AN EXAMINATION OF HOW KNOWLEDGEABLE AND SKILLED ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS LEAD SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN ALABAMA:

FOUR CASE STUDIES

by

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A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 increased the importance of having principals who are not only effective leaders of general education programs but knowledgeable and skilled in special education and able to effectively lead special education programs. The researcher examined four principals of elementary schools (i.e., kindergarten through fifth grades) in Alabama. Two principals (i.e., Case A and Case B) were identified as being knowledgeable and skilled in special education, and two principals (i.e., Case C and Case D) were identified as being marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education. The purpose of this study is to determine the similarities between how principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education lead and support the special education programs at their schools, to examine the differences between how those principals and principals who are identified as marginal in their knowledge and skill in special education lead and support special education programs at their schools, and examine the role that the principal who is knowledgeable and skilled in special education plays. This study attempts to gain a deeper understanding of the constructs of effective special education leadership at the school level.

A sequential mixed-methods process was used to collect data. The researcher used a survey to collect data during Phase 1 that was analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics within-case and a means comparison across cases. In Phase 2, data were collected from (a) archival records, (b) interviews, (c) documentation, and (d) direct observations. Data were analyzed through a within-case analysis through coding, categorizing, and identifying emerging themes. Data were analyzed through a cross-case analysis for similarities between principals who
are knowledgeable and skilled in special education and then between principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education. Then differences between the two groups were identified. Conclusions are drawn in five areas: (a) necessity of knowledge and skill in special education, (b) possession of knowledge and skill in special education, (c) the roles principals play as leader of the special education program, (d) how principals support special education programs, and (e) special education oversight at the school level.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; 2002), has had a major impact on education. In an attempt to educate all students equally, special education has been thrust into the spotlight at every school in every school district. An emphasis has been placed on hiring principals who are instructional leaders (Heckert, 2009). The NCLB Act consists of several components, including accountability; the consequences of failing to meet the standards set forth in these components has caused school level administrators to focus on areas in which schools are deficient and are held accountable by the NCLB Act.

One method being used to hold schools accountable is the disaggregation of data. Each state department of education develops its own accountability measures before having those measures approved by the Federal Department of Education. The Alabama State Department of Education has determined that the data of schools with a subgroup population of 40 or more students will be disaggregated; and schools, as well as school districts, are held accountable for students with disabilities’ state assessment scores, graduation rates, and participation during testing (Alabama Department of Education, 2010). These subgroup categories of students include students who receive free and reduced lunch based on their families’ low socioeconomic background, who belong to different ethnic groups, and students who receive special education services. Because students with disabilities are included as a subgroup, the special education population is one determining factor as to whether or not a school or school district is sanctioned.
As a result of schools being held accountable for their special education students’ academic progress, graduation rates, and participation during state testing, the importance of having an effective special education program at each school and for the school district has increased. Moreover, hiring principals, directors of special education, and district level administrators who possess the knowledge and skills needed to effectively oversee special education programs at the school and district levels has become increasingly important. In order for schools and school districts to meet the challenges facing them today, direction and leadership for school level special education programs must be provided by knowledgeable and skilled leaders.

The principal is the leader of the school (Cline, 1981); therefore, principals must possess an understanding of their own roles and responsibilities with regard to the special education programs they oversee. Each group of school level principals (i.e., elementary, middle, and high) has unique demands placed upon it. Research has indicated that there are differences between what elementary, middle, and high school faculty members think is important (Stone, Horejs, & Lomas, 1997). Although no research was found examining the differences between these three groups of principals from the perspective of the principal, research has indicated that elementary school principals are more involved in the administration of special education services than their middle school counterparts (Stevenson, 2002). No research was found with regard to the differences between high school principals and their elementary and middle school peers. It is important for elementary, middle, and high school principals to possess the necessary knowledge base and skills to complete specific job-related tasks and meet the challenges of overseeing special education programs at each of these levels.
Statement of the Problem

The NCLB Act of 2001 holds schools accountable for their special education students’ academic progress, graduation rates, and attendance during state testing, yet principals have been inadequately trained to oversee special education programs (Hirth & Valesky, 1990; Keeler, 2002; Nelson, 2002; Stevenson, 2002; Volpe, 2006). Moreover, state standards for administrative preparatory programs might not be valid (Keeler). The knowledge and skills principals need to effectively oversee special education programs have not been adequately defined for overseeing school level special education programs effectively (Rude & Sasso, 1988; White, 1993). Criteria that can be used to identify principals as effective, which can be replicated across school districts or state borders, does not exist. If administrators of special education programs do not have adequate skills and training, special education programs that are administered by these professionals might be less effective (Wigle & Wilcox, 2002). Although the role of principals with regard to their oversight of special education programs was studied for the typical principal (Bays & Crockett, 2007), the role of principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education play has yet to be determined, and the role of the effective principal leader overseeing school level special education programs has been examined by only one researcher, McGrew (2008), with a focus on inclusion. Educational researchers have yet to determine how principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education administer special education programs differently than their peers who are identified as marginally knowledgeable.

Significance of the Problem

There is a need for research to address the importance of quality special education administrative leadership (Bays & Crockett, 2007). School level principals will play an
increasingly greater role overseeing special education programs at the school level (Severance, 1997). School level leadership of special education programs is a concern for principals (Heckert, 2009). Principals spend more than 10 hours a week on special education topics (Bravenec, 1998). Principals need to possess a fundamental knowledge base in special education to effectively oversee all program areas in which they are responsible (Bradley, 1999; Bravenec; Stile, Abernathy, & Pettibone, 1986).

Research is needed to identify which skills are most important to the effectiveness of principals in supervising school level special education programs (White, 1993). Identifying special education skills that are different from the skills needed by principals to perform the day-to-day operations of the general education program of the school is important (Rude & Sasso, 1988). School level special education services are impacted by the varying knowledge and skill levels of principals.

Principals who are ill-prepared in the knowledge base and skills with regard to special education are less likely to be able to lead and support school level special education programs effectively and efficiently. The more special education knowledge principals have the more likely the special education programs at their schools will be successful (Wigle & Wilcox, 1999). Without knowing how principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education administer special education programs, the special education programs at schools with principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education will continue to be less effective. The education services received by students with disabilities can be negatively impacted with less effective school level leadership. All principals need to know how principals, who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education, manage, lead, and support special education. Without this knowledge base from which to work, principals who are marginally
knowledgeable and skilled in special education will continue to manage special education programs in less effective ways. Knowing the knowledge base and skill set that elementary school principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education possess is important in meeting the demands placed on contemporary school level special education programs. This new knowledge base will help elementary school principals improve upon their strengths while addressing key areas of weakness.

Because administrative preparatory programs vary in the special education content and length of time future principals will spend on special education topics during their preparation, it is important that future principals receive the knowledge and develop the skills most important to overseeing special education programs. Without knowing what knowledge and skill related to special education is most important to principals, administrative preparatory programs will continue to overlook the importance of providing future principals with the knowledge and skills they need to lead effectively and support special education programs. Also, administrative preparatory programs will neither teach nor prepare future principals for the roles they will need to play as the school level leader of special education programs. Without implementing effective practices in special education leadership at the school level, school districts, principals, and teachers will continue to be sanctioned by state departments of education for their failure to provide special education services effectively. There is a lack of research on effective principals of special education programs with regard to what makes effective principals different from their peers and the roles effective principals play.
The purpose of this study was to determine the special education knowledge base and skills elementary principals, who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education, report to be necessary for their positions. The researcher examined the extent to which those principals report to possess that knowledge and those skills as compared to their peers. The roles that knowledgeable and skilled elementary principals play with regard to overseeing school level special education services in Alabama are described. In this study, the researcher identified how elementary principals who identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education lead and support special education programs.

This topic was chosen due to a paucity of research on school level administrative leadership in special education. No research was found that addressed how elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education lead their programs differently than elementary principals who possess marginal knowledge and skill in special education. This study will fill this gap in the literature. Identifying the knowledge base and skill sets elementary principals report as being necessary for their position will aid in determining which knowledge and skills are most important for elementary principals to possess in similar situations. Directors of special education will be able to use this information to provide elementary principals with more appropriate, beneficial, and timely professional development; support; and assistance. Pre-service administrative programs in Alabama can provide future elementary principals with the knowledge base and skills they need to ensure that elementary principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education report as necessary to their positions but for which they are deficient. Faculty of pre-service administrative programs will be able to address
the specific special education knowledge base and skills necessary for elementary school
principals to be more effective in overseeing special education programs at their schools.

The results of this study will be used to refine transformational leadership theory as to
how this theory is used and can be used within the field of special education administration. The
field of special education administration is evolving and has yet to be linked to research-based
business leadership models. The importance of special education leadership within school level
administration is becoming realized.

Theoretical Framework

Transformational leadership theory, conceived by Burns (1978), is used by organizational
leaders all over the world. Burns’s theory is based on the idea that organizational leaders can
accomplish more if their constituents believe in the leadership and are part of the process as
opposed to being subservient to an authoritarian leader. Transformational leaders inspire
organization members through their leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Contemporary
transformational leadership theory, as described by Kouzes and Posner (2007), was used as the
theoretical framework for this study.

Kouzes and Posner (2007) have identified five ways exemplary leaders lead: (a) “Model
the Way,” (b) “Inspire a Shared Vision,” (c) “Challenge the Process,” (d) “Enable Others to
Act,” and (e) “Encourage the Heart” (Kouzes & Posner, p. 14). Each of these practices is an
important part of exemplary leadership, and each practice requires two commitments from the
leader.

Leaders model the way by understanding their own values and ensuring that their actions
align with those values. They understand their own values by conducting an in-depth
examination of their belief system. Leaders understand who they are and what drives them. They connect what they hold dear with what members within the organization are passionate about without forcing their own values on members.

In order to inspire a shared vision among constituents, leaders look forward to future opportunities to bring constituents together. Leaders look to the future because they are idealists who understand they must know where they want to be before they can create a road map to reach that destination. They motivate organization members to become involved in the process in order to develop a shared vision.

It is important for leaders to challenge the process through innovation and risk taking. They are innovative and proactive. They take and encourage risk taking.

Leaders enable others to act by developing a relationship built on trust and increasing the determination of members within an organization. They work to build trust among members within the organization so that organization members are more apt to take risks.

In order to encourage the heart, leaders recognize the achievements and contributions of organization members as well as celebrate organizational victories. They recognize the individual accomplishments of organization members. Leaders celebrate victories in a way that does not diminish the importance of the event. They do not celebrate hollow victories for the sake of celebration.

Each of the aforementioned practices is one aspect of leadership. Each is but a segment of a broader phenomenon referred to as exemplary leadership. When used as part of a comprehensive organizational leadership strategy, these five practices make up the foundation of exemplary leadership (see Figure 1).
Research Questions

The following overarching research question and sub-questions will be investigated.

Overarching Question: How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education administer the special education programs at their schools?

1. How do knowledge bases and skills reported as necessary for elementary principals to possess differ between elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special
education and elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education as measured by the *Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey* (Harlin-Fischer, 1998)? (See Appendix A.)

2. How do knowledge bases and skills reported as being possessed by elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education differ from the knowledge bases and skills reported as being possessed by elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education as measured by the *Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey* (Harlin-Fischer, 1998)? (See Appendix A.)

3. How do the roles played by elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education differ from the roles played by elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education?

4. How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education support special education programs differently than principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education?

5. How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education oversee their programs differently than elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education?

**Definitions of Terms**

The following terms are defined to create clarity for the reader. These definitions will be used as the default definitions for these terms throughout the remainder of the study, unless otherwise noted.
Director of Special Education (DOSE) is the person whom the superintendent, elementary school principal(s), middle school principal(s), high school principal(s), system psychometrist, system psychologist(s), general education teacher(s), and special education teacher(s) seek guidance and consultation from in regard to special education issues. This person is responsible for and viewed as the leader of the district special education program (Cope, 2002; Lashley & Boscardin, 2003). The director is the person at the district level who specializes in and oversees the day-to-day operations of the special education program within the district. The DOSE impacts special education services at the district level in the same manner as corporation vice presidents influence the specific departments they oversee within their companies. The DOSE is referred to by different names in different school systems. In some school systems, the DOSE is referred to as the coordinator or supervisor of special education services (Walker, 1988). The DOSE can also be referred to as the administrator of special education programs or special education administrator (Walker).

Elementary school principals oversee students in Grades kindergarten through five. They are responsible for special education programs at the school level.

Knowledge is defined as what is known about a specific topic.

Role is defined as the responsibilities of a professional to perform tasks specific to his or her job function.

Skill is defined as the specific ability that professionals need in order to perform job related tasks.
Limitations

1. All elementary school principals to whom a survey was sent were expected to reply to the survey. Data collection, Phase 2 participants, and findings are limited to principals who completed and submitted surveys.

2. All participants who responded to the survey might have had ulterior motives for responding.

3. Nonparticipation likely affected the size of the pool of candidates for participation in the qualitative phase, Phase 2.

4. Qualitative research is not necessarily generalizable (Kilbourn, 2006).

Assumptions

1. Elementary school principals accurately reported the knowledge base and skill sets they think they possessed.

2. Teachers accurately reported the knowledge bases and skill sets they think their principals possessed.

3. Elementary school principals accurately reported the knowledge bases and skill sets they think are most important to principals overseeing special education services.

4. The two elementary school principals who were selected for Phase 2 of this study, and identified as being both knowledgeable and skilled in special education, were knowledgeable and skilled in special education.

5. The two elementary school principals who were selected for Phase 2 of this study, and identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education, were marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education.
6. Elementary school principals answered interview questions honestly.

7. Elementary school principals performed their jobs in the same way they would otherwise if they were not being observed during direct observation.

8. To an undeterminable extent, the principal investigator’s background impacted the gathering of data objectively.

9. The principal investigator’s background impacted the interpretation of results (Kilbourn, 2006).

10. The qualitative phase met expected interpretive validation requirements (e.g., internal validity, reliability, and external validity).

Delimitations

This study was limited to the state of Alabama.

1. The study was limited to the 134 public school districts within the borders of Alabama.

2. The study was limited to elementary principals who supervised students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

Position Statement

A researcher conducting qualitative inquiry should make a statement regarding his background in the area being researched (Kilbourn, 2006). The researcher in this study graduated with a bachelor’s degree in collaborative education, also known as special education, in 2001. At that time, he was certified to teach special education in Grades 6 through 12. He taught special education in Grades 6 through 12 for the next 10 years. During that time, he earned a master’s in collaborative education and an educational specialist degree in special education. Both degrees
include certification in Grades 6 through 12. After earning a master’s degree and before earning 
an educational specialist degree in special education, he earned his certification in educational 
administration for prekindergarten through Grade 12. He has presented on a variety of special 
education topics, including special education leadership, at state conferences, local workshops, 
and as a guest speaker at the graduate school level. He has studied special education and the 
leadership of special education programs at the school and district levels in-depth for the past 6 
years. All of these experiences have an impact on the design of the study, the methodological 
design, the types of data chosen for collection, how data were collected and interpreted, and the 
findings and conclusions drawn in this study.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED MATERIAL

The importance of having effective administrators of special education programs at both the school and district levels has increased since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; 2002). This chapter begins with search procedures. Next, this chapter reviews literature related to the administration of special education services. It is divided into four sections: (a) preparatory programs for administrators, (b) importance of principals’ experiences in special education, (c) roles and expectations for principals, and (d) principals’ knowledge and skills in special education. This chapter concludes with a summary of relevant research and a study rationale.

Search Procedures

Studies and literature reviews related to the purpose of this study were gathered from electronic databases, microfiche, and hard copies held by libraries. The University of Alabama electronic card catalogue was also used to find hard copies of relevant dissertations. Studies were reviewed for relevant information. Literature reviews were used as a research tool in finding additional studies that could be reviewed. Literature reviews within each study were also examined to identify additional studies to be reviewed. The following electronic databases were used to find relevant research information for this study: (a) Education Resources Information Center, (b) Review of Educational Research, (c) ProQuest, (d) EBSCOhost, (e) Professional Collection, (f) Expanded Academic ASAP, and (g) Dissertations and Theses. The following
search terms and a combination of these terms were used: administration, administrator, principal, special education, Director of Special Education (DOSE), coordinator, supervision, supervisor, education policy, role, leader, inclusion, elementary, and effective.

Preparatory Programs for Administrators

Although some administrative preparatory programs include special education coursework or special education content within coursework, some debate occurs as to the extent and quality of instruction in these programs. Through the years, the quality of administrative preparatory programs and the special education coursework and content within these programs have been studied (Bravenec, 1998; Hirth & Valesky 1990; Hyatt, 1987; Keeler, 2002; Nelson, 2002; Stevenson, 2002; Style, Abernathy, & Pettibone, 1986; Valesky & Hirth, 1992; Volpe, 2006).

Volpe (2006) investigated problems associated with superintendents’ perceptions of how important it is to be knowledgeable and to be able to perform tasks associated with the management of the district level special education program. Volpe investigated which knowledge and tasks were reported to be important for superintendents with regard to their management of special education programs; if superintendents’ preparation programs had an effect on their knowledge of or their perceived importance to their management of special education programs; and if a relationship existed with regard to their career paths, demographic factors and their knowledge, the type of professional development opportunities they attended, and how they managed special education programs. The Leadership for Special Education survey, developed by Volpe in 2006, was used to collect data anonymously. All 36 survey items were taken from the certification standards for superintendents and DOSEs in Illinois. The
content validity of these documents was established through administrator focus groups and feedback through public remarks. The survey was field tested for validity. Seven professionals with expertise in the areas of special education, administration, or both were involved in the field test. Based on field test results, no major changes were needed in the content of the survey, and the survey instrument was reliable in its measurement.

Participants were 550 Illinois superintendents who were randomly selected and sent surveys (Volpe, 2006). Two hundred forty-one responded for a response rate of 43.8%.

The data were categorized into four sets of standards (Volpe, 2006). The standards included (a) instructional environment and programming, (b) legal issues and ethics, (c) the identification and provision of student services, and (d) finance. All categories were related to the administration of special education services. Descriptive statistics were analyzed by means comparisons, the frequency of the variable, the percentages of the variables, the mean rank of the variables, and other descriptive statistics not reported in the methodology section (but it stated that additional descriptive statistics were used). The following inferential statistics were used to analyze the data: (a) Kendall’s W, (b) Wilcoxon signed rank, (c) Mann-Whitney U, and (d) Kruskal-Wallis tests.

Volpe (2006) reported that 42.7% of superintendents had no previous coursework in special education since their undergraduate coursework. Forty-four superintendents reported being the primary administrator in charge of the special education program. Thirty-two superintendents reported having experience within special education.

According to Volpe (2006), developing a climate of continuous improvement was important to superintendents. Superintendents reported that coursework had adequately prepared them based on the knowledge indicator on which they were assessed. The more recent a
superintendent’s Educational Specialist Degree, the more likely he was to be knowledgeable in the identification and provision of student services. Superintendents who reported completing special education related coursework at the master’s level were more knowledgeable in the identification and provision of student services for students with disabilities. Data indicated a relationship between the superintendent’s preparation and the perceived importance of administrative duties in special education. Superintendents who had been the administrator of a special education program at some point in their careers reported the instructional environment and programming as being more important than superintendents who had not been the administrator of a special education program.

Volpe (2006) concluded that coursework in special education should be included in graduate level administrative programs. This coursework should address the leadership aspect of managing special education programs. Guided experiences in special education leadership roles should be a part of administrative preparatory programs.

The standards used to prepare future administrators within administrative preparatory programs are also important. Keeler (2002) investigated the administrative standards found in the Idaho Foundation Standards for School Administrators, which are used to prepare future school administrators. The purpose of this study was to determine the validity of those standards. Data were gathered by convenience sample from 16 school level administrators, 52 administrative interns, and 55 superintendents. Idaho administrative standards were then compared to the data. Data were gathered through the creation of lists indicating which Idaho administrative standards administrative interns thought they had not been prepared to meet. Data were collected from school level administrators and superintendents in focus groups. The focus groups were broken down into small groups and asked to list what school level administrators are not prepared for in
their leadership roles. Next, school level administrators and superintendents voted on how to prioritize the data collected.

The results indicated that Idaho administrative preparatory standards adequately covered leading school improvement, public relations, and technology (Keeler, 2002). Superintendents and school level administrators reported budget management as a critical skill to possess.

Idaho administrative standards did not cover counseling and communication skills, such as the interpersonal skills necessary for employing change strategies, which were viewed as important to superintendents, nor did they cover the counseling skills viewed as an important skill set by school level administrators. In addition to the problems associated with counseling and communication, the school law section of the Idaho preparatory guidelines for school administrators did not specifically cover special education law. Although interns reported that university faculty taught special education legal issues in courses devoted to education law, special education law was not specifically targeted by preparatory guidelines. Administrative interns reported an inadequacy in the training they received in this skill area. The Idaho preparatory guidelines for administrators only vaguely addressed budget management in strategic planning.

Keeler (2002) concluded that the Idaho Foundation Standards for School Administrators might be invalid. Preparatory administrative guidelines used in other states might be invalid, as well.

The level of preparation on special education provided to future principals in preparatory programs varies between programs. Nelson (2002) investigated the skills principals need to effectively lead school level special education programs and the current preparation of future principals with regard to overseeing school level special education programs. A modified version
of the *Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey* (KSSE) (Harlin-Fischer, 1998) was used to collect data. The content validity of the original instrument was established by a review of literature focused on special education competencies for principals as they related to the Council for Exceptional Children’s standards. These competencies were then reviewed by nine professional educators. Instrument revisions were based on their recommendations. Reliability was established with Cronbach’s alpha coefficient scores of .87 for instruction and management, .62 for ethics, .80 for assessment, .77 for theoretical and philosophical issues, .80 for legal issues, and .77 for skills (Harlin-Fischer). In addition to the original items included in this survey instrument, principals ranked their administrative preparatory programs with regard to their preparedness to effectively lead the special education programs at their schools, and administrative preparatory program university faculty ranked how effective they were in preparing prospective principals to lead special education programs.

The modified version of the *KSSE Survey* was returned by 60 of 67 (89.6%) high school principals, 39 of 54 (72.2%) middle school principals, and 103 of 164 (62.8%) elementary school principals in Louisiana and 26 of 37 (70.3%) faculty members in administrator preparatory programs of universities in Louisiana. Of those professionals surveyed, 228 of 322 (70.1%) participated in the study. Data were analyzed by comparing the means and percentages with a Mann-Whitney *U* test, a Spearman’s rho tests, and a One Sample Chi Square.

Of the principals who participated, 19.8% were certified in special education (Nelson, 2002). Additionally, 20.8% had experience teaching in special education, while 29.2% had not taken any special education coursework. Principals (57.4%) reported having spent additional time on special education law and legal issues during their coursework, and 27.2% of principals wanted to spend additional time on teaching strategies. A majority of principals (98.5%) reported
that an administrative class in which the primary focus was on special education would have benefited them. Moreover, 56.9% of principals reported spending less than 11% of class time on special education topics. Forty-two point six percent of principals reported their administrative preparatory programs had only fairly or poorly prepared them to oversee special education programming at the school level, and 63.8% of principals reported due process rights in the area of assessment as extremely necessary. Principals (57.4%) reported that it is extremely necessary to possess a vocabulary that includes terminology essential to understanding assessment.

At universities with administrative preparatory programs, 57.7% of faculty members reported not having any special education coursework in their programs (Nelson, 2002), and 46.2% of administrative preparatory faculty members at universities reported wanting to spend more time on special education law. Eleven point five percent of administrative preparatory faculty members at universities wanted to spend additional time on teaching strategies. Moreover, 88.5% of faculty members at universities with administrative preparatory programs reported spending less than 11% of their class time on special education topics. Faculty members (38.5%) at universities with administrative preparatory programs reported that an administrative class focusing on special education law should be a requirement of administrative preparatory programs, while 80.8% of faculty members at universities with administrative preparatory programs reported having adequately prepared their students to oversee special education programming at the school level. According to Nelson, 69.2% of faculty members at universities with administrative preparatory programs reported a vocabulary that included terminology essential to understanding assessment as extremely necessary for principals to possess. At universities with administrative programs, 61.5% of faculty members reported due process rights in the area of assessment as extremely necessary.
Nelson (2002) concluded that although administrative preparatory programs do provide future administrators with some training in special education, training in administrative preparatory programs is inadequate. Administrative preparatory programs need to be reformed and need to provide future principals with the knowledge base in special education they need to oversee school level special education programs. Principals reported that training in special education needs to take place in the areas of (a) eligibility procedures and definitions for the different disability categories, (b) legal rights of parents and students, (c) responsibilities of teachers, (d) regulations and laws pertaining to behavioral issues for students with disabilities, (e) modeling how to act toward and interact with students with disabilities, and (f) regulations for student assessment. University faculty members reported that training in special education needs to take place in the areas of (a) legal rights of parents and students, (b) responsibilities of teachers, and (c) regulations for student assessment. Administrative preparatory programs are reported to effectively train future administrators in the area of special education according to university faculty members. However, principals differed in their opinions in that administrative preparatory programs are not effectively training future administrators in the area of special education.

Similar to Nelson’s (2002) study, which investigated the knowledge necessary for administrators according to principals and university faculty of administrative preparatory programs, Stevenson (2002) investigated the special education competencies Illinois principals needed to effectively oversee special education services. The researcher developed the questionnaire utilizing the administrative competencies for principals overseeing special education programs in *Standards for Special Education Administrators* (Wilson et al., 1996). These competencies were used to validate the content of the instrument. The reliability of the
survey as an instrument was not stated. Of the 150 (54%) questionnaires mailed to principals, 81 were returned (Stevenson). Stevenson also examined Illinois administrative preparatory programs to determine if and how future principals were prepared to deal with special education issues. Of 28 Illinois universities with administrative preparatory programs, 24 (86%) responded. A faxed copy of the researcher developed questionnaire was used to collect data from university preparatory programs.

Results indicated that although 55.6% of principals reported having certification in special education, 46.9% of principals had not taught special education classes (Stevenson, 2002). The amount of time spent on special education tasks was directly impacted by the principal’s certification in special education. While 26.7% of principals who had a certification in special education spent over 25 hours each week on special education related tasks, only 8.3% of principals who did not have a certification in special education spent the same amount of time. Most principals, 74.1%, were involved in the prereferral process for special education. Ironically, 13.9% fewer principals with special education certification regularly participated in the prereferral process. More students in schools with principals who had certification in special education received special education services than did students in schools with principals who did not have certification in special education.

Results indicated that funding special education through grant writing was viewed as more important by principals who did not have a certification in special education (Stevenson, 2002). Results indicated that elementary school principals are more involved in the administration of special education services than their middle school counterparts. All principals reported overseeing special education instruction, co-teaching strategies, procedures and procedural safe guards, state and federal statutes and requirements, consensus building, being
supportive by listening, resolving conflict, and planning with regard to special education as important to overseeing special education services at the school level.

Data gathered from university preparatory programs in Illinois indicated that only 3 of the 24 programs in which responses were received required coursework in special education (Stevenson, 2002). Only one course related to special education was required for each of the three programs that had a special education course component.

Stevenson (2002) concluded that additional coursework beyond one special education course is needed to adequately prepare future administrators for special education job-related tasks. The specific coursework required in administrative preparatory programs needs to reflect deficits in knowledge and skills related to special education. Implementing professional development for principals, which deals with developing their knowledge to effectively oversee special education services should be examined.

Comparable to the Stevenson (2002) study, where the focus was on school preparation for the school level administration of special education services, Bravenec (1998) investigated the need for administrative preparatory programs to address special education services. Bravenec used the Critical Needs Survey, a researcher developed instrument, to collect data from 141 principals in Texas. The response rate for the survey was 79.5%. A review of the literature formed the foundation for the Critical Needs Survey. Content validity was established when professionals in the area of administration reviewed the instrument. Instrument reliability was not stated. Data were analyzed by response percentages, by comparing mean responses, and by ranking responses by their means.

The majority of participants, 97.9%, were certified administrators (Bravenec, 1998); however, only 13.5% were certified in special education, which was not necessarily related to the
supervision of special education services. The following is a list of how principals reported receiving information pertaining to special education and the percentage of principals who reported receiving information regarding special education through each method: (a) central office, 41%; (b) regional service centers, 27.3%; (c) local in-services, 17.3%; (d) trial and error, 7.2%; and (e) coursework 5%. While 37.7% of respondents reported that their educational backgrounds had not prepared them to provide special education students with appropriate services, 82.4% of respondents reported that additional training in special education was needed.

Participants were asked to indicate the importance of specific areas covered within administrative preparatory programs. Participants reported that law was the most important aspect of special education followed by effective instruction and staff development (Bravenec, 1998).

Seventy-two percent of principals reported spending up to 10 hours a week on special education related tasks. Thirty-nine point seven percent of respondents reported being responsible for 75% or more of special education services at their schools.

Results from the study indicated that a general knowledge of special education is needed by administrators in order to implement an effective special education program (Bravenec, 1998). Principals reported a need for additional professional development throughout their tenure in order to preserve and further their effectiveness as administrators.

Bravenec (1998) concluded that administrative preparatory programs should include internships that expose future administrators to special education related issues. All three groups concerned with developing effective administrators, current administrators, university faculty, and personnel from the certification office, should work together to create appropriate and
effective training on special education related issues. Additional training should address deficiencies in knowledge of special education law, effective instruction, and staff development.

It is important to be prepared to oversee special education programs. Valesky and Hirth (1992) investigated how general education administrators are prepared for their role in overseeing school level special education programs. Researchers surveyed state DOSEs to establish what general education administrators were required, by state certification requirements, to understand with regard to special education as well as their familiarity with special education program related issues. Researchers surveyed 50 state DOSEs in the United States of America and DOSEs in “Washington, DC, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Virgin Islands, Saipan, Guam, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs” (Valesky & Hirth, p. 401). Of the 57 DOSEs who were sent surveys, 52 responded. The data collected from the Bureau of Indian Affairs was not used for an unspecified reason. Data were gathered on the certification of administrative positions to include superintendents, DOSEs, and principals by sending out the Survey of the States: Special Education Law. Researchers did not state the origin of the survey, its development, its validity, or its reliability.

With the exception of a certification in the administration of special education services, 33% of general education administrative certifications required a knowledge base in legal issues with regard to special education legalities (Valesky & Hirth, 1992). A knowledge base could be established by completing a course in the aforementioned area of study, completing coursework with a component devoted to legal issues within special education, or by the university officials stating the student had acquired the required knowledge base. Using any of the three previously stated guidelines, 45% of general education administrative programs did not require a basic understanding of special education. Only two states required a course in special education law
for certification in general education administration. Professional development for administrators in the area of special education law was offered by 39 states.

Valesky and Hirth (1992) concluded that although general education administrative preparation programs require students in general education administration preparatory programs to possess at least some understanding of special education and the laws pertaining to special education, general education administrative preparatory programs are not adequately preparing future general education administrators in special education. General education administrative programs should be required to provide students with a course in special education law. This knowledge base is needed to provide both students with exceptionalities a proper education and general education administrators with the knowledge they need for decreasing the number of lawsuits by providing students with an education that aligns with legal requirements.

In an earlier study, Hirth and Valesky (1990) investigated the extent to which general education administrative certification programs included content that addressed special education legal issues, how state DOSEs and university preparatory programs differed in their perspectives with regard to knowledge requirements associated with overseeing special education programming, and how universities trained future administrators in the legal aspects and overall general knowledge of special education. A random sample of 123 universities with administrative certification programs were sent a researcher developed survey to collect data. The development, validity, and reliability of the survey instrument were not stated by researchers. Of the 123 universities, 66 (54%) participated in the study.

With the exception of special education certification programs, 18 of 66 (27%) universities with administrative preparatory programs participating in this study required knowledge in special education law for general education administrative certification (Hirth &
Valesky, 1990). Based on the results of the survey, the researchers determined the extent to which an acceptable knowledge base in special education law had been provided to students in general education administrative programs. However, a specific definition was not provided. General education administrative certification programs offered a course that specifically addressed special education law 7% of the time. Thirty-two percent of respondents reported requiring a general knowledge of special education legal issues in a minimum of one general education administrative certification program. Respondents reported requiring an introductory course in special education 21% of the time; 39% of participants reported either requiring or offering a course that focused on the legal aspects of special education as an elective.

Hirth and Valesky (1990) concluded that state officials were not effectively communicating the requirements of administrative certification programs to universities. Less than 11% of course content in preparatory programs was spent on special education and related issues more than 74% of the time. Education is moving toward a more inclusive model that will require general education administrators to become more knowledgeable in all areas of special education.

Hyatt (1987) surveyed Virginia elementary school principals on their competence to oversee school level special education programs as well as their attitudes toward their preparation, certification requirements, and professional development in overseeing special education services at their schools. One hundred nineteen of 173 principals, 119 (68.8%) responded to the survey. Hyatt developed a survey in which the content validity was established by a review of a panel of judges. The instrument was revised based on the comments of the panel. Hyatt stated that the instrument was reliable, based on a pilot study, but did not state how
this conclusion was drawn. Data were analyzed through the use of means, percentages, frequency, one-way ANOVA, and chi square.

Principals reported having experience in special education 8% of the time. Results indicated that undergraduate coursework on special education was not a part respondents’ coursework 69% of the time (Hyatt, 1987). Respondents reported 63% of the time, that special education coursework was not included in their graduate school programs. Principals reported being confident in their knowledge of multidisciplinary team responsibilities, the purpose of the IEP, maintaining records as well as reports, and placement procedures. Principals reported being the least confident in the areas of IEP development, recommending different solutions, and explaining test assessment results.

More than 97% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that a course on the characteristics of special education students ought to be included in any administrative preparatory program (Hyatt, 1987). Over 94% of principals agreed or strongly agreed that a course on evaluating students diagnostically and interpreting diagnostic test data ought to be included in any administrative preparatory program. Principals reported the need for additional professional development on the characteristics associated with students with learning disabilities and emotional disturbance, identifying students with disabilities, diagnostic methodology and evaluations, and special education law.

Hyatt (1987) concluded that additional professional development is desired by principals in several areas of special education. A minimum of one special education course should be required in preparatory administrative programs. Certification renewal should include a requirement to include professional development in the area of special education.
Stile et al. (1986) focused on coursework in their study. Stile et al. investigated special education certification programs and coursework within general education and special education administrative programs in the United States. Certification offices in Washington D.C. and all 50 states were surveyed, and a 100% response rate was achieved. The study was conducted in 1984 and acted as a follow-up study to Stile and Pettibone’s study conducted in 1979.

Results indicated that from 1979 to 1984 the required special education knowledge base and coursework by state certification offices increased (Stile et al., 1986). As compared to 1979, four more certification offices reported additional requirements. Results also indicated that 18 state certification offices reported that general education administrative certification programs authorized recipients to oversee special education programs. Two additional states were working toward expanding their requirements to include this authorization. Twenty-four state certification offices reported a formal preparation program for a special education administrative degree, a supervision degree, or a certification in the supervision of special education. Of the 51 certification offices included in this study, 46 reported that administrative programs in their states included coursework in the administration of special education services. However, there were three less administrative certification programs reported specifically for special education than there had been 5 years earlier. Data also indicated that institutions of formal administrative preparatory programs had become more aware of the importance of special education training for all administrators.

Stile et al. (1986) concluded that all administrators of educational programs needed the knowledge base to work with special education students. A specific knowledge base was not described by the researchers. However, researchers did state that special education administrative certification programs should be eliminated. Eliminating special education administrative
programs would increase the likelihood that universities would include additional special education coursework in general education administrative programs.

Because 72% of administrators spend more than 10 hours a week on special education related topics (Bravenec, 1998), administrators must have a knowledge base in special education to effectively oversee all program areas in which they are responsible (Bravenec; Stile et al., 1986). Administrative preparatory programs vary in the special education content and length of time future administrators spend on special education during their preparation. Hirth and Valesky (1990) found that university administrative certification programs studied spent 11% of course content addressing special education issues. Several studies have specifically targeted special education coursework in administrative preparatory programs (Bravenec; Hirth & Valesky; Hyatt, 1987; Nelson, 2002; Stevenson, 2002; Stile et al.; Valesky & Hirth, 1992). Future administrators over special education programs are not receiving adequate preparation (Hirth & Valesky; Keeler, 2002; Nelson; Stevenson; Volpe, 2006). Volpe concluded that coursework in special education is important. Moreover, guided experiences in a special education leadership role are also necessary (Bravenec; Volpe). Ongoing professional development on special education topics is necessary for administrators to be effective (Bravenec). Taken together, the studies in this section mean that administrative programs are not adequately preparing administrators to take roles as leaders of the special education programs they oversee. Additional training that specifically targets special education is needed for administrators.
Importance of Principals’ Experiences in Special Education

Having a variety of experiences is beneficial for principals. The more experiences principals have prior to their appointment to the position the more knowledge they have from which to draw. Experience impacts principals.

Principals bring experiences with them to their position. Praisner (2003) investigated what elementary school principals’ attitudes were with regard to including students who were severely disabled within the general education environment. Praisner also investigated whether a relationship existed between elementary school principals’ employment backgrounds, their educational experiences, and their background knowledge and if elementary school principals’ attitudes with regard to inclusion were affected. Of 750 Pennsylvania elementary school principals surveyed, 408 (54%) participated in the study.

The researcher-developed *Principals and Inclusion Survey* was used to collect data (Praisner, 2003). This instrument measured the impact of principals’ preparation, experience, mind-sets toward including students with disabilities in the general education classroom, and how principals’ attitudes impacted principals’ thoughts on the least restrictive environments of students with disabilities. The survey consists of four sections. Section one is the demographic information of participants. The second section consisted of 13 questions addressing variables that influence principals’ attitudes toward educating students with disabilities in an inclusive setting. Content validity for section two was established by basing the content of the survey on a review of literature and a review of the content in the survey by four experts. The reliability of this section was not stated by Praisner. The third section of this survey instrument used the *Superintendents’ Attitude Survey on Integration* (Stainback, 1986), which was adapted from Olley, Devellis, Devellis, Wall, and Long’s (1981) *Autism Attitude Scale for Teachers*, to collect
data. Stainback established a reliability coefficient of .899. Section three is a 5-point Likert-type scale that consists of questions that measure the attitudes of elementary school principals toward including students with severe disabilities within the general education classroom. The Likert-type scale ratings were “strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, and strongly disagree” (Praisner, p. 137). Section four is the perceptions of elementary school principals with regard to the placement of students with varying disabilities.

Praisner (2003) calculated percentages; frequency distributions; and a Pearson-Product Moment Correlation, also known as a Point-Biserial Correlation. Elementary school principals’ attitudes toward inclusion varied. Most participants (76.6%) reported neither a positive nor negative attitude toward inclusion. While 21.1% of participants reported positive attitudes toward inclusion, 2.7% of participants reported a negative attitude toward inclusion. Although these participants’ scores indicated their attitudes were generally more positive than negative about inclusion, their scores were within the tentative range.

Principals reported training in a variety of tasks related to special education areas in order to prepare them for their roles as administrators (Praisner, 2003). Research indicated that 83.6% of principals had training in legal issues pertaining to special education, 77.7% had training on the traits of students with disabilities, 62% had training in how to manage the behavior of students with disabilities, 16.2% had received training in providing a connection between the family and nonschool related supports, 15.7% had any training in intervening at the family level, and 13.2% had been trained in life skills. Praisner (2003) concluded that explicit topics within special education needed to be covered in university preparatory programs to prepare future administrators for their positions as instructional leaders of special education programs.
Praisner (2003) also concluded that differing prior knowledge and experience bases of principals can affect their attitudes toward special education and the implementation of special education programs. Principals’ attitudes have been affected by their positive or negative experiences with students with disabilities. Moreover, principals’ attitudes have affected the way in which special education programs at their schools were administered. Results indicated a significant correlation between principals’ attitudes toward special education and whether their previous experiences with special education students were positive. The more positive a previous experience is the more likely the principals are to have a positive opinion of special education services in general. Whether or not principals can change themselves and their programs lay within their own belief system, which appears to be based on the type of previous experiences gained. Results indicated that principals can change if they think it is in the best interest of the students and if the principals are open to change. Administrative preparatory programs can have a positive effect on principals’ attitudes toward inclusion. Elementary principals should be prepared in their pre-service training programs and through professional development activities. There is a need to provide current and future elementary principals with training and professional development on the issues and strategies to promote and improve inclusion within their schools. Praisner implied that DOSEs should support professional development within their school systems.

The training received and knowledge of special education that general education teachers bring with them impacts the way they oversee special education programs. Villa, Thousand, Meyers, and Nevin (1996) investigated (a) the differences between general education and special education teachers and their attitudes toward inclusion, (b) the relationships between previous experiences and differing backgrounds and educators’ attitudes toward inclusion, and (c) the
relationships between previous experiences and differing backgrounds and educators’ attitudes toward inclusion.

Researchers achieved an 84% response rate when 690 general and special education teachers responded. Of the 690 respondents, 10 were not identified as general or special education teachers and were therefore omitted from the study. Participants came from 32 schools located in Arizona, Michigan, New York, Vermont, and Ontario, Canada. Of the 690 participants, 578 were licensed as general education teachers, and 102 were licensed as special education teachers. Fifty-eight participants were certified in administration, and 53% of the general education participants had additional certification in administration, and five of the special education participants had additional certification in administration. Schools that participated in this study were selected based on their attempts to provide students with a heterogeneous education, which is also known as inclusion. According to Villa et al. (1996), these schools had attempted to provide students with an inclusive environment for a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 8 years. All staff at these schools were surveyed at faculty meetings.

Participants were surveyed using The Regular Education Initiative Teacher Survey-Revised (Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991), which consisted of 50 questions, and The Heterogeneous Education Teacher Survey, which was a researcher developed instrument that consisted of 16 questions. How The Regular Education Initiative Teacher Survey-Revised was developed and validated was not stated by the researchers. However, researchers conducted their own reliability test by using a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient and found the mean item reliability score to be .40. This is well below an acceptable Cronbach’s alpha score of .70. Therefore, none of the responses from this data set were used. The Heterogeneous Education Teacher Survey was developed by reviewing definitions of inclusion and conducting a qualitative analysis of those
definitions. Instrument reliability for *The Heterogeneous Education Teacher Survey* was established with “a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .77” (Villa et al., 1996, p. 35). Data included demographic, background, and experience information from participants. Data were analyzed by using an analysis of variance, a Scheffe post hoc test, and a chi square test for statistical significance.

Results indicated that educators have more positive attitudes when they are influenced by five factors (Villa et al., 1996). Those five factors are (a) additional training and assistance, (b) a higher level of administrative support, (c) a greater amount of collaboration, (d) scheduled time for collaboration, and (e) purposeful restructuring of the school.

Results also indicated that educators have a positive attitude toward inclusion. They reported inclusive practices as having a positive effect on the attitudes of educators. Participants reported that (a) general and special education teachers are both responsible for all students in an inclusive classroom, (b) general and special education teachers can work together collaboratively, (c) the inclusive environment does not adversely affect students with disabilities, and (d) team teaching has a positive impact on general and special education teachers.

General education teachers reported that support, collaborative consultation time, and their backgrounds in dealing with students who are severely disabled affected their attitudes toward inclusion. Special education teachers reported the extent to which collaboration was used and support from the administration as having a positive impact on their attitudes toward inclusion. General education teachers as well as special education teachers agreed that collaboration and support of the inclusion program are key factors in the effectiveness of an inclusion program.
Villa et al. (1996) concluded that the amount of knowledge and the actions administrators take can have an impact on inclusive practices at their schools. General education personnel and special education personnel can work together collaboratively. Pre-service education programs, graduate education programs, and professional development should address the need for an equal partnership within the classroom and the need of general education personnel and special education personnel to work together.

Both Praisner (2003) and Villa et al. (1996) concluded that educators’ attitudes toward special education are impacted by their knowledge of special education and previous experiences. Elementary principals are open to change if they think students will benefit from that change (Praisner). Taken together, the studies in this section mean the background knowledge educators possess with regard to special education can have a positive or negative impact on their attitudes. However, elementary principals’ attitudes might be changed if additional knowledge of special education programs has a positive impact on their beliefs.

Roles and Expectations for Principals

Since the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed in 1975, there has been an increased focus on special education and the services provided to students with disabilities at the school level. This increase in focus has been reinforced through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to what is currently known as the NCLB Act (2001) and the reauthorization of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004). These changes have increased the specialized knowledge and skills necessary for principals to possess in order to effectively oversee school level special education programs.
Principals use varying types of instructional leadership strategies to guide their faculties and supervise programs. How elementary principals used instructional strategies to improve the education of students with learning disabilities, as well as principals’ leadership practices with regard to their supervision of programming for students with learning disabilities, were examined by Heckert (2009). Research questions focused on improving the academic performance of students with learning disabilities, determining the feasibility of those practices, and determining the instructional leadership practices used by principals with regard to promoting instruction for students with learning disabilities. Heckert used a multiple gating procedure to identify and select five elementary school principals who were considered effective leaders of special education programs. Each principal identified one special education teacher perceived as effective by the principal, and each special education teacher identified one general education teacher perceived as effective by the special education teacher. Data collected from special education and general education teachers were used to confirm or refute the data collected from their principals.

The primary procedure used for collecting data was an interview. Research questions were developed by a review of the literature, feedback provided by an expert reviewer, and the execution of a pilot test. Heckert (2009) interviewed principals on two separate occasions 6 weeks apart. All special education and general education teachers were interviewed one time each. Interview data were transcribed, and member checking was used to ensure the accuracy of data collected. Data were coded through the use of a predetermined coding system that was based on a review of the literature. However, codes were reviewed and revised throughout the coding process. Transcripts were reviewed after each revision to the coding system. A cross-case analysis was used to identify emerging themes.
Results indicated that four principals (i.e., A, C, D, and E) had some understanding of how to improve the educational outcomes for students with learning disabilities (Heckert, 2009). All five principals agreed that students with learning disabilities need small group instruction as well as instruction in the general education setting. In addition, all five principals agreed that specially designed instruction is beneficial to all students and not just students with learning disabilities. Four principals (i.e., B, C, D, and E) reported the need to use data to make decisions with regard to the specific services needed by each student with a learning disability. Those same principals reported efforts for improving services within the general education environment for students with learning disabilities by promoting an atmosphere of accountability and high expectations among teachers. They reported using meetings to promote collaboration among faculty members, as well. As related to the needs of students with learning disabilities, three principals (i.e., A, B, and C) were specific in their statements that special education teachers were in charge of their instruction. Special education teachers were viewed as the experts and charged with the task of determining what instructional strategies needed to be used. Other principals (i.e., D and E) viewed themselves as part of the solution and worked with teachers to solve instructional problems. Two principals (i.e., A and B) were viewed by their special education teachers as being supportive of and interacting with general education teachers but not special education teachers. Other principals (i.e., C, D, and E) were viewed as being supportive of and interacting with all teachers equally.

Conclusions for this study were reported in the form of propositions. Heckert (2009) concluded that principals are better able to be instructional leaders for general education teachers, special education teachers, and students, when they possess a better understanding of effective instructional strategies. Two principals (i.e., D and E) had acquired Master’s degrees in
Special Education and demonstrated a depth of knowledge with regard to instructional strategies as well as the implementation of those strategies. Teachers reported these principals as highly knowledgeable in effective instructional strategies. Principals (i.e., D and E), who support and interact with all teachers, promote the academic welfare of all students including those with learning disabilities.

McGrew (2008) conducted a study that focused on inclusion education, too. McGrew examined principals’ knowledge of inclusion. The researcher examined principals’ perceptions of and attitudes toward inclusion. Three elementary principals from three schools with similar ethnic and special education population demographic data participated in the study. All three principals worked within the same school district, which was commonly known for having an effective inclusion program. These participants were chosen because of their accessibility and willingness to participate.

The researcher utilized the case study method to examine the research questions. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and organizational documents (McGrew, 2008). Organizational documents included both district and school level special education and inclusion policies and practices. Also, professional development plans for the district and each school were examined.

McGrew (2008) recorded and transcribed data collected from initial semi-structured interviews. Data were coded, and emerging themes were identified. Emerging themes were used to develop interview questions for a second semi-structured interview. Data collected from the second semi-structured interview and participant observations were transcribed and coded. Member checking was used by having participants review each of their interview transcripts for their first and second interviews. Participants were allowed to provide additional information
after each review. No additional information was given by participants as they reported that the information was an accurate representation of what they do. Data were cross-referenced and triangulated. Reliability and validity were increased through triangulation and re-categorizing data and updating codes used in the coding process afterwards. The same codes were used in analyzing all forms of data.

Data were presented in the form of the espoused theory, which focused on what principals stated, and the enacted theory, which focused on what principals stated with regard to the researcher’s research questions (McGrew, 2008). At the fundamental level, the espoused theory indicates that principals perceive inclusion as the delivery of instruction within the general education that includes the delivery of effective instruction. Instruction is differentiated to provide for the learning needs of each student. Teachers collaborate in this setting to provide each student with an appropriate level of support. Results indicated that the enacted theory supports the espoused theory in that principals facilitated collaboration with and between faculty members.

McGrew (2008) concluded that principals play the role of both caretaker and facilitator of the inclusion program. Principals have faith in their teachers’ abilities to take leadership of the inclusion program and meet the needs of students. Principals were dedicated to the inclusion programs they oversaw, and they had high expectations for their inclusion programs. The inclusion program at each school would have been viewed as an afterthought if principals were not dedicated to the inclusion program. Principals encouraged teachers to be collaborative in their approaches to inclusion. Principals wanted to ensure that students identified for special education services were not excluded from the general education environment.
The roles principals play and the expectations of those principals to oversee school level special education programming vary between school districts. Bays and Crockett (2007) designed a study to develop a theoretical framework to investigate how elementary principals lead the special education programs they oversee. This study examined how specialized instructional practices were supervised, how administrators dealt with the needs within specialized instruction, and what led to the supervision of these programs being performed in the manner that they were. Grounded theory, a qualitative methodology, was used. The coding procedures used in this study were open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Participants were selected from three school districts in the Southeastern region of the United States. From within those three school districts, nine rural elementary schools with student enrollments ranging between 1,000 and 3,000 were selected. Researchers interviewed and observed three DOSEs, nine elementary principals, nine general education teachers, and 13 special education teachers. Researchers interviewed a school psychologist and a district level coordinator of instruction. Researchers included the school psychologist and district level coordinator of instruction in the category of teachers for a total of 24 teacher participants. At each school, the principal, a minimum of one special education teacher, and one general education teacher of students with disabilities participated in the study. Researchers collected data over a three- to five-day period at each school and visited the central office of each district twice. In addition to interviews, data were collected through observation and by examining documents. For a 2-week period, two of the nine principals kept journals on special education related issues and how those issues were solved. Teachers in each of the two schools also kept journals in order to validate principals’ responses.
Bays and Crockett (2007) analyzed data collected from school board policy manuals, organizational charts from within the school system, DOSEs’ and principals’ memos, school websites, and meetings involving educators in supervisory roles. Researchers continuously compared and contrasted interview data. Also, researchers created an audit trail by dating every piece of data collected and citing where each piece of data came from. Once a theory was formulated, in order to increase the validity of the researchers’ theory by refining their newly developed theory based on participants’ feedback, Bays and Crockett used member checking (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006) with eight participants.

Results indicated that job descriptions for elementary principals were created by each school board (Bays & Crockett, 2007). Principals perceived their roles as instructional leaders as being affected by such responsibilities as having an understaffed district level office, time limitations, school size, the special education services provided at each school, each elementary principal’s knowledge of and regard for special education, and elementary principals’ opinions of their special education teachers’ abilities. Participants reported that, in an attempt to lead the special education program at their schools, elementary principals observed and evaluated teachers, walked throughout their schools as a form of supervision, and utilized open communication to construct an atmosphere of shared accountability for all students’ learning.

Elementary principals reported that they were the instructional leaders of their schools, but they understood that it was not possible for them to micromanage all administrative tasks (Bays & Crockett, 2007). Because of competing job responsibilities, elementary principals informally delegated the responsibility of special education job tasks to faculty members. Often, special education administrative tasks were delegated in a way that diminished the importance of
their supervision of the special education programs. Results indicated that elementary principals were more focused on legal and procedural issues than instructional problems.

Results also indicated that principals have many tasks to complete that relate to the oversight of special education programs. Principals have been assigned to a variety of job tasks such as handing out curriculum guides, creating an annual financial plan, presenting the financial plan to their superintendents, obtaining professional development related to special education, communicating with parents to make sure students receive any additional tutoring they need, participating in IEP (Individualized Education Plan) meetings, monitoring teacher instruction, and providing their faculties with professional development on how to use different instructional strategies. These tasks were part of principals’ responsibilities that fell within most of their job descriptions.

Additionally, results indicated that elementary principals sought advisement on special education legal issues from the DOSE and special education teachers (Bays & Crockett, 2007). Directors of special education often played other roles within their respective school systems. Some DOSEs oversaw the day-to-day operations of federal programs, district wide testing, or English Language Learner programs in addition to their regular responsibilities.

Results indicated that elementary principals shared their roles as the instructional leaders of the special education programs at their schools with their DOSEs (Bays & Crockett, 2007). Directors of special education helped plan special education related professional development and provided support for the delivery of special education instruction.

Bays and Crockett (2007) concluded that the abilities of elementary principals to lead their special education programs were affected by a variety of factors. When special education administrative tasks are dispersed to other faculty members by elementary principals, the
implications for such a practice are three fold. First, the responsibility to ensure that students with disabilities are provided with effective instruction lies with the elementary principal. Second, teachers of students who have disabilities should be provided with the necessary supports. Third, teachers of students who have disabilities should be observed and evaluated to ensure that those teachers’ students are receiving an appropriate education. In order to lead special education programs, it is important to determine which competencies are possessed by effective administrative personnel. Additional research is needed to address the importance of high quality special education administrative leadership.

To be the leader of the school level special education program is one of the many roles with which principals are charged. Cruzeiro and Morgan (2006) investigated how administrators lead school level special education programs. A modified version of Billingsley, Farley, and Rude’s (1993) survey was used to survey 255 rural school administrators in Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming. The survey focused on participants’ leadership roles and responsibilities with regard to their supervision of special education services. The validity, reliability, or how the survey was modified was not specified by researchers. The make-up of participants was 98 elementary school principals, 78 high school principals, 50 administrators who worked in the central office or in some other facet of administration outside of a principalship, 19 principals who oversaw programs that combined elementary and high school programs, and an additional 10 not specified by researchers. Of 439 administrators, 255 (58%) participated in the study.

Administrators’ formal training in special education related issues in the leadership of special education programs was a concern for Cruzeiro and Morgan (2006). Contemporary principals have had to meet the demands of a variety of job tasks. Their time can be divided into meeting the demands of competing task responsibilities. Two of the main tasks principals must
perform are the oversight of the general education program and the oversight of the special education program at their schools. The time allotted to overseeing general education programs was found to be more than three times the amount of time allotted to overseeing special education programs. Results indicated that principals spent 79% of their school day on general education tasks as opposed to special education tasks, which took up 21% of their school day.

Cruzeiro and Morgan (2006) concluded that special education task completion has become important for principals. Being competent with this issue has allowed principals to become credible leaders of the special education programs they oversee. Principals have attempted to include their special education programs as part of an eclectic educational setting and appeared to be successful in this endeavor. Principals do play a role in encouraging their faculty to participate in professional development activities in special education. Principals communicate a common goal to their faculties, work with faculty members on their instruction, supervise their faculties, and encourage a positive school atmosphere in order to accomplish the task of creating a unified school.

Both the concerns and special education knowledge base of principals are important when overseeing special education programs. Balt (2000) interviewed and collected background data on elementary principals in a qualitative study to investigate what the principals reported as contemporary administrative concerns, the necessary knowledge base and characteristics needed by school level administrators over special education programs, to determine the type of professional development necessary for current and future principals, and to determine the need for change in administrative preparatory programs. Interview data from 30 elementary school principals with 2 to 7 years of experience in their current position as principal were transcribed and coded.
When asked who was responsible at their schools for overseeing special education services, participants referred to themselves and teachers 43% of the time, themselves only 40% of the time, and either everyone or a team 37% of the time (Balt, 2000). Participants reported that they had not received an adequate amount of administrative training in special education as part of their administrative preparation. When participants were asked to rank the different leadership domains, improving instructional programs was ranked in the top five 100% of the time, and educational leadership was ranked in the top five 90% of the time. Participants (63%) reported a connection between leadership and improved instruction, and 40% of principals reported a need for additional faculty training in special education. Of participants responding, 47% reported understanding education law as one of the top five education leadership domains. Fifty-seven percent of participants reported that possessing a sound knowledge base in special education law was a necessity for principals. One third of participants reported the need for participation in field experience in special education for aspiring administrators.

Balt (2000) concluded that data indicated an inconsistency in professional development for special education. Principals should be prepared to oversee special education programs by their preparatory programs and continue their growth through professional development.

The role principals play, and the extent to which principals are involved in special education, is important. O’Brien (1998) investigated the roles principals play in the provision of special education services. O’Brien surveyed Alabama kindergarten through eighth grade principals and special education teachers. Of 130 principals, 94 (72%) responded, and 96 (74%) of 130 special education teachers responded. A review of literature provided the information for the development of the survey. The content validity of the instrument was established through a review by professionals in the fields of administration and special education. A Cronbach’s alpha
coefficient of .94 was established for the job functions of principals pertaining to special education and .88 for how often principals are involved in the processes within special education.

Results indicated that 80.9% of special education teachers had certification in special education. Data indicated that only 19.1% of principals had certification in special education (O’Brien, 1998). Whether or not a principal possessed a certification in special education did not significantly influence their participation in special education. Principals reported their involvement in special education services to be significantly higher than special education teachers had reported principal involvement in special education services. Results indicated that principals with special education certification were no more likely to report being involved in special education than their peers without certification in special education.

Seventy-eight percent of special education teachers and 98% of principals reported that students with disabilities were integrated into the general education classroom setting. Although principals reported that special education received at least as much support as general education, 42% of special education teachers did not report that they were equally supported.

O’Brien (1998) concluded that professional development for principals is needed that will aid in communicating their expectations and support for special education to their teachers. Principal preparation should include exposure to and training in special education.

With a focus on the importance of school level administrators, Quigney (1996) investigated how important the different aspects of special education were in relation to school level principals. All participants were from Ohio and consisted of 116 of 313 (37.1%) special education teachers, 95 of 200 (47.5%) principals, and 92 of 200 (46%) DOSEs surveyed. This sample size represented an overall return rate of 42.5%. A survey instrument was used. The survey consisted of 78 competencies and those competencies were rated between 1 (not
important) and 5 (great importance). The development of the survey, its validity, and its reliability were not stated by the researcher. Descriptive statistics were used to rank the mean scores of respondents.

Results indicated that principals are an important component of an effective special education program (Quigney, 1996). Separate areas were prioritized in order of importance by participants. Participants reported the domain of staff development to be the most important domain for school level principals with regard to special education services. Principals must be able to communicate effectively and be able to promote collaboration between general and special education teachers. Additionally, principals must be able to resolve conflict with regard to issues in special education. Principals must create school level support teams that take a collaborative approach to problem-solving the instructional needs of students through the implementation of additional instructional strategies. Personnel management was reported as the second most important domain. Legal issues concerning special education were ranked as the third in their importance to leading special education programs at the school level. Principals should attend IEP meetings. The principal should assist in coordinating the instructional needs of students as well as their non-instructional needs. The principal should be aware of any behavioral problems students might exhibit in addition to any behavioral plans already in place.

Quigney (1996) concluded that principals are accountable for school level programs and need to understand what their roles are as they relate to special education programs. Principals need to work together with DOSEs to develop a relationship between general education and special education.

White (1993) investigated the extent to which Arizona elementary school principals were involved in overseeing special education programs and their attitudes toward this role. In an
effort to increase the validity of the data collected from elementary principal participants, White used elementary school teachers to validate data collected from their supervising principals. Data were collected from six elementary school principals and the teachers they supervise. The teacher make-up included 11 special education teachers and 104 general education teachers from a possible 153. This produced an overall teacher response rate of 75%. Quantitative data were collected from teachers through the use of a researcher-developed questionnaire. Both content validity and construct validity for this instrument was established with a review by administrators and revisions based upon their feedback. Reliability was not stated. Qualitative data were gathered from elementary principals and special education teachers by interview. Results were analyzed quantitatively by frequency distributions, chi-square, and cross-tabulations and qualitatively by categorizing emerging themes.

Results indicated that although elementary principals reported valuing tasks associated with supervising school level special education programs, teachers were more varied in their opinions (White, 1993). White reported that 65% of teachers reported their principals provided academic and extracurricular activities for students with disabilities in their schools. However, special education teachers reported that the special education programs at their schools were not viewed as a main concern for principals. Fewer than half (44.4%) of special education teachers reported that principals participated in monitoring special education referral process as well as the assessment process. Although general and special education teachers agreed that principals were involved in the process of disciplining students with disabilities, they viewed principals as being less involved in the areas within special education with regard to instruction, to curriculum development, and to managing resources. Teachers reported principals as lacking in the skills
needed to effectively oversee special education programs. Principals do not rank special education very high as a priority.

White (1993) concluded that the principal’s role needs to be further defined. Principals do not possess the skills they need to effectively oversee special education programs. It is important to identify the skills possessed by effective administrative personnel.

Research on the roles and expectations of principals with regard to special education has focused on differing combinations of elementary, middle, and high school principal participants (Balt, 2000; Bays & Crockett, 2007; Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006; Heckert, 2009; McGrew, 2008; O’Brien, 1998; Quigney, 1996). Research has indicated that further research is needed to address the importance of high quality special education administrative leadership (Bays & Crockett). Future research is needed in special education leadership that should utilize observations to develop a comprehensive, in-depth examination of this phenomenon (Heckert). Principals need to understand what their roles are with regard to the special education programs they oversee (Quigney). These roles need to be further defined (White 1993). Principals need to continue to develop their special education knowledge throughout their careers (Balt). Taken together, the studies in this section mean that additional research is needed that focuses on the similarities and differences between effective principals with regard to the special education knowledge, skills, roles, and expectations they report as important to their positions. The similarities between how principals, who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education, oversee and support their special education programs need to be examined. The differences between how principals, who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education, and principals, who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education, need to be examined, as well.
Principals’ Knowledge and Skills in Special Education

All principals bring with them a knowledge base and skill set specific to their backgrounds and experiences. Background knowledge and experiences come from a variety of places to include coursework, practicum, internship, and on-the-job experiences. Principals vary in the amount of background knowledge and experience they have with students with disabilities and special education services.

Effective leadership is an important component of any program. The purpose of the Brotherson, Sheriff, Milburn, and Schertz (2001) study was to more closely align policy and practice in early childhood education inclusion practices. Researchers investigated the perceived challenges of elementary school principals in relation to early childhood inclusion and the perceived needs of those principals in order to effectively lead the early childhood inclusion programs they oversee. Thirty-five elementary principals participated in Phase 1. An additional 22 elementary principals participated in Phase 3. During Phase 2, 655 of 916 (71.5%) researcher-developed surveys mailed to all elementary school principals in Iowa were returned. Of the 22 elementary principals participating in Phase 3, 4 had participated in Phase 1.

A mixed-methods design was used to examine these research questions (Brotherson et al., 2001). A participatory action research model, which involves participant input throughout most of the study from beginning to end, was used. There were three Phases built into the design of this study. The constant comparative method was used to analyze data collected in Phases 1 and 3. All 57 participants used in Phases 1 and 3 were elementary school principals in Iowa. The first Phase was conducted within seven focus groups that involved 35 of the 57 elementary school principals. Purposeful sampling was used in this phase to select the 35 participants. This phase was conducted in order to identify common themes among the participants. The second Phase
used data collected in Phase 1 to develop a survey to be sent to each of the 916 elementary school principals in Iowa. A response rate for Phase 2 was not reported. The reliability of the instrument used was not reported. This phase was used to validate and clarify researchers’ understandings of Phases 1 and 3 and was not reported. A third Phase was conducted to help researchers gain a better understanding of the themes identified within the first Phase of this study.

Participants during Phase 2 indicated on their surveys if they were interested in participating in Phase 3 research. All Phase 2 participants who indicated they wanted to participate in Phase 3 research were selected for this final research phase. Six focus groups were conducted in this phase. Twenty-two elementary school principals who had not been involved in Phase 1 were involved in Phase 3 focus groups. In addition to the 22 elementary school principals who were not involved in Phase 1, but volunteered to participate in the focus groups during Phase 3, four participants who had been involved in Phase 1 volunteered for Phase 3, as well. Researchers only reported the findings of Phases 1 and 3 in this study.

In order to ensure accuracy, researchers used a variety of techniques. Triangulation; peer debriefings, in which all four researchers were involved; member checks; and data collected from the survey to help researchers develop a deeper understanding of participants’ responses were used (Brotherson et al., 2001). Six elementary school principals were used for the members’ check technique. As a group, those six elementary school principals were invited to come together, discuss the results, and provide researchers with feedback as to the accuracy of the results. Two additional elementary school principals were brought in to review the finished manuscript. All eight principals concluded that the results and findings were accurate depictions of what elementary school principals had reported within their focus groups.
Elementary school principals reported an inadequacy in the amount of training they received with regard to special education services (Brotherson et al., 2001). Elementary school principals reported a lack of training in the areas of early childhood and dealing with students with inappropriate behaviors.

Elementary principals reported one aspect of their jobs as being the leader when it comes to the change and development of the school (Brotherson et al., 2001). They reported it was important to seek out diverse ways in which school tasks could be completed. Principals also reported their responsibilities with regard to special education as having grown. The profession of being an elementary school principal has become so stressful that elementary principals are considering leaving their positions.

Brotherson et al. (2001) identified six underlying themes from the data. Only four of the themes were supported through survey research in addition to the focus groups. Elementary principals reported that (a) they and their teachers need additional professional development relating to inclusion, (b) it is the role of the principal to help teachers grow as professionals, (c) parental support is needed at an earlier stage in the process of inclusion, and (d) interagency involvement is needed to increase the success rate for inclusion.

Brotherson et al. (2001) concluded that principals perceived problems associated with inclusion to be extrinsic. Examples of those problems include an inadequate amount of money or time, a need for additional personnel, or a need for additional information. Principals did not perceive the problems to be due to their own deficiencies.

Two implications of this study are that a need exists for an increased knowledge base and training for elementary school principals with regard to early childhood education and special
education services (Brotherson et al., 2001). Additional training is needed in the areas of current research and best inclusive practices for elementary school programs.

The impact the administrative leader has on a program will vary. Bradley (1999) investigated how elementary principals impact special education programs. Bradley also attempted to determine the personal traits and characteristics of elementary principals. The sample consisted of five elementary principals who were selected as effective leaders in overseeing special education programs and a minimum of 10 teachers at each principal’s school. The director, who oversees special education services at the South Carolina State Department of Education, listed elementary school principals who were viewed as effective leaders. The DOSE from each school system was asked to list elementary school principals who were viewed as effective leaders, and all five elementary school principals selected for this study were chosen by their DOSE as effective leaders. Similar to the method White (1993) used to validate elementary school principals’ responses by collecting data from the teachers supervised by those principals, Bradley (1999) used elementary school teachers who had been supervised by the principal to validate data collected from each elementary school principal. Five teachers were selected by each principal, and another five were randomly selected by the researcher.

Qualitative data were collected by using semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers, unstructured observations of principals, and examinations of onsite artifacts. A quantitative component in the form of two survey instruments was added to this study. The first survey, *The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire* (Hoy & Miskel, 1991), was administered to every teacher on each campus. This instrument was developed in the 1940s at Ohio State University. Reliability was established for initiating structure (.83) and consideration (.92), which were the two areas measured by this instrument. The second survey, *The School
Climate Survey Form C (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1987), was administered to every teacher on each of the five campuses. The development and reliability of this survey, survey form C, were not stated. Instead, the development and reliability of The School Climate Survey Form A (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1987) was discussed. This may be due to a typing error. Reliability for The School Climate Survey Form A was reported at .81.

Data collected from teacher and principal interviews were analyzed by categorizing transcribed data by school. Important themes were color coded. The researcher then looked for emerging themes and conducted a constant comparison method analysis of the data. The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (Hoy & Miskel, 1991) and The School Climate Survey Form A (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1987) were scored, and survey data from these two instruments were used to supplement data collected during the qualitative section of this study.

All five principals reported possessing certain personal traits. With the exception of one principal whose traits were not corroborated by teachers, the teachers corroborated the following traits: the principal (a) fostered a positive school environment, (b) was focused on learning, (c) supported their staffs, (d) collaborated with their staffs when making decisions, (e) established school goals, (f) organized and managed professional development, and (g) were committed to their chosen profession (Bradley, 1999).

Just as with personal traits and with the exception of one principal whose skills were not corroborated by teachers, all five principals reported possessing specific leadership skills. Principals reported an inclusive philosophy. Principals did not distinguish between regular education programs and students or special education programs and students. Principals
established a vision, they possessed child-centered values, valued special education, and stressed professional growth (Bradley, 1999).

Although these elementary principals were selected because they were viewed as effective leaders of special education programs, these principals reported that continued growth in the skills and knowledge they possessed was important. Bradley (1999) concluded that effective leaders of school level special education programs must, at a minimum, possess a fundamental understanding of special education. The knowledge principals need to lead special education programs effectively needs to be identified in order to prepare future administrators to lead school level special education programs effectively.

Although research exists on the knowledge and skills elementary school principals should possess, there is a paucity of research that focuses on the knowledge and skills middle school and high school principals should possess. Foley and Lewis (1999) investigated the competencies that secondary school principals, who oversaw Grades 7-12, needed in order to effectively perform job functions related to a collaborative approach toward providing special education services. Researchers attempted to determine whether a relationship existed between factors such as administrative experience and the level of competence those principals reported themselves as possessing. Both of these inquiries were focused on and made in relation to collaboration. Foley and Lewis used a computer-generated random sample of principals who oversaw educational programs in Grades 7-12. It is important to note that the grade levels responding principals oversaw varied greatly among participants (e.g., Grades 6-9, 10-12, etc.). Although the sample was randomly chosen, it was stratified in that it reflected the percentages of the nine regions taken from the United States Census.
Data were collected with a researcher developed, Likert-type survey, which consisted of 23 competencies (Foley & Lewis, 1999). Likert-type scale responses were rated from 1 (none) to 5 (high) depending on respondents’ reported competence as a collaborative school leader. The survey was developed based on a review of textbooks and instruments relevant to this study. Content validity was established by including all possible survey items. For the survey instrument, a Cronbach’s alpha of .96 was obtained. A participant response rate of 46% was achieved. Descriptive statistics and stepwise multiple regression were used to analyze data. Principals who possessed educational specialist and education doctoral degrees rated themselves higher in three areas than their peers who did not possess a degree above that of a master’s degree (Foley & Lewis, 1999). The three areas were that (a) they themselves were not resistant to change, (b) they had the ability to lead their faculties in the development of objectives, and (c) they were able to lead in the evaluation of the interpersonal aspect of the problem-solving process.

Overall, results indicated that respondent principals rated themselves as more competent in the skills of effective communication, understanding the concepts of what it takes to have a group effort, and leadership through collective choice making by the faculty (Foley & Lewis, 1999). Conversely, principals rated themselves as less competent in their capacity to organize outside agencies within the functions of the school and resolving conflicts through formalized strategies.

Foley and Lewis (1999) also reported a significant relationship between both the number of professional development hours which principals attended and could not receive credit and how they rated themselves. The more professional development hours principals were unable to receive credit the more likely they were to rate themselves higher.
The implications of this study pertain to the continual improvement of administrators in the areas of knowledge and skill (Foley & Lewis, 1999). Continual professional development that focuses on collaboration can enhance administrators’ ability to lead the collaborative programs they oversee.

Foley and Lewis (1999) concluded that, studying general education teachers’ and special education teachers’ insights of principals’ skills could aid in identifying the strengths as well as weaknesses of principals’ leadership skills. This connection between general education teachers’ and special education teachers’ insights and principals’ skills might aid in the development of administrative programs. Continuous training is needed for administrative personnel to further their understanding and proficiency in communication. The principal’s role in supporting both general education and special education teachers in the classroom environment should be examined.

The administrative skills used by principals who oversee school level special education programs are important to effective principals. Wigle and Wilcox (1999) investigated the administrative skills important to overseeing a special education program for principals. Principals’ responses were compared to DOSEs’ and special education teachers’ responses. A survey was developed from the Council for Exceptional Children’s (1997) list of important administrative skills for overseeing a special education program (Wigle & Wilcox). The content validity and reliability of the instrument was not stated by the researchers. Two hundred forty principals, 240 DOSEs, and 240 special education teachers from Kansas, Nebraska, Tennessee, and Texas were randomly chosen and sent a researcher-developed survey. Sixty-three (26%) surveys sent to principals, 43 (18%) surveys sent to DOSEs, and 49 (20%) surveys sent to special education teachers were returned. A response rate of 22% was achieved. The mean scores from
each group were calculated, and a chi-square statistical measurement was used. Demographic data of participants were gathered, as well. Demographics included the age, gender, education, and number of years in education for each participant.

The results indicated that DOSEs did not report themselves as being less competent than principals or special education teachers in any skill area with statistical significance (Wigle & Wilcox, 1999). However, DOSEs did report themselves as being less competent in their ability to create and implement technology plans without a statistical significance. In this area, DOSEs reported themselves as being less skilled in implementing these plans than special education teachers. The only three skills in which special education teachers reported themselves with statistical significance as being more competent in than DOSEs were in responding to the needs of families and students through program planning, putting into practice an evaluation plan for students with disabilities, and using data to help students with disabilities. A statistically significant relationship existed between special education teachers and principals in 14 of the skills examined.

According to Wigle and Wilcox (1999), DOSEs reported themselves to be more competent than any other group of participants. Directors of special education reported themselves as being skilled in 48% of their item responses and adequately skilled in 44% of their item responses. Principals did not report themselves as being skilled in knowledge or skills associated with special education.

Wigle and Wilcox (1999) concluded that future principals should address the skill and knowledge deficiencies found in this study prior to entering into an administrative position. The more knowledgeable principals are in special education the more likely the special education programs at their schools will be successful.
The knowledge base of elementary principals was examined by Harlin-Fischer (1998). The researcher examined the knowledge and skills necessary for elementary school principals, as reported by Oklahoma elementary principals and both general education and special education teachers, to include students with disabilities served within the general education setting. The KSSE (Harlin-Fischer, 1998) and Programs for Students with Disabilities (PSD) (Harlin-Fischer, 1998) instruments were developed by the researcher and used to collect data. The KSSE Survey was developed based on the CEC Common Core of Knowledge and Skills (Council for Exceptional Children, 1995) standards, which included the competencies needed by principals to effectively oversee special education programs. Comparing the CEC Common Core of Knowledge and Skills standards with competencies found in a literature review and basing revisions on the comments of experts within the areas of administration, special education, and instrument development established the content validity of the KSSE Survey. The content validity of the PSD was established in the development of the instrument by basing its content on both the School Inclusion Assessment in South Dakota Statewide Systems Change Project: A Closer Look at Inclusion (South Dakota Statewide Systems Change Project, 1993) and the Inclusion Practice and Priorities Instrument (Montie et al., 1992). Internal reliability for both instruments was above .70.

The participants for the KSSE Survey were 200 elementary principals and a special education and a general education teacher from each school for a total sample size of 600. Respondents for the KSSE Survey were 58 of 200 (29%) principals, 86 of 200 (43%) special education teachers, and 72 of 200 (36%) general education teachers. The participants for the PSD were 110 elementary principals and a special education and a general education teacher from each school for a total of 330 participants. Respondents for the PSD were 62 of 110 (56%)
principals, 72 of 110 (65%) special education teachers, and 52 of 110 (47%) general education teachers. Data were analyzed by comparing descriptive statistics, an analysis of variance, post hoc analysis, and qualitatively through the categorization of emerging themes.

As indicated by the responses of elementary school principals on the KSSE Survey, the top five areas principals reported as being necessary for principals to be knowledgeable with regard to special education were modeling proper conduct, the rights and duties of stakeholders, due process with regard to evaluations and student placement, legal issues and procedures involved in assessing students, and laws and policies pertaining to disciplining students with disabilities (Harlin-Fischer, 1998). Data indicated practicum experiences for administrators are valuable experiences.

Results from data collected by special education teachers indicated that principals need an understanding of assessment and the legal issues surrounding assessment in special education. Principals should be capable of relating assessment to instruction.

Results from data collected by general education teachers indicated that principals need an understanding of students’ and parents’ rights with regard to placing the student in the least restrictive environment. Principals also need an understanding of students’, parents’, and staffs’ rights with regard to special education, the legal issues and guidelines when assessing students with disabilities, legal guidelines on disciplining students with disabilities, the principal’s role in the IEP process, and confidentiality. In addition, principals need to implement collaborative strategies, help students gain the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve a quality life, and model proper behavior.

Harlin-Fischer (1998) concluded that principals need instruction to add to their knowledge base in order to effectively lead school level special education programs. An
improved knowledge base will help principals take the lead in implementing special education programs at their schools.

Special education law has become a concern for administrators. Hirth and Valesky (1989-90) investigated the self-reported understanding of special education law by Tennessee principals. The two areas of special education law addressed in this study were procedural safeguards and educational service. Data were collected with the *A Knowledge Survey of Special Education Law* survey, which was developed by Hirth and Valesky. Survey content was based on P.L. 94-142, amendments to P.L. 94-142, and important court cases in special education. Content validity was established when three experts in special education reviewed the survey. The reliability of the test instrument was not stated by researchers. Of 568 principals surveyed, 278 (49%) responded. An analysis of variance and Scheffe’ post hoc procedure were used to analyze data.

Results indicated that no significant difference exists between the knowledge principals’ possessed in their understanding of procedural safeguards or educational services. No significant difference was found in principals’ knowledge with regard to either of these two areas based on participants’ gender or age, their experience as administrators, the type of college degree they had earned, the area in which their degrees were earned, or the amount of special education coursework they had taken. The only significant difference was found in principals who had between 3 and 5 years of experience. These principals had a better understanding of special education law than did principals who had at least 16 years of experience.

The mean score for principals with regard to their knowledge of procedural safeguards was 73% (Hirth & Valesky, 1989-90). Principals reported a lack of understanding in both parental notification and the expulsion of students with disabilities. Principals inaccurately
reported on the survey that parental consent is needed to conduct re-evaluations or change the student’s least restrictive environment. With regard to expulsion, principals reported students with disabilities were entitled to the continued provision of educational services.

The overall average score for principals’ knowledge of educational services was 71% (Hirth & Valesky, 1989-90). Data indicated that principals did not understand the differences between the terms mainstreaming and least restrictive environment. Principals reported that they did not understand the United States Supreme Court’s decision in *Board of Education v. Rowley*. The decision required that school districts ensure that each student with a disability receive an appropriate and individualized education that the student can benefit from educationally, and the school district is not responsible for ensuring that each student with a disability meets his or her maximum intellectual capacity.

Hirth and Valesky (1989-1990) concluded that principals did not have a comprehensive understanding of special education law extensive enough to guarantee mistakes are not made in the areas of procedural safeguards and educational services. Principals need additional training in special education law. Each state or school district needs to identify knowledge deficiencies in special education law. Training should address those identified needs. State department of education administrative certification officials should examine university certification requirements to ensure that coursework includes a class in special education law. In addition, education law coursework should include instruction in procedural safeguards. Principals should participate on committees created to address issues in special education.

The knowledge principals bring with them as well as their attitudes can vary. Cline (1981) conducted a study to examine the knowledge base of principals and their attitudes toward students with disabilities. Participants in this study were kindergarten through 12th grade
principals from a large, Southeastern American school district. Participants were surveyed with the *Rucker-Gable Educational Programming Scale* (Rucker & Gable, 1974). The development of the survey was not explicitly stated. The survey was normed by 35 experts. The reliability of the instrument was not stated. A *t* test was used to analyze data.

Results indicated a significant difference between elementary and high school principals’ attitudes. Principals with more than 10 years of experience had less of a knowledge base in special education than their peers who had fewer than 10 years of experience.

Cline (1981) concluded that whether or not a special education program existed within a school did not affect the attitudes or knowledge of principals with regard to special education. However, principals possess an inadequate amount of knowledge in special education.

Principals lack a sufficient amount of knowledge in special education law (Hirth & Valesky, 1989-1990). The knowledge and skills necessary for principals to oversee special education programs at the school level have been examined in several studies (Brotherson et al., 2001; Cline, 1981; Foley & Lewis, 1999; Harlin-Fischer, 1998; Wigle & Wilcox, 1999). None of these studies were conducted within schools in Alabama. After the areas in special education in which principals are deficient have been identified within each state, additional training should address these deficiencies (Hirth & Valesky). Taken together, the studies in this section indicate that additional research is needed to identify the knowledge and skills that principals, who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education, possess as well as the knowledge and skills those principals report to be the most important to the administration of school level special education programs.
Summary

Coursework in special education is important (Volpe, 2006). Administrative preparatory programs vary in the special education content and length of time future administrators spend on special education during their preparation. Special education coursework provides a foundation in special education for future administrators who will oversee special education programs at the school level. Only recently with the passage of the NCLB Act of 2001 has the school level supervision of special education programming become viewed as an essential component of effective leadership.

The importance of having principals who are effective in overseeing special education programs has increased since the passage of the NCLB Act of 2001. Because of the evolving role of principals and their increased involvement in special education services, preservice preparation in special education has become more important. Moreover, principals need to continue to develop their special education knowledge throughout their careers (Balt, 2000). According to Wigle and Wilcox (1999), principals do not possess the skills necessary to effectively oversee special education programs due to inadequate preparation (Hirth & Valesky, 1990; Keeler, 2002; Nelson, 2002; Stevenson, 2002; Volpe, 2006).

Principals spend a portion of their time each week on special education related topics. In fact, 72% percent of administrators spend more than 10 hours a week on special education issues (Bravenec, 1998). Because of the amount of time principals spend on special education issues, administrators must have a knowledge base in special education to effectively oversee this responsibility (Bradley, 1999; Bravenec; Stile et al., 1986). Training in this area is important. Guided experiences in a special education leadership role are also necessary (Bravenec; Volpe, 2006).
Principals’ attitudes toward special education can impact school level special education programs. Educators’ attitudes toward special education are impacted by their knowledge of special education and previous experiences (Praisner, 2003; Villa et al., 1996). However, practicing principals’ attitudes have to be open to change for additional training to be effective. Research has indicated that elementary principals are open to change if students will benefit (Praisner). Research has not addressed whether middle school and high school principals are open to change if students will benefit.

Current research on the roles principals play with regard to school level special education services has been conducted with a variety of participants. Research on the roles and expectations of principals with regard to special education has focused on a mixture of elementary, middle, and high school principal participants (Balt, 2000; Bays & Crockett, 2007; Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006; Heckert, 2009; McGrew, 2008; O’Brien, 1998; Quigney, 1996). Wigle and Wilcox (1999) examined the importance of administrative skills with regard to special education programs, and comparisons were made between principals’, DOSEs’, and special education teachers’ responses.

Special education leadership theory for school level leadership is still in its infancy. Research is needed to address the importance of high quality special education administrative leadership (Bays & Crockett, 2007) and should include observation as a methodology in order to develop a more in-depth knowledge base on the topic (Heckert, 2009). Researchers have examined the knowledge and skills necessary for principals to effectively oversee special education programs at the school level in several studies, but the results vary (Brotherson et al., 2001; Cline, 1981; Foley & Lewis, 1999; Harlin-Fischer, 1998; Heckert; Wigle & Wilcox, 1999); only one study was conducted recently. Administrative programs are not adequately
preparing administrators to take roles as leaders of the special education programs they oversee. Principals’ areas of deficiency need to be identified. The results of a study by Hirth and Valesky (1989-1990) indicated that principals lack a sufficient amount of knowledge in special education law. Hirth and Valesky suggested identifying these deficiencies within the principal population of each state. Then, additional training should address these deficiencies (Hirth & Valesky).

Additional training that specifically targets special education is needed for administrators. By developing a knowledge base of key knowledge and skills, school level administrators will be enabled to improve upon their current knowledge base and skill levels. Because ongoing professional development on special education topics is necessary for administrators to be effective (Bravenec, 1998), acting principals receiving professional development in special education skills and competencies in which they are deficient will be beneficial to them.

Principals play important roles within their schools. Principals need to understand the roles they play with the special education programs they oversee (Quigney, 1996). These roles need to be further defined (White 1993). Additional research is needed that focuses on the differences between elementary school principals, who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education, and principals, who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education, with regard to how each genre of principal supervises and leads the special education programs at their schools.

Study Rationale

Because the NCLB Act (2001) holds principals accountable for students’ academic progress (Lashley & Boscardin, 2003), a major focal point for principals has become the academic improvement of students with disabilities (Heckert, 2009). To be successful,
students with disabilities require support from principals who are knowledgeable in special education (Boscardin, 2004). In order to assist students with disabilities in making academic progress toward the mandates of NCLB, principals must develop and incorporate the knowledge base and skills customarily used only by DOSEs (Boscardin, 2007) as well as lead school personnel in the implementation of effective practices in improving learning outcomes (Boscardin, 2005).

Research on special education leadership is still in its infancy. Researchers have known since the Whitworth and Hatley (1979) study that a need exists for leaders of special education programs to possess a specialized knowledge base in order to be effective. Few authors or researchers have examined special education leadership by principals (Bays, 2004). A need exists to determine the competencies necessary for principals to possess in order to be effective leaders of school level special education programs (Bays & Crockett, 2007).

Research indicates that there is a need to provide professional development to school level administrators that addresses the knowledge necessary to effectively oversee special education services (Hirth & Valesky, 1989-1990; Stevenson, 2002). However, this cannot be accomplished until the specific knowledge and skills have been identified. Because additional research is needed to address the importance of high quality special education administrative leadership (Bays & Crockett, 2007), the purpose of this study is to fill a void in the research where no studies were found (Balt, 2000; Bays & Crockett; Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006; McGrew, 2008; O’Brien, 1998; Quigney, 1996) that conducted an in-depth examination of the similarities between elementary principals, who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education, and the differences between how this group of principals manage the special education programs and
how principals, who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education, manage the special education programs.

Learning how effective principals oversee and support special education programs needs to be addressed as an issue, but limited research exists that addresses this issue. Of the studies located (Bays & Crockett, 2007; Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006; Heckert, 2009; Praisner, 2003), researchers investigated how special education programs are supervised at the school level as well as principals’ attitudes toward special education. All four studies included elementary school principals as participants. Whereas researchers in two studies used surveys to collect data (Cruzeiro & Morgan; Praisner), researchers in two studies (Bays & Crockett; Heckert) used qualitative procedures to collect data and qualitative methodologies for analyses.

Qualitative methodology has been used in the field of special education and is a valuable source of descriptive information (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005). A multitude of methodologies are required within special education because of the complexities within this field of study (Odom et al., 2005). By utilizing multiple research methodologies, as a field, special education researchers have been able to identify effective practices. However, no studies were found that used a mixed-methods approach in examining how principals manage the special education program in its entirety. Studies on special education leadership have focused on segments of special education leadership instead of a holistic examination of special education leadership, thus far. The methods used in these studies (Balt, 2000; Bays & Crockett; Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006; McGrew, 2008; O’Brien, 1998; Quigney, 1996) did not allow for a rich, in-depth examination in the similarities and differences between principals. Although Bays and Crockett conducted a study similar to this one, these researchers chose to use grounded theory. Grounded theory focuses on processes and results in a theory grounded in the data. In this
study, the researcher will use the case study approach and focus on a thick, rich description (Geertz, 1973) of the individual cases in order to develop a deeper understanding of the cases.

The role principals’ play in supporting the special education program needs to be examined (Foley & Lewis, 1999). It is important to define the roles and responsibilities of principals with regard to special education services (Swanson, 1990) based on the knowledge base and skill set necessary to effectively oversee special education programs at the school level. In this study, the researcher will define the roles that principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education play at the elementary level. This new knowledge base will help principals to better understand and play the role of an effective supervisor and supporter of school level special education programs. The more special education knowledge principals possess the more likely the special education programs at their schools will be successful (Wigle & Wilcox, 1999). Practicing and preservice principals need to be trained in the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully oversee school level special education programs (Goor & Schwenn, 1997). An improved knowledge base will help principals to lead their special education programs (Harlin-Fischer, 1998).

Additional research is needed that focuses on the knowledge and skills needed to oversee special education programs at the school level but differs from the skills needed by principals to carry out the day-to-day operations of the school not related to special education (Rude & Sasso, 1988). There is a need to know what the similarities are between effective school level special education leaders as well as what makes them different from their peers. Few studies (Cline, 1981; Harlin-Fischer, 1998; Nelson, 2002) have examined the knowledge and skill needed to oversee special education services at the school level, but no studies were found that indicate how principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education are involved in the
special education program. There continues to be a lack of research that focuses on what principals who are effective, knowledgeable, or skilled do at the school level. Identifying an effective principal is difficult at best and impossible at worst. Identifying principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education is possible. According to Kilbourn (2006), adding to a growing body of research is a valid reason to conduct a study. This study is necessary in order to provide additional research to a growing body of research on the topic of special education leadership at the elementary school level.
CHAPTER III
METHODS
Overview of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the different knowledge and skills principals, who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education, reported as necessary to their positions as compared to their peers, who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education. In addition, the different knowledge and skills principals, who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education, possessed as compared to their peers, who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education. In this study, the researcher defined the roles that principals, who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education, played with regard to the special education programs at their schools that differ from the roles their peers, who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education, played. How principals, who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education, led and supported their special education programs was examined as well. These questions were examined through what Van Manen (1990) referred to as the *lived experiences* of participants.

As interpretive symbolic interactionists believe, a pre-established systematic approach to scientific inquiry does not exist (Blumer, 1969). A profession of this nature allows for the methodological development of each study to take place independent of preconceived notions as to what constitutes scientific research with regard to the methods used. For this study a
sequential mixed-methods, multiple-case study design was used. Yin (2009) stated that using a case study protocol will increase the reliability of the study. Therefore, a case study protocol was developed for this study (see Appendix B). The sequential mixed-methods, multiple-case study design used in this study consisted of a two phase process. Both phases of this study comprised a holistic, multiple-case design that utilized replication logic between case studies. A case study is a holistic approach to learning about a phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). Case study research is a systematic process (Patton, 2002). Using replication logic in a multi-case study design increases the external validity of this study (Yin). According to Yin, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative statistics in case study research “is a strong analytic strategy” (p. 132) that “can yield appreciable benefits” (p. 132). Phase 1 was quantitative and utilized descriptive statistics (see Figure 2). Qualitative data were collected as part of the case study phase, Phase 2. Phase 2 used both within-case and cross-case analyses (see Figure 3). Phases 1 and 2 used a variety of data collection procedures that were linked to each of the five research questions (see Figure 4). Permission was obtained from the University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix C) before data were collected. Data collected from each case study participant in Phase 2 was documented on the researcher developed Data Collection Checklist (see Appendix D) to ensure that all data were collected from each participant in this phase.
Figure 2. Analysis of data collected from the KSSE Survey between principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education and principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education through the use of descriptive statistics in Phase 1.
Figure 3. Analysis of data collected in Phase 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>KSSE Survey Scale 1 (Necessary)</th>
<th>KSSE Survey Scale 2 (Possesses)</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Calendar of Appointments</th>
<th>Observation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education administer the special education programs at their schools?</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. How do knowledge bases and skills reported as necessary for elementary principals to possess differ between elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education and elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education as measured by the Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey (Harlin-Fischer, 1998)? (see Appendix A)</td>
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<td>2. How do knowledge bases and skills reported as being possessed by elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education differ from the knowledge bases and skills reported as being possessed by elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education as measured by the Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey (Harlin-Fischer, 1998)? (see Appendix A)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>3. How do the roles played by elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education differ from the roles played by elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education?</td>
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<td>4. How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education support special education programs differently than principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education?</td>
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<td>5. How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education oversee their programs differently than elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education?</td>
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*Figure 4. Research questions aligned with data collection instrumentation.*
Participant Selection Procedures

In case study research, only the most important criteria for selecting participants must be established (Merriam, 1998). Case study participants can be selected for a specific purpose (Creswell, 1998; Merriam; Yin, 2009). In qualitative research, participants should be selected based on their potential for providing meaningful content that can best answer the researcher’s questions (Creswell, 2009). Determining how many cases to study is not simple (Creswell, 1998). According to Creswell, most case studies include “no more than four cases” (p. 63) because the more cases studied decreases the depth with which individual cases within the study are analyzed. Conversely, Stake (2006) suggests using at least four cases or the researcher risks limiting the potential benefits of using a multiple-case study design.

All case study participants consisted of public school employees in the state of Alabama during the 2010-2011 fiscal school year. In an e-mail, a list of current principals, principals’ contact information, the schools they oversee, and the grade levels of each school was requested from the Alabama State Department of Education (ASDE). The ASDE responded with a list of the 1,528 public schools in Alabama and the requested information pertaining to the principals of those schools. The list provided by the ASDE was checked against the Alabama Education Directory for accuracy (Alabama Department of Education, 2010-2011). For the purpose of this study, elementary principal was defined as the school level administrator overseeing school age children from kindergarten through Grade five. Meeting the criteria for participation, as outlined in this section, were 194 elementary school principals from 39 school districts in Alabama.

A flowchart was used to outline the participant selection process (see Figure 5). Consent was requested from the appropriate district personnel (see Appendix E) of each school district and, when necessary, approved by the board of education for that school district. District
personnel from 15 school districts consented to the initial request to allow principals within their school systems to participate in Phase 1 of the study. Follow-up attempts were made within 2 weeks to non-responding district personnel by e-mail, mail, phone, or a combination of all three. Follow-up attempts yielded consents from an additional four school systems. Out of a possible 39 school systems, 19 were included in this study. This represented 49% of school systems with principals who were eligible for participation in this study.

A list of potential case study participants was generated by surveying all 135 elementary school principals with the principal version of the Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey (KSSE Survey) (see Appendix A), which was developed by Harlin-Fischer (1998) and modified by the researcher by adding a second scale. Principals were provided with their rights as a participant before they began the survey (see Appendix F). Of the 135 principals who were sent surveys, 11 principals responded to the first and second rounds of surveys distributed electronically. Two additional follow-ups via the United States Postal Service in conjunction with follow-up e-mails, phone calls, and onsite visits, yielded an additional 53 responses for a total of 64 respondents. However, 3 respondents did not answer every question, and their surveys were excluded. A total of 61 respondents from the original 135 elementary school principals surveyed were used to identify candidates for Phase 2. This represents a 45% response rate. Gay and Airasian (2003) stated that a sample size of 20% is considered appropriate for the population size of studies using descriptive statistics.
Employees of the Alabama State Department of Education nominated elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled. Permission was requested from appropriate district personnel in each of the 194 elementary school principal’s (k-5) school districts in Alabama for Phase 1.

The researcher followed-up with an e-mail, letter, phone call, or a combination of all three within two weeks. (additional follow-up, as needed)

Elementary principals from participating school systems were sent KSSE Surveys electronically. (Consent to participate was established when surveys were filled out and submitted.)

Mean score of all respondents was established for the second scale of the KSSE Survey.

1. Top scores on the KSSE Survey were used in conjunction with nominations from the Alabama State Department of Education to identify participants who are knowledgeable and skilled.
2. Principals whose scores were closest to the established mean score were identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled.

After four cases for Phase 2 were selected, permissions were requested from appropriate district personnel in each of the participant’s school district.

Permission was requested from each principal for their participation in Phase 2.

The researcher followed-up with an e-mail, letter, phone call, or a combination of all three within two weeks. (additional follow-up, as needed)

The researcher followed-up with an e-mail, letter, phone call, or a combination of all three within two weeks. (additional follow-up, as needed)

Faculty members of each participant were asked to complete the teacher version of the KSSE Survey. Consent to participate was established when surveys were filled out and returned. Faculty responses validated or refuted principals’ responses. Regardless of the outcome, identified principals remained as participants.

Figure 5. Selection process and consents.
A two-part selection process was used to identify two sets of participants for Phase 2 of this study. After receiving survey data from responding principals, the data they provided were input into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software version 15.0. The mean, a measure of central tendency, was calculated for all data from the second scale of the principal version of the *KSSE Survey*. The first part of the selection process for Phase 2 was to identify principals with the highest mean scores on the second scale of the principal version of the *KSSE Survey*. In addition, nominations were sought through phone conversations and e-mails from ASDE personnel for principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education. A nomination from ASDE personnel did not automatically qualify a principal as being knowledgeable or skilled. Conversely, not being nominated by ASDE personnel did not exclude a principal from being identified as being knowledgeable and skilled. Accessibility is an issue in case study research and should be a factor in selecting participants (Creswell, 1998). As outlined by Creswell (2009), participants were selected based on their potential to provide the researcher with the most meaningful data in Phase 2 of data collection to help the researcher answer his research questions.

Next, consent (see Appendix G) from the appropriate district personnel was requested to include one principal from within each school district to participate in this study. A follow-up attempt was made by mail, e-mail, phone, or a combination of all three within 2 weeks. Additional follow-ups were made, as needed. Once permission was received from the appropriate district personnel, permission (see Appendix H) was requested for participation from principals in whom the appropriate district personnel have granted permission for Phase 2 of the study to take place within their school districts.
“An extensive screening procedure” (Yin, 2009, p. 91) should be avoided when choosing a case. Yin suggests questioning individuals who are knowledgeable of the participant or collecting a small amount of documentation on the participant. For this study, the faculties of all four candidates for participation in Phase 2 of this study were asked to validate principals’ responses.

The faculties of responding principals with the two highest means were asked to validate their principals’ responses. The faculties of these two principals were asked to fill out surveys using a modified teacher version of the KSSE Survey (see Appendix I). Teachers were informed of their rights as participants prior to participating in the study (see Appendix J). By completing and submitting the survey, teachers consented to allow the researcher to use their surveys to validate or nullify the self-reported knowledge and skill, with regard to special education, of their supervising principal. The mean responses from the second scale of the teacher version of the KSSE Survey, which measures whether or not faculty members think their principal possesses knowledge and skill in special education, from each faculty were compared to their principal’s responses to validate principals’ responses. Regardless of the results, previously identified principals remained as study participants.

The case study method is a complex research methodology (Yin, 2009). Because of the complexities of case study research, a variety of problems will occur throughout the research process. The parameters for participation in this study excluded schools with pre-kindergarten classes. A list of schools and the grade levels served by each school was received from the Alabama State Department of Education indicating that the site for Case A consisted of a student population within the parameters of this study. However, while collecting data, it was determined that pre-kindergarten classes were present within the school setting for Case A. The researcher
found that pre-kindergarten classes contained students who qualify to receive special education services. Because cases can be selected for their unique features (Yin), the researcher decided to finish data collection and keep the principal for Case A as a participant. In doing so, this adds an additional feature to this study.

A second part of the selection process identified principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education. The second part of the selection process was used to identify participants for Phase 2 of the study and utilized data that were input into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software version 15.0. These data were used to select two principals whose self-reported knowledge and skills in special education ranked them as being marginal in these two areas. The mean score for all data from the second scale of the principal version of the *KSSE Survey* was tabulated to be 3.23. Initial and follow-up attempts were made to increase study participation. Principals were given 8 weeks to return surveys before a mean score was tabulated. Additional surveys were returned after the mean score was tabulated. Although those surveys were not used to determine which principal was closest to the mean, those surveys were used to determine the reliability coefficient for each scale. Principals closest to the mean score of all participants were asked to participate in the qualitative data collection phase, Phase 2, of this study. Each case was examined for his or her potential to provide meaningful data before obtaining permissions. Permission (see Appendix G) from the appropriate district personnel was requested to include one principal from within each school district to participate in this study. A follow-up attempt was made by mail, e-mail, phone, or a combination of all three within 2 weeks. Additional follow-ups were made, as needed.

Once permission was received from the appropriate district personnel, permission (see Appendix H) was requested from principals in whom the appropriate district personnel had
granted permission for Phase 2 of the study to take place within their school districts. The faculties of responding principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education were asked to validate principals’ responses. The faculties of these two principals were asked to fill out surveys using a modified teacher version of the KSSE Survey (see Appendix I). Teachers were informed of their rights as participants prior to participating in the study (see Appendix J). By completing and submitting the survey, teachers consented to allow the researcher to use their surveys to validate or nullify the self-reported knowledge and skill of the principal with regard to special education. The mean responses from the second scale of the teacher version of the KSSE Survey, which measures the extent to which faculty members think their principal possesses knowledge and skill in special education, from each faculty were compared to their principal’s responses to validate principals’ responses. Regardless of the results, previously identified principals remained as study participants.

Rival explanations should be examined in case study research (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2009). Two arguments could have been made against using principals’ faculties to validate the knowledge and skills principals self-reported as possessing during the two-part selection process used to identify case study participants. First, faculty members might have been fearful of retaliation toward them if they had not participated. Second, faculty members might have been fearful that their principals might have retaliated against them if they had not rated their principal favorably. Both of these issues were addressed by the researcher when teachers were explained their rights as research participants (see Appendix J). Teacher participation in the surveys was voluntary, and their survey data were not shared with the principal.
Phase 1: Quantitative

**Purpose**

Phase 1 of this study served four purposes. The first purpose was to identify four case study participants. Two elementary school principals (i.e., Principal A and Principal B), who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education, and two elementary principals (i.e., Principal C and Principal D), who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education, were identified. The second purpose of Phase 1 was to identify the differences between the knowledge and skills that principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education reported as necessary to their position when compared to principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education. The third purpose of Phase 1 was similar to the second purpose with the exception that the focus was on the differences between the knowledge and skills each principal reported as possessing. The fourth purpose of Phase 1 was to collect quantitative data that can be used in the analysis within and across case studies to triangulate the findings of this study.

**Instrumentation and Measurements**

The principal, general education teacher, and special education teacher versions of the *Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey (KSSE)* were developed by Harlin-Fischer (1998) to measure the importance of special education knowledge bases and skill sets to elementary principals. The purpose for creating the *KSSE Survey* was to determine which competencies are important for principals overseeing school level special education programs. The *KSSE Survey* consists of 27 knowledge and 8 skill statements. The 35 items on the *KSSE Survey* were rated between 1 and 4 by participants. The meaning of the scores are 1 (*not at all*...
necessary), 2 (somewhat necessary), 3 (necessary), and 4 (extremely necessary). The six areas into which test items were categorized are instruction and management, ethics, assessment, theoretical and philosophical issues, legal issues, and skills.

The content validity for all three versions of the KSSE Survey was determined by conducting a review of literature. The competencies identified by the review of literature were compared with the Common Core of Knowledge and Skills standards created by the Council for Exceptional Children (1997). The competencies on the KSSE Survey were reviewed by principals, special education teachers, and general education teachers. Three professionals from each position as well as two professors, who were well versed in research, reviewed the validity of these questions and provided feedback to improve the quality of survey items.

Dr. Gayle Fischer granted permission (see Appendix K) to use and modify the KSSE Survey. The instrument was modified by adding a second scale to the 35-item survey. The second scale measures the self-reported knowledge level of participants on the first 27 survey items. Participants indicated if they are a 1 (not at all knowledgeable), 2 (somewhat knowledgeable), 3 (knowledgeable), or 4 (extremely knowledgeable). On survey items 28 through 35, participants indicated if they are a 1 (not at all skilled), 2 (somewhat skilled), 3 (skilled), or 4 (extremely skilled).

Data were collected and input into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software version 15.0. Reliability statistics were calculated on both scales of the modified principal version of the KSSE Survey. A Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .70 or higher is needed in order for a survey to be reliable for research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). A Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .956 was achieved for the first scale. For the second scale, a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .959 was achieved.
On the modified teacher version of the *KSSE Survey*, the general education teacher and special education teacher versions were combined. Essentially, only two changes were made. The instrument no longer segregates general education and special education teachers, as this version is now referred to as the teacher version, and the same second scale that was added to the principal version was added to the teacher version. The teacher version of the *KSSE Survey* is scored by teacher participants in the exact way as the principal version of the *KSSE Survey*, except teachers are reporting their perception as to their supervising principal’s knowledge base and skill set in special education.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the differences between the knowledge and skills reported to be necessary for and possessed by elementary principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education (i.e., Principal A and Principal B) when compared to elementary principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education (i.e., Principal C and Principal D). These data were used to describe the differences between the mean score for Principals A and B and the mean score for Principals C and D in relation to the necessity and possession of knowledge and skills in special education as self-reported on the *KSSE Survey*.

**Data Analyses**

Phase 1 of this study used descriptive statistics. Gay and Airasian (2003) stated that a sample size of 20% is considered appropriate for the population size of studies using descriptive statistics, and Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) noted that a minimum sample size of 100 is necessary for studies using descriptive statistics. However, in this study, descriptive statistics are used to add to the depth and richness of data and not as a means of generalizing descriptive data to other
members of the population. Therefore, although this study meets the criteria established by Gay and Airasian, this study does not have to meet the sample size standards of Fraenkel and Wallen.

Data were collected from all four case study participants on each of the two scales on the KSSE Survey. Demographic data were collected as part of the survey. The survey instrument encompasses two separate scales. The first scale measures how necessary case study participants reported each special education knowledge statement and skill set to be to their positions. The second scale measures how knowledgeable and skilled participants reported themselves to be with regard to special education. Mean scores for the two principals (i.e., Principal A and Principal B) who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education were calculated. Next, the mean scores for the two principals (i.e., Principal C and Principal D) who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education were calculated. A means comparison was made between these two sets of data.

On the first scale, principals responded to the extent each knowledge statement and skill is necessary to their positions. Both knowledge and skill statements were scored as a 1 (not at all necessary), 2 (somewhat necessary), 3 (necessary), or 4 (extremely necessary). On the second scale, principals responded on items 1 through 27 to the level of knowledge they possess by indicating if they are a 1 (not at all knowledgeable), 2 (somewhat knowledgeable), 3 (knowledgeable), or 4 (extremely knowledgeable), and principals responded on items 28 through 35 to the level of skill they possess with a score of a 1 (not at all skilled), 2 (somewhat skilled), 3 (skilled), or 4 (extremely skilled). During the participant selection validation stage, teachers responded to both scales with regard to how necessary each knowledge and skill set is to their principal’s position and whether or not they think their principal possesses each knowledge and skill set.
A data management plan (see Appendix L) was used to align research questions with the appropriate analysis for each data set in this phase. Principals A and B formed one group, and principals C and D formed a second group for data analysis (see Figure 4). Data collected from each scale of the KSSE Survey were averaged together within each of these groups. The first research question was analyzed by comparing the mean scores of Cases A and B with the mean scores of Cases C and D on the first scale of the KSSE Survey. The second research question was analyzed by comparing the mean scores of Cases A and B with the mean scores of Cases C and D on the second scale of the KSSE Survey.

Phase 2: Case Study

Purpose

The purpose of the case study phase, Phase 2, was to develop a deeper understanding of how elementary school principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education administer the special education programs at their schools. Sub-questions address principals’ leadership of the special education programs at their school with regard to the roles principals play, how they support, and how they oversee special education programs.

Data Collection

Case study research requires an extensive amount of data to be collected from multiple sources (Creswell, 1998). The type of data that will be collected should be established (Creswell, 2009). There are six categorical sources from which case study data can be collected (Yin, 2009). Four of those six categories of sources are used in this study: (a) archival records, (b) interviews, (c) documentation, and (d) direct observations. Yin suggests utilizing three strategies when
collecting data. The three strategies are using more than one data source to triangulate data, developing a case study database, and keeping a chain of the evidence collected. These strategies will increase the construct validity of the case study (Creswell; Yin).

Data collected were carefully chosen in order to provide the greatest amount of triangulation with other sources of evidence (see Figure 4). A case study database was developed that includes handwritten notes, interviews, observations, pictures, principals’ calendars of appointments, and principals’ diaries. Evidence was systematically identified and labeled as to when, where, and from whom it was collected as replicated from the chain of evidence used in the Bays and Crockett (2007) study. In Bays and Crockett’s study, data were dated as to when they were collected and identified as to where they were collected. The usefulness of keeping a chain of evidence is in reducing bias and increasing accuracy (Patton, 2002). Unlike the Bays and Crockett study, a Data Collection Checklist (see Appendix D) to aid in the creation of a chain of evidence was used in this study.

An important aspect of case study research is determining which data to collect. In order to determine which data should be included in this study, all possible data sources as described by researchers (Creswell, 1998, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Gay & Airasian, 2003; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009) were considered. All possible data were listed, and all possible connections linking each datum to the research questions of the study were made (see Figure 4). Data that could not be linked to the research questions were discarded. Data that were linked to the research questions were analyzed. A data collection timeline for Phase 2 can be seen in Figure 6.
Figure 6. Data collection timeline for each case in Phases 1 and 2.

Archival records were collected in Phase 1 of this study. Data were collected unobtrusively and used for triangulation when they were collected from archival records (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Archival records tend to be precise, which is one advantage to
using them (Yin, 2009). Demographic and survey data collected as part of Phase 1 were organized as archival records during Phase 2.

On day one of Phase 2, a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was conducted. A semi-structured interview utilizes both formal, highly structured interview questions and informal, unstructured interview questions (Merriam, 1998). The interview is conducted to learn from the perspective of the interviewee (Patton, 2002) and is a powerful tool for examining the interviewee’s perspective (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The interview as a data collection instrument is both targeted and insightful, which are two advantages of utilizing the interview as a data collection instrument (Yin, 2009). Although a systematic approach to the interview process is not always warranted, interviews conducted at multiple sites do require some level of systematization (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Interview questions allow participants to answer questions with in-depth responses that inform the audience (Weiss, 1994).

In order to provide content validity for interview protocol and questions, an interview protocol (see Appendix M) was developed based on a review of the literature and validated by five elementary principals and one assistant elementary principal who reviewed the interview questions and provided feedback to the researcher. Reviewing principals oversaw grade levels kindergarten through 4 (2), kindergarten through 5 (2), and kindergarten through 6 (1). The assistant principal, who reviewed the content validity of the interview protocol, oversaw grade levels kindergarten through 6. The interview protocol was revised, as needed, based upon the feedback received from the five principals and one assistant principal.

Principals were informed of their rights as participants prior to being interviewed (see Appendix H). The principals involved in each of the four case studies were interviewed. With the permission of each participant, interviews were recorded and transcribed. Interview data
collected from principals were triangulated with archival records, documents, and field notes to increase the validity of the results (Yin, 2009) and develop themes. A time lapse occurred between the initial and second site visits of each site and varied between sites. With the exception of Case A, when a 4-week time lapse occurred between the second and third site visits, a time lapse did not occur between the second and third site visits.

On day two of Phase 2, documents were collected and include two types of documents from each site. Similarities exist between data collected through documentation and archival records in that they are unobtrusive forms of data collection and can be used for triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Advantages to using documentation include data stability, unobtrusive documentation, exactness, and the breadth of its scope (Yin, 2009). The first type of document each principal was provided with from the researcher was a calendar for the 2010-2011 school year that includes the principal’s professional schedules and appointments. The second type of document each principal was provided with was a journal. Each principal was provided a journal and asked to keep it for 2 weeks based on the guidelines for journal entries (see Appendix N). The focus of the journal was special education and what the principal does to supervise and support the special education program. Although all four cases were provided with journals and an envelope with paid postage and a return address, none of the participants chose to complete a journal.

Field notes were used to record data during direct observation. Direct observation occurred during the second and third site visits. Although a time lapse occurred between the initial and the second site visits, no time lapse between the second and third site visits occurred except for Case A. A time lapse between site visits one and two was necessary to allow the researcher ample time to increase the face validity and focus of the observation protocol by
aligning the observation protocol with interview data (see Figure 6). Additional time was not needed between the second and third site visits because the observational protocol was already validated. At that time, 2 days of direct observation occurred on sequential days. Direct observation was used to identify complex interactions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), develop themes, and to triangulate results with other data. Two advantages of direct observation are that the events take place in real time and that the observation occurs within the context of the environment (Yin, 2009). The researcher documented the physical setting, participants involved in each setting, the activities of participants as well as their interactions, conversations, subtle factors, and the researcher’s own behavior (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998). He did this by taking pictures with a digital camera, writing handwritten notes in a log, and recording voice notes with a digital recorder. Precise records were kept in order to make analysis easier at a later time (Merriam). Precise records were kept through the use of an observation protocol (see Appendix O) (Creswell; Yin). Direct observation occurred during a 2-day period at each of the four sites.

A researcher utilizing the case study research method must be aware of the weaknesses of each type of data source used. Yin (2009) documented the following weaknesses of each data collection source. Archival records and documentation both have weaknesses in retrievability, biased selectivity, reporting bias, and access. Archival records have an additional weakness in that privacy issues might prevent access. Weaknesses exist in the validity of interview data due to potential researcher and respondent bias, the risk of reporting data inaccurately, and reflexivity. Observation data are weak due to reflexivity, cost, and excessive time requirements. Confidentiality was held to be of the highest importance by the principal investigator. With the exception of interview data, which was viewed by a research assistant for interrater reliability, no
data collected were viewed by anyone other than the lead investigator unless participants had
been coded as Principal A, Principal B, Principal C, or Principal D, or a reference was made that
does not indicate a specific participant.

The research assistant, used for this study, has an academic background grounded in
research. The qualifications of the research assistant are as follows. The research assistant earned
a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from The University of Alabama. Her dissertation
examined teachers’ perceptions about the Alabama Math and Science Initiative and utilized a
mixed-methods design. Also, she has taught BER 500, Introduction to Education Research, as an
adjunct faculty member at The University of Alabama Gadsden Center.

Data Analyses

Multiple ways exist to analyze data when conducting case study research (Merriam,
1998; Yin, 2009), but a technique that “can be applied mechanically, following any simple
cookbook procedure” (Yin, p. 162) does not exist. Although Phase 2 is referred to as the case
study phase, Phase 1 data from each of the four participants selected for this study were analyzed
as part of the case study process. Within the context of qualitative research, the process of data
analysis does not begin after data collection is complete (Merriam). According to Merriam, data
analysis begins at the onset of data collection, continues throughout the process of data
collection, and intensifies at the conclusion of data collection. Although case study research has
been conducted with a single analysis technique, the use of multiple measures of analyses
increases the reliability of the findings.

Within each individual case study, interview data were transcribed, coded, categorized,
and emerging themes identified. A spiral approach to data analysis was used in which analysis
occurs through visualization; descriptions, classifications, and interpretations; reading and memoing; and data mining of the account (Creswell, 2007). Interview, archival records, documents, and field notes data were transcribed by the researcher. These and survey data were reviewed multiple times to identify codes. Codes were placed into categories. Emerging themes were derived from these categories. A matrix was developed for each case to demonstrate how emerging themes identified in interview data are triangulated with archival, documentation, and direct observation data (see Appendices R, S, T, & U).

Interview data were coded, categorized, and emerging themes identified by the principal researcher and a research assistant independent of the principal researcher. The research assistant was trained to follow the exact procedures the principal researcher followed to identify emerging themes. She was trained to first code, then categorize, and then identify emerging themes in the data sets. In order to establish interrater reliability, the emerging themes identified by the principal researcher were compared with the emerging themes of the research assistant. Of the 19 emergent themes identified by the research assistant, 14 (74%) were similar to the themes or subthemes identified by the principal researcher.

When using multiple-cases, the use of a cross-case analysis is appropriate (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 2009). After each of the four cases was analyzed through a within-case analysis, a cross-case analysis was conducted to identify emerging themes between Cases A and B and emerging themes between Cases C and D (see Figure 6) (Creswell). Once similarities in emerging themes were identified between principals who are knowledgeable in special education (i.e., Case A and Case B) and principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable in special education (i.e., Case C and Case D), the differences in emerging themes between these two groups of principals were compared (Creswell).
Word tables are a form of pattern matching, which increases the internal validity of case study research (Yin, 2009). Within-case and cross-case analyses from collected data are displayed through the use of word tables (Creswell, 2009; Yin). This enables outside viewers to compare and understand the emerging themes found within each case study independently and between all four case studies collectively.

There are varying levels of analysis with each level being more complex than the previous one (Merriam, 1998). The first level of analysis utilizes descriptive statistics. The second level of analysis identifies emerging themes. The third level of analysis includes the development of a theory. One purpose of this study is to describe the similarities between how principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education administer their programs and the differences between those principals and principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education. A second purpose is to develop a deeper understanding of the roles and practices of these principals in their special education programs. The findings of this study were compared to theoretical propositions (Yin, 2009) found in business leadership theory. Additionally, the findings of this study were compared to Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) transformational leadership theory. This was done to determine whether principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education are more likely to implement the principles of transformational leadership theory in their leadership of the special education program than their peers.

In order to produce reliable and valid results, data collected from interviews, archival records, documents, and field notes taken during direct observation were used to triangulate the emerging themes (Creswell, 2009). Rival explanations were identified and addressed. Identifying
and addressing rival explanations increases the internal validity of case study research (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2009).

Member checking was used to validate the findings of this case study (Creswell, 2009; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Each case study participant (i.e., Cases A, B, C, and D) was provided with the results of the study. Participants checked these results for accuracy and provided feedback as to the validity of the findings.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Overview

The findings of both quantitative and qualitative methods used in this multi-phase, case study are reported in this chapter. Data collected and a within-case analysis from the two cases, Cases A and B, will be reported first. Principals for Cases A and B were identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education based on results from the principal version of the Knowledge and Skill in Special Education Survey (KSSE Survey) (see Appendix A). The mean scores on the second scale of the principal version of the KSSE Survey, as self-reported by 61 elementary school principals in Alabama, were compared. Principals for Cases A and B had the highest mean scores when compared to their peers.

The reporting of data and the within-case analysis from Cases C and D is followed by the reporting of data collected from Cases C and D. Principals for Cases C and D are considered to be of marginal knowledge and skill in special education. Principals for Cases C and D were identified as being marginally knowledgeable and skilled based on results from the second scale of the principal version of the KSSE Survey. Of the 61 elementary school principals in Alabama, who returned a completed survey, the mean score on the second scale of the principal version of the KSSE Survey were closest to the mean score as calculated from the 61 completed surveys. The cross-case analysis between Cases A and B, Cases C and D, and then Cases A and B as compared to the Cases C and D are be reported at the end of this chapter.
Within each individual case study, interview data were transcribed, coded, categorized, and emerging themes identified. A spiral approach to data analysis was used in which analysis occurred through visualization; descriptions, classifications, and interpretations; reading and memoing; and data mining of the account (Creswell, 2007). Interview, surveys, archival records, documents, and field notes data were transcribed by the researcher. Each datum within each data set was reviewed multiple times to identify codes. Codes were placed into categories. Emerging themes were derived from these categories.

The findings of each case will be reported systematically and sequentially. Contextual factors, participant description, and preparation for each case will be described. These descriptions will be followed by quantitative and mixed-methods data analyses.

Quantitative data were collected by mailing each case the principal version of the KSSE Survey. A mean score was tabulated for both of the KSSE Survey scales for Cases A and B. This mean score was compared with the mean score tabulated for both scales for Cases C and D. Then a qualitative analysis between Cases A and B was conducted. The findings of the themes for Cases A and B were compared to the themes for Cases C and D. When reporting data from this point forward, any information that can be used to identify participants or the names of schools within the study is stripped from the data so that confidentiality can be maintained.

Case A

*Contextual Factors*

Demographic data in this section comes from the demographic section of the KSSE Survey that was completed by Principal A. Data used to describe the setting for Case A were
gathered through 2 days of onsite direct observation. A digital camera, digital voice recorder, and pocket-size note memo pad were used to collect and record data.

The setting for Case A is a large urban school building with a dwindling student population. Many of the rooms in the old section of the school are no longer in use. The student population consists of 250 students. The grade levels of students range from kindergarten through fifth grades. Of those students, 23% (57) of the total population, receive special education services. It is important to note that this school houses teaching units for students with autism and mental retardation who would otherwise attend different schools. In addition to the 250 students served in kindergarten through fifth grade, there are 12 students served in a prekindergarten class. Six of these students receive special education services.

The prekindergarten classes at this school should have excluded it from selection in this study. The principal of this school was selected for the initial survey because a list of grade levels served by each school in Alabama received from the Alabama State Department of Education indicated that the site for Case A consisted of a student population within the parameters of this study. Research study parameters state that each participant is to be an elementary school principal in Alabama who supervises students from kindergarten to fifth grade. Principals then were randomly selected based on their survey responses. Prior to going onsite, the researcher had no knowledge of the existence of prekindergarten classes on campus. The researcher found that the prekindergarten class contained students who qualify to receive special education services. Because cases can be selected for their unique features (Yin, 2009), the researcher decided to finish collecting data for Case A and include the principal within this study.
The principal has a midsize office with windows on three of the four walls. On the wall behind the desk, the parking lot and playground can be seen through the windows on the wall leading to the exterior of the building. The front entrance to the school and the inner office can be seen through the other windows. The principal’s desk has stacks of papers, folders, books, and binders messily stacked in uneven piles. A copy of the principal’s personal calendar sits in the middle of her desk. There is a form lying on top with the title Team Meeting/Collaborative Planning. On the fourth wall, a wooden bookshelf takes up most of the wall. The books found there include titles such as *A Principal’s Guide to Special Education*, *Different Like Me*, *Collaboration for Diverse Learners*, *A Guide to Co-Teaching*, and *Proactive Discipline for Reactive Students*. Three-ring binders labeled *Mastering the Maze*, *Alabama Administrative Code*, and *Positive Behavior Supports* can be found on the bookshelf, as well.

On the wall of the principal’s office that leads to the interior wall of the main office hang two Exceptional Child Award plaques for the 2002-2003 school year. One was awarded by the local parent teacher association, and the other was awarded by the Alabama Parent Teacher Association. These were awarded because the school developed a Sensory Room for students with autism. A trophy titled Exceptional Child Award 2005, awarded by the local parent teacher association, sits atop a set of cabinets above the secretary’s desk. This was awarded for the school hosting a luncheon for parents and dignitaries that focused on students with autism. The school hosts this event every year. There is a recruitment flyer for prekindergarten students with disabilities hanging on the window beside the door to the main office. A clipping from a local newspaper hangs on the principal’s office window on the side in the interior of the main office. The clipping highlights Autism Awareness Month and was taken at a local school with the mayor of the city and a student who has autism. There is a bulletin board at the end of the main
hall titled Autism Awareness Month, as well. There is detailed information consisting of information on a fundraiser, information on the effect of autism on people, signs of autism, and statistical rates of autism on this bulletin board about autism.

There is a hall leaving the main office opposite the entrance of the inner office. Moving down this hall, the first door on the right is a conference room with an oval table, six chairs, and a whiteboard. There is a calendar on the door with the dates and times of scheduled IEP meetings. A variety of special education forms are organized into files within this room. The hall continues past the conference room. There is a large calendar used for scheduling school events hanging on the wall on the left. There are data meetings, state testing dates, and other school events scheduled on the calendar. The teachers’ lounge is at the end of the hall. Organized in cubby holes on a counter are Special Education Screening, Behavioral Observation, and Orthopedic and Physical Therapy Referral forms.

Throughout every room in the school, there are a variety of technological resources. Hall and classroom walls are covered with student projects, colorful posters, and bulletin boards. One room is designed for students with disorders that impact emotional and sensory overstimulation. The toys and floor in the room are padded. According to the principal, this room provides students a safe setting to release some of their energy.

**Participant Description**

Demographic data in this section were collected in two ways. First, data were collected from the demographic section of the *KSSE Survey* that was completed by Principal A. Second, interview data were analyzed to increase the depth of information gathered on the principal as well as validate and clarify demographic information.
Principal A is a female, Caucasian American, who “love[s] to read.” She is finishing her 28th year as an educator. She spent her first 9 years in education as a general education teacher. She spent the next 5 years as a teacher of at-risk students. According to the principal, she was drawn to the at-risk program because of the tutoring component. She became an assistant principal in 1997 at a different school. Her tenure there lasted for 1 year before her 1998 appointment as the principal at her current school. She is finishing her 13th year as the principal of this school. She has obtained both a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in elementary education. She has obtained an education specialist degree in administration and an education doctorate degree in leadership.

**Preparation**

Principal A has been prepared to oversee special education services in a variety of ways. In addition to the preparation she received through academic coursework, a large part of her preparation has come from her experiences as an educator. She has received training through professional development provided to her by the school system.

As a teacher of at-risk students, her responsibilities included providing small group instruction, conferencing with teachers at a variety of grade levels, tutoring, disciplining students, working with behavior plans, and being left in charge by the principal when she was out, which Principal A stated led to her interest in administration. She went on to state that she was treated like an assistant principal, who dealt with both academics and discipline. As part of her responsibilities, she collaborated with the counselor to solve discipline problems, served on committees, and kept a tracking log on every student. According to the principal, during her time as a teacher of at-risk students, she focused on the different learning styles of students and used
kits, which she persuaded school district personnel to purchase, to identify the learning style of each student she served. She referred to this information as a great resource for teachers to use. Also, Principal A generated new ideas for dealing with students who exhibited inappropriate behaviors by reading behavioral manuals. Principal A stated that she relies on the experiences and skills developed during her time as a teacher of at-risk students to help her supervise the special education program at her school.

Since becoming a principal, she has continued to increase her knowledge base in special education. She attends training opportunities that relate to special education whenever an opportunity arises. Principal A attends training at conferences on special education, especially special education law. She has experienced various on-the-job training through her involvement in Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings and Local Education Agency (LEA) representative training to serve as the LEA representative during IEP meetings. Principal A summarizes her training and acquisition of knowledge and skills in special education as coming from “having lived it, breathed it, talked about it, read it.”

Quantitative Data Analysis

The principal completed both scales on the KSSE Survey. Scale 1 of the KSSE Survey measures the principal’s perception of the necessity of each survey item as it relates to the role of the elementary school principal. The first 27 items focused on specific knowledge bases, and items 28 through 35 focused on specific skills. Data from scale 1 of the KSSE Survey are reported in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal’s response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Issues in definition and identification procedures for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of typical and exceptional learners</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Basic terminology used in assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ethical concerns related to assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Typical procedures used for screening, prereferral, referral, and classification</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Appropriate application and interpretation of scores</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The relationship between assessment and placement decisions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Methods of monitoring student progress</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Differing learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to these styles</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Basic classroom management theories, methods, and techniques for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Research and best practices for effective management of teaching and learning for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ways in which technology can assist with planning and managing the teaching and learning environment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students’ behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Teacher attitudes and behaviors that positively or negatively influence the student behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Strategies for crisis prevention/intervention</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Strategies for preparing students to live harmoniously and productively in a multiclass, multiethnic, multicultural, and multinational world</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Typical concerns of parents of students with disabilities and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Roles of students, parents, teachers, and other school and community personnel in planning a student’s individualized educational program</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
With the exception of four items, Principal A reports that all knowledge bases and skills are extremely necessary for an elementary school principal. The four items not reported as extremely necessary are reported as necessary for an elementary school principal. This indicates that Principal A thinks knowledge and skill in special education are important.

The teacher version of the KSSE Survey was distributed to the faculty of the principal for Case A during a faculty meeting at the end of the first full-day observation after the interview. The faculty were provided with envelopes addressed to the researcher, as well as postage. The faculty were informed of their rights as participants and assured that their responses would be kept confidential. They were informed that the principal would not have access to surveys. Of 24 faculty members, 9 (38%) returned surveys. Whereas the first 27 survey items focused on the principal’s knowledge of special education, items 28 through 35 focused on the level at which

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<tr>
<td>27. One’s own cultural biases and differences that affect one’s attitude toward students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Articulate a personal philosophy of special education, including its relationship to/with general education</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Interpret assessment data for instructional planning</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Demonstrate a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The scoring criteria are on a scale of (1-4) for each variable. Where 1 = not at all necessary, 2 = somewhat necessary, 3 = necessary, and 4 = extremely necessary.
the principal possesses skills relevant to special education. The principal’s self-reported knowledge, as indicated on the second scale of the KSSE Survey, is compared to the mean responses of teachers for each item in Table 2.

Table 2

Comparison of Principal’s Ratings with Teachers’ Ratings of Principal on Scale 2 of KSSE Survey: How Knowledgeable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal’s response</th>
<th>Teachers’ M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Issues in definition and identification procedures for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of typical and exceptional learners</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Basic terminology used in assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ethical concerns related to assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Typical procedures used for screening, prereferral, referral, and classification</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Appropriate application and interpretation of scores</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The relationship between assessment and placement decisions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Methods of monitoring student progress</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Differing learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to these styles</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.6(7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Basic classroom management theories, methods, and techniques for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Research and best practices for effective management of teaching and learning for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ways in which technology can assist with planning and managing the teaching and learning environment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students’ behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Teacher attitudes and behaviors that positively or negatively influence the student behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Principal’s response</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Strategies for crisis prevention/intervention</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Strategies for preparing students to live harmoniously and productively in a multiclass, multiethnic, multicultural, and multinational world</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Typical concerns of parents of students with disabilities and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Roles of students, parents, teachers, and other school and community personnel in planning a student’s individualized educational program</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. One’s own cultural biases and differences that affect one’s attitude toward students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The scoring criteria are on a scale of (1-4) for each variable. Where 1 = not at all knowledgeable, 2 = somewhat knowledgeable, 3 = knowledgeable, and 4 = extremely knowledgeable. Parentheses are used to indicate the number of respondents for each question that was different than 9.

The principal rated herself as a 4.0, extremely knowledgeable, on each item of the first 27 items. Of the mean scores based on faculty responses on the principal’s possession of these knowledge bases, no items were rated within 0.5 of the principal’s self-rating. There were 13 items rated within 1.0 of the principal’s self-rating. The rest of the items (14) were rated at greater than 1.0 away from the principal’s self-rating.

The five items that were rated by the faculty and align closely with the principal’s self-reported score follow. The mean score based on faculty ratings on three items is 3.4. Those items are items (3) due process rights related to assessment eligibility, and placement; (4) rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education; and (26) ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities.

The mean score on two items is 3.2. Those items are (10) legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessment and (25) roles of students, parents, teachers, and other school and community personnel in planning a student’s individualized educational program.
The five items with a mean score that were rated by faculty members and furthest away from the principal’s self-rating follow. The mean score based on faculty ratings for one item is 2.3. This item was item 19, ways in which technology can assist with planning and managing the teaching and learning environment of students with disabilities. The mean score based on faculty ratings on three items is 2.6. Those items are items 7, effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities; 15 differing learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to these styles; and 16 life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities. The mean score based on faculty ratings on one item is 2.7. This item was item 17, basic classroom management theories, methods, and techniques for students with disabilities.

Items 28 through 35 focused on the skills the principal possesses. The principal’s self-reported skill as indicated on the second scale of the KSSE Survey is compared to the mean responses of teachers for each item in Table 3. When compared to the principal’s self-reported skills, five items stand out because of their distance from the principal’s self-reported skills. Items 32, implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student, 34 demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students, and 35 model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities, stand out because of how close they are to the principal’s self-reported skills. Items 30, interpret assessment data for instructional planning and 33, use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel, stand out because of how far they are from the principal’s self-reported skills.
Table 3

*Comparison of Principal’s Ratings with Teachers’ Ratings of Principal on Scale 2 of KSSE Survey: How Skilled*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal’s response</th>
<th>Teacher’s M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28. Articulate a personal philosophy of special education, including its relationship to/with general education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Interpret assessment data for instructional planning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Demonstrate a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The scoring criteria are on a scale of (1-4) for each variable. Where 1 = *not at all skilled*, 2 = *somewhat skilled*, 3 = *skilled*, and 4 = *extremely skilled*. Parentheses are used to indicate the number of respondents for each question that was different than 9.

The three items that are rated by the faculty and identified as being close to the principal’s self-reported rating follow. The mean score based on faculty ratings for one item is 3.2. This item is item 35, model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities. The mean score based on faculty ratings for two items is 3.1. Those items are items 32, implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student, and 34, demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students.

Two items are identified because of the distance between the principal’s self-reported score and the mean score of faculty responses. The mean score based on faculty ratings for one
item is 2.5. This item is item 30, interpret assessment data for instructional planning. The mean score based on faculty ratings for a second item is 2.7. This item is item 33, use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel.

*Mixed-methods Data Analysis*

To identify themes and subthemes, data from an interview, *KSSE Survey*, calendar, and observations were reviewed by the researcher. Data were analyzed by identifying codes among data sets. Additional analysis yielded the categorization of coded data. Categories were analyzed to identify themes. Based on the analysis of these data, 24 codes were extracted. Those codes were combined into 12 categories that were narrowed further into four themes that were validated through the triangulation of data from multiple sources (i.e., principal’s survey, teachers’ surveys, principal’s calendar, direct observation, and pictures) (see Appendix P). The four themes identified within the data are (a) special education as a cultural component, (b) compliance, (c) paradigm of special education, and (d) nature and roles of special education. The four themes are discussed in this section.

*Findings*

*Special Education as a Cultural Component*

The culture and atmosphere at site A is based on the inclusion of students with disabilities. A focus on inclusion and special education services is evident by the principal’s leadership, hiring, and involving herself and others in the special education program. Atmosphere, value laden hiring, and involvement are subthemes in this section.
Atmosphere. Evidence of the importance the principal places on the special education program was observed, during direct observation, throughout the school and documented with pictures (e.g., awards for special education program, article on autism, bulletin board on autism, special education forms placed throughout the building, etc.). The principal’s leadership creates an atmosphere centered on the provision of special education services. The principal stated that she is “accountable for everything under” her. She reported that her leadership in this area is one component that helps to shape the culture of the school. The “principal’s attitude toward these kids [students with disabilities] determines a lot.” The principal’s statement is supported by her response on the first scale of the KSSE Survey item 35. The principal reported it is extremely necessary for a principal to be knowledgeable in modeling appropriate behavior toward students with disabilities for students and teachers. Teachers reported on the second scale of the KSSE Survey that Principal A is skilled (3.2) in modeling appropriate behavior toward students with disabilities.

Data collected from her personal calendar indicates that the principal attends luncheons that focused on special education. She reported that she provides the faculty with a “good, strong direction of what you’re wanting to accomplish with your special education program.” It is necessary for everyone to understand the goals they are to work toward. She stated that the focus of her vision is for faculty “to believe that these children can learn, will learn [emphasis added].” Her beliefs relating to student learning help create an atmosphere of sincerity in which teachers are encouraged to do what is necessary to enable students with disabilities to learn.

The principal reported on item 24 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to understand parental concerns. The principal reported that she wants to ensure that parents understand that everyone is “collaborating and working for the good of your
children.” This is a message that the principal relays to advocates, as well. She communicates a clear expectation to advocates that she is willing to work with them as long as they are willing to work with her to meet the “needs of that child.”

Based on direct observation, another way the principal promotes an atmosphere conducive to students with disabilities is by building relationships with parents that are built upon trust. The principal was observed making handwritten comments on every report card. She was observed attending IEP meetings and stated that she plays the role of a “liaison.” The principal reported on item 33 of the first scale on the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be skilled in collaborating with stakeholders. She reported on the second scale that she is extremely skilled in this area. Teachers reported that the principal is skilled (2.7) in this area.

The principal advocates for students with disabilities by encouraging parents to make requests for specific accommodations. Principal A thinks that it is important to let parents know that you, the principal, are knowledgeable about special education because,

You have that information and you can work with them and explain to them . . . we can provide these services. . . . When you get into those tough, tough situations, then you . . . have a trust level. They know that . . . you know the law. [Also], you know what they can and cannot have. So it’s best for you all the way around to make that a goal to be knowledgeable of special ed.

This trust is based on a mutual respect for each participant’s role, knowledge, and ability to carry out the functions of that role for what is in the best interest of the child. The importance the principal places on the rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education can be seen in the principal’s response on item 4 of the KSSE Survey. On the first scale of the KSSE Survey, the principal reported that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in these areas. She reported that she is extremely
knowledgeable in these areas. Teachers reported that the principal is knowledgeable (3.4) in these areas.

*Value laden hiring.* The principal hires special education teachers who are engaged with their students. According to the principal, she relies on special education teachers to understand the needs of each child. “I count on them [special education teachers] so much.” The principal recognizes her own limitations due to time constraints as demonstrated by her calendar of appointments and the onsite observation that she is out of her office most of the day. “You know the principal may or may not be able to be involved . . . but that [special education] teacher has to be involved.”

Principal A is a passionate supporter of the special education program as indicated by the newspaper clipping of Autism Awareness Month that hangs on her office window. She exhibits compassion toward the special education program and students who receive special education services. During direct observation, the principal stated that she thinks students with disabilities are “precious.” When speaking of students with disabilities, the principal becomes emotional:

They may be a little different, but they still have a good brain. They still have the ability to learn. They still laugh. They still love. So it touches us all, makes us all more human. Makes us all more appreciative of what we have. And then to see the struggles, and the kids are in school just about every day. It’s very rare they’re out. It really makes you a better person when you look at the struggles and diversities [they go through]. How many of them get on a bus in the morning and have to be loaded and strapped in, and the 45 minute, if not longer, ride to come to [school name] and get out, and have smiles on their face, and to eat breakfast, and to start their day knowing that they’re loved.

The principal’s compassion has an impact on the characteristics she values in others. The principal reported on item 21 on the second scale of the *KSSE Survey* that she is extremely knowledgeable in how teachers’ attitude can have a positive or negative influence on student behavior. The principal hires special education teachers who possess a particular set of beliefs.
She wants to hire education professionals who are “in it for a genuine love and care of kids.” A person who does not possess characteristics such as these does not need to be in this profession. If educators are “not able to perform their job with a loving, kind heart, they need to sincerely look at another job.”

Direct observation data indicated that Principal A looks for specific traits and characteristics when hiring any personnel. She makes recommendations to the superintendent on personnel issues. Not only do special education teachers have to possess similar values to the principal’s but support personnel must possess similar values, as well. One characteristic the principal values is emotion, which is an intrinsic characteristic derived from what the individual values. When hiring special education teachers, Principal A looks for “top notch educators, that are in special ed with a loving heart.” These educators should have “a sincere interest in their students.”

*Involvement.* The principal reports that her involvement and the involvement of general education teachers in the special education program are both important. The principal forges relationships by being involved in the special education program and being knowledgeable of special education services. Both of these concepts enable the principal to develop relationships that are built upon a foundation of trust. She involves herself throughout the educational process. She attends IEP meetings. She is a “hands-on administrator” who is willing to work “side-by-side with them [special education teachers], and being involved with them [is necessary] to even know what kind of support they need.”

Throughout the school day, the researcher observed the principal’s involvement with special education issues, situations, and students. The principal had several discussions with
special education personnel. Although the majority of discussions were initiated by special education personnel, Principal A did initiate contact with special education personnel to address specific issues. According to one school employee, Principal A stays informed, but does not micromanage. Observation data indicate that the principal attempts to stay informed and updated on all special education issues by talking with special education faculty members through unscheduled and informal meetings. Although general education teachers outnumber special education teachers 19 to 5, special education teachers initiated contact at a much higher frequency during unstructured observations. This interaction allows the principal to gain a deeper understanding of special education teachers’ needs while simultaneously forging relationships that are built upon a level of trust.

The principal reported on item 28 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for a principal to be able to articulate her philosophy of the relationship between special education and general education. Data collected from the principal’s personal calendar indicates that the principal is involved in the collaborative planning process. General education teachers need to take ownership and get involved in the special education program. One formal way of doing this is by providing general education teachers with each student’s accommodations:

So . . . [there are] forms that you are to take that child’s IEP to the P.E. teacher, to the art teacher, to the music, all those that work with that child so that they know. And when you do that, that child, that one child now becomes everybody’s child, which is the way it should be, because we’re all responsible.

Because we are all responsible, we must work together to ensure that the student receives the instructional strategies and supports he or she requires. According to Principal A, both general education and special education teachers should be “engaged in the educational process for those children and are aware of what is in that individualized plan for that student’s learning.”
Principal A is involved in data meetings with teachers, and she is involved in training. Based on data collected during direct observation from the principal’s personal calendar, as well as the books in her office, the principal attends meetings and reads books on issues relevant to special education on a regular basis (e.g., response-to-intervention and co-teaching). The principal was involved in a data meeting on how students’ reading decoding and comprehension had progressed. The principal participated in examining how students who require intensive reading instruction have progressed.

Compliance

Interview and observation data indicated that Principal A has knowledge in legal issues associated with a special education program. The principal focuses on two components in regard to special education and the prevention of legal issues. She views policies and procedures as well as developing an understanding of special education law for her faculty and herself as necessary for compliance. Policies and procedures as well as law are subthemes in this section.

Policies and procedures. Compliance is an important component in the oversight of a special education program. “The two things that will get a principal are money and special education.” Principal A reported during direct observation that she has been a participant in the mediation process for students who receive special education services three times. She keeps documentation on team meetings. She reported that policies and procedures play an important role in special education. “Policies and procedures guide how I manage the . . . special education program at my school.”
The principal plays the role of compliance officer to ensure that the appropriate procedures are being followed. Based on direct observation, the principal takes test procedures seriously and is kept up-to-date on local policies by special education teachers. Observation data indicated that the principal knows the IEP process and legal requirements for each team member. The principal reported on item 25 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary that a principal know the roles stakeholders play in an IEP meeting. Based on the results from both the principal’s and teachers’ responses on the KSSE Survey, teachers (3.2) at school A agree with the principal on the second scale of the KSSE Survey that she is knowledgeable to extremely knowledgeable in this area. The principal stated that she ensures “that from beginning to end people are involved in . . . IEP [meetings]. They don’t get up, they don’t leave, they don’t sign paperwork and not attend the meeting.” Data collected from her personal calendar indicates that one way the principal does this is by “being involved in individualized education plan meetings” herself. When talking about discussing special education issues with teachers, the principal stated “you know I will ask. Often it’s brought up to discuss, you know, what’s going on in the classroom.”

Observation data indicated that knowing and following procedures is important to Principal A. Faculty members follow procedures for reserving the conference room for IEP meetings. Guidelines for determining whether students are eligible to receive special education services are placed in the conference room. The principal reported on items 2 and 11 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for a principal to be knowledgeable of (2) issues in definitions and identification procedures for students with disabilities as well as the (11) screening, prereferral, referral, and classification procedures. Pictures taken during direct observation show that the principal keeps a copy of *Mastering the Maze*, which includes special
education forms and outlines the procedures and guidelines that are used for special education services in Alabama, in her office. She has a copy of the *Alabama Administrative Code*, which includes the procedures and legal requirements for the provision of special education services in Alabama, in her office.

The principal reports effective communication between all administrative levels is important for compliance. According to Principal A, this is not occurring at the state and local levels. Principal A’s frustration can be heard in her voice when she speaks of the importance of communication between the different levels of administration. She references communication gaps between the special education departments at the state, local, and school levels as being a problem.

It’s crucial that the state department have a decision, have a plan in place, let our downtown supervisors know it, and then implement it. Teach the teachers from there. And a lot of times you do not see that consistency. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve had my teachers to say, well, I got two different answers from the state department. So [there are] some things I think that . . . need restructuring and looking at, looking at from our state department special ed division. Well, all of it, state department to our local [level]. I can’t say enough about that collaboration and that discussion has got to be in place.

According to the principal, she has this frustration because of the compliance issues generated by gaps in communication. The principal stated that when special education teachers need answers, state and local officials should be able to provide them with a single correct answer. According to Principal A, this is not always the case. Effective communication is a key component of an effectively administered special education program. Otherwise, school personnel will find it difficult to implement policies and procedures accurately.

The principal reported that she communicates with a variety of stakeholders in the special education program. Even though she communicates with stakeholders with regard to students with disabilities, data collected on item 26 of the second scale of the *KSSE survey* indicated that
the principal thinks she is extremely knowledgeable in the areas of ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities. Teachers reported that the principal is knowledgeable (3.4) in these areas.

Law. Observation data indicated that the principal stays current on special education law in order to make sure students are receiving an appropriate education. *The Law of Public Education* sits on a bookshelf near the principal’s desk. Based on the response by Principal A on item 10 of the first scale of the *KSSE Survey*, it is extremely necessary for a principal to know legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessments. The principal reported on the second scale of the *KSSE Survey* that she is extremely knowledgeable in these areas. The teachers at school A agreed with Principal A and reported on the second scale of the *KSSE Survey* that the principal is knowledgeable (3.2) in these areas. The principal reported on item 3 of the first scale of the *KSSE Survey* that it is extremely necessary for a principal to know due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement. The principal reported on the second scale of the *KSSE Survey* that she is extremely knowledgeable in these areas. Teachers agree with the principal that she is knowledgeable (3.4) in these areas.

The principal stated, it is “important for you to know the laws . . . [and] what’s expected for IEPs. And that’s the big thing.” She reported that special education is constantly evolving. “I think that’s why it’s so crucial that staff development actually be done yearly for not only special ed but for the regular classroom teacher. I think it’s important for all of us to know that special ed law.” She attends training on special education law that is provided by lawyers who specialize in special education law.
The principal stated that faculty members need to be kept up-to-date with changes in special education. “I think the best thing you can do as an administrator is [to keep general education teachers] informed of the changes in . . . special ed law and how it applies to their day-in and day-out” interactions with students with disabilities. Principal A reported on the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable of laws and procedures pertaining to behavioral issues in students with disabilities. Principal A stated during an interview that all teachers “need to be educated on how . . . law has been changed, and how it applies to them. So, I am big on law.” General education teachers should receive updates on special education law annually. The principal tries to ensure teachers have the knowledge of special education necessary to improve compliance in order to provide students with the services they are supposed to receive.

To reinforce the importance of IEPs and their implementation, the principal will remind the faculty that the IEP “is a legal, binding document, and you better make sure that you’re doing what it tells us [you are] doing.” As noted in her personal calendar of appointments, the principal attends conferences that deal with issues and topics in special education. Information on special education issues is disseminated to faculty members formally at faculty meetings. Information is disseminated informally through discussions that take place outside of the formal setting. The principal has special education related information posted on a bulletin board at the end of the main hall.

Principal A stated that a principal should understand how the federal law applies to the provision of special education services as it relates to each student’s IEP. “I think you need to know how the law applies to carrying out that individual education plan.” The principal ensures that the sanctity of specialized instruction within special education is “strictly enforced, and . . .
expected.” The principal reported that she understands her role and responsibilities as the LEA representative at IEP meetings. “I represent my school as well as” the school system. She ensures that formal procedures are followed by making sure general education teachers “are included in IEP meetings.” The principal makes sure that general education teachers are informed of their responsibilities for providing accommodations for each student, and the principal ensures that each student’s IEP is being implemented with fidelity. The principal completes these responsibilities formally. The principal makes sure general education teachers are provided each student’s accommodations and sign-off stating that “they have read the IEP . . . [and] are familiar with the IEP.”

The principal reported that she attempts to keep the special education program at her school compliant within the confines of special education law. She stays up-to-date with new laws and legal issues as well as ensuring that students are receiving a free appropriate public education. Principal A does not concern herself with potential lawsuits:

If anything, if I ever go to court, it would [not] be . . . [because I didn’t] follow the law. It was a matter of how it was interpreted, or I, I did everything that was within my power to do what special ed law requires of me. And I think that they would, they would be more near to smack your hand for you trying to do what you thought was legal and right than if you just ignored and didn’t do it at all.

Principal A reported that the intent of the principal is important. If the principal is trying to provide the student with an appropriate education within the parameters of the law, the principal is doing everything within her power to provide the student with a free appropriate public education.

The principal reported that it is important for general education teachers to know special education law as it applies to the roles they play. It is important to make sure that all teachers
“are knowledgeable and follow the law regarding . . . special education.” The principal reported that general education teachers must stay current on law changes.

**Paradigm of Special Education**

The principal has a view of what the provision of special education services should look like at the school level. Principal A has strong beliefs in setting high expectations and in communication between the different levels of administration. She values knowledge in special education, which is demonstrated through her utilization of special education teachers. Beliefs, value of knowledge in special education, and utilization of special and general education teachers are subthemes in this section.

**Beliefs.** The principal reported on item 1 of the first scale of the *KSSE Survey* that it is extremely necessary for a principal to have an understanding of models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice and should be among the fundamental beliefs of a principal. Principal A reported on the same item on the second scale of the *KSSE Survey* that she is extremely knowledgeable in these areas. The results from teacher surveys on the second scale of the *KSSE Survey* indicated that the principal is knowledgeable (3.0) in these areas.

Observation notes indicated that Principal A takes a student-centered approach to learning. She stated that “students come first.” The principal reported that she is collaborating with faculty to identify how they can engage students in learning prior to the start of each class each morning. She stated that she does not like wasting time that could be spent on learning.
On two separate occasions during direct observation, the principal was adamant that special education students can learn. The principal stated during an interview that she communicates her belief that all students can learn to parents. “We expect these things from your child just like we expect these things from the other children.” This statement lets parents know that a level of high expectations exists for their children. The principal wants to include “all students can learn” and that school personnel has “high expectations” for students in a new mission statement for the school.

According to the principal, one component of a strong leadership team is the acquisition of the services provided by a good attorney who is experienced with special education. The principal stated that a good attorney can either make or break your school system because of the multitude of legal quandaries that can come out of the special education program. She also stated that central office personnel play an important role in this process. They break the information down that lawyers provide them into “laymen’s terms,” and they explain to the school level administration what that information means at the school level. To have an effective special education program, “it’s going to take a strong attorney. It’s going to take a very strong person that’s in charge of your special ed.”

*Value of knowledge in special education.* For Principal A, an important component of leadership is knowledge. Of the 35 items on the first scale of the KSSE Survey, the principal reported that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable or skilled in 31 of those items. The principal reported that it is necessary for principals to be knowledgeable or skilled in the areas measured on the four other items. Possessing knowledge of special education equips principals to deal with a variety of situations. In her own words, “knowledge is power.”
Because of this belief, she tries to stay current with special education law and the applications for new laws. The principal stated that it is “very, very smart for a principal to know . . . everything there is to know about special education.” According to Principal A, knowing special education law is important for a principal to know what services should and what services should not be provided.

According to the principal, she stays up-to-date on issues involving students with disabilities, special education training, and special education laws. The principal reported during direct observation that it is not feasible for her to oversee the special education program in its entirety with all of the competing job responsibilities unrelated to special education without sufficient help from teachers. Therefore, she relies on special education teachers to keep her up-to-date on issues related to students with disabilities, special education training, and special education laws. “I do rely a lot on my special ed teachers because they work with it every day.”

Because the principal relies on special education teachers, she has an expectation that special education teachers “know law.” It is important for the special education teacher to have a grasp of special education and special education law that goes beyond a superficial understanding. Special education teachers “better know updates, changