It's ok to rely on others
	Different approaches to learning
	Bridge hearing and deaf worlds

Appendix C

Telephone Script

TELEPHONE SCRIPT

Hello (Principal),

My name is Tanya Hilligoss. I am a doctoral student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the Educational Administration department. I am calling to ask if you would be willing to participate in an interview about supervising teachers of the deaf.

The interview will require no longer than one hour of your time. You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form prior to completing the interview. The location of the interview will be at a time and in a location that is convenient for you. The interview will be digitally recorded. Interview questions will focus on your administrative experiences supervising teachers of the deaf.

All responses will be kept in strict confidence. A pseudonym will be used in place of your name in transcripts of the interview. Your name will not be included in the documents created. Pseudonyms will be used if any responses are cited in any documents. All digital recordings will be kept in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office until they have been transcribed, and will be erased after transcription.

Would you be willing to participate in an interview?
(If no, thank you for your consideration of my request. It was nice talking to you.)

If yes, I would like to select a date, time, and location for the interview that will be convenient for you. What works best for you?

Thank you for your time. I look forward to talking with you further. I will be sending an email to you to confirm our upcoming appointment.

Appendix D

Email Confirmation of Interview

EMAIL CONFIRMATION OF SCHEDULED INTERVIEW

Dear (Principal),

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview. This is the sole purpose of the study. The results will be of interest to both principals and teachers of the deaf.

Your experiences and insight as a principal who has supervised teachers of the deaf are important. Participation in this study will require a signature on an Informed Consent Form prior to the interview.

The interview will take no longer than one hour. The interview will take place on (date) at (time) at (location).

All responses will be kept in strict confidence. A pseudonym will be used in place of your name for the transcript of the interview. Your name will not be included in the documents created. Pseudonyms will be used if any responses are cited in any documents. All interview transcripts will be destroyed one year following the completion of the study. The results may be published in a dissertation as well as in professional journals, or presented at professional meetings. Any information that could identify you will be kept strictly confidential.

Your questions about the study are invited before, during, or after the time of participation. If you have additional questions that have not been answered, you may contact the primary researcher, Tanya Hilligoss, a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 402-416-7875. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Marilyn Grady, 402-472-0974, at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for further clarification should you have any concerns about my study. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or the University of Nebraska. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Sincerely,
Tanya Hilligoss
Principal Investigator
tanyahilligoss@yahoo.com
402-416-7875

Appendix E

Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: PAGE 1

Date/Time/Location:

_____

Thank you for meeting with me today. I am interested in your experiences in supervising a teacher of the deaf. I will be recording our conversation. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

Interview Questions

To begin, I will ask a set of questions asking about your background and experiences in educational administration, teaching, and special education:

For which level(s) are you currently a principal?
(Elementary, Middle School, High School, Other)

How many years have you served as a principal?

For how many schools have you served as principal?

For which level(s) have you had experience as an administrator?

How many years did you teach before becoming a principal?

What other positions have you held in your professional career?

How many University-level classes have you taken in special education?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: PAGE 2

Interview Questions

How many University-level classes have you taken in deaf education?

How many deaf or hard of hearing students have you met and/or worked with either personally or professionally?

How do you believe the role of a teacher of the deaf is different than the role of a special education resource teacher?

In your role as an administrator, what are the significant differences in supervising teachers of the deaf compared to supervising other teachers (i.e. math teacher, second grade teacher, etc.)?

What are your experiences in supervising programs for students who are deaf or hard of hearing? Please describe.

What are specific ways you support teachers of the deaf?

What is most rewarding about supervising teachers of the deaf?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: PAGE 3

Interview Questions

How many teachers of the deaf do you currently supervise?

How would you describe your overall supervision of teachers of the deaf?

What influence do principals have on the supervision of teachers of the deaf?

What are the key factors principals need to be aware of when supervising teachers of the deaf?

Are you aware of current state and national trends in educating students who are deaf or hard of hearing?

Can you describe ways you gain information about current state and national trends in deaf education?

How do you believe current state and national trends in deaf education affect the role of the teacher of the deaf?

What are your strengths as a principal?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: PAGE 4

Interview Questions

How do your strengths as a principal make you an effective supervisor of teachers of the deaf?

What evidence do you have that you are an effective principal who supervises teachers of the deaf?

As a supervisor of teachers of the deaf, are there any specific areas where you would want to improve?

What ideas do you have for the future direction of principals who supervise teachers of the deaf?

Appendix F

IRB Approval

Nebraska
UNIVERSITY OF
Lincoln

March 7, 2014

Tanya Hilligoss
Department of Educational Administration
7925 Amelia Drive Lincoln, NE 68516

Marilyn Grady
Department of Educational Administration
128 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20140313055 EX
Project ID: 13055
Project Title: Principals Who Supervise Teachers of the Deaf

Dear Tanya:

This letter is to officially notify you of the certification of exemption of your project by the
Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's
opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the
participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance
with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the
Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Exemption Determination:
03/07/2014.

1. The approved informed consent form has been uploaded to NUgrant (file with -
Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use this form to distribute to participants. If you need
to make changes to the informed consent form, please submit the revised form to the IRB
for review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this
Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:
* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects,
deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated,
involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves

risk or has the potential to recur;
* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or

* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB

Appendix G

Informed Consent

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

As a doctoral student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, I am conducting a study to gain information about principals who supervise teachers of the deaf. This is the sole purpose of this study. The results will be of interest and value to school administrators and teachers of the deaf.

You are being asked to participate in this project because you are a principal who supervises teachers of the deaf. Interviews will last no longer than one hour. Participation will take place at a time and location convenient for you. You will be asked to sign this Informed Consent Form prior to participating in the interview. The interview will be digitally recorded to ensure all responses are recorded. Interview questions focus on your administrative experiences supervising teachers of the deaf.

There are no known risks involved in participating in the study. All responses will be kept in strict confidence. A pseudonym will be used in place of your name in transcripts of the interview. Your name will not be included in the documents created. Pseudonyms will be used if any responses are cited in any documents. The digital recorder will be kept in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office until interviews have been transcribed, and will be erased after transcription. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office and will only be seen by the investigators during the study and for one year after the study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published in a dissertation, education journals, books, or presented at professional meetings but the data will be reported as aggregated data. Participants may benefit from the findings of the study in understanding the supervision of teachers of the deaf.

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may call the investigator at any time, phone number (402) 416-7875, or Dr. Grady at (402) 472-0974. Sometimes participants have questions or concerns about their rights. In this case, please contact Research Compliance Services at (402) 472-6965. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study.

Signature of Research Participant: _____ Date: _____

☐ I agree to be digitally recorded during the interview.

Signature of Research Participant: _____ Date: _____

Tanya Hilligoss, M.A.
Graduate Student
Department of Educational Administration
tanyahilligoss@yahoo.com
402-416-7875

Marilyn Grady, Ph.D.
Professor
Department of Educational Administration
mgrady1@unl.edu
402-472-0974

Appendix H

Transcriptionist Confidentiality Agreement

TRANSCRIPTIONIST CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I _____ (name of transcriptionist) agree to hold all information contained on digitally-recorded interviews received from Tanya Hilligoss, primary investigator for the research project: **Principals Who Supervise Teachers of the Deaf**, in confidence with regard to the individual and institutions involved in the research study. I understand that to violate this agreement would constitute a serious and unethical infringement on the informant's right to privacy. I also certify that I have completed the CITI Limited Research Worker training in Human Research Protections.

I will not discuss or share any recorded information or transcribed data with any individuals other than the researcher or her supervisor, Dr. Marilyn Grady. When the transcriptions are complete, I will return the digital recordings to the researcher and will transfer all electronic files to the researcher. Upon confirmation of receipt of these files by the researcher, I will destroy the originals.

_____   _____

Signature of Transcriptionist   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Principle Investigator   Date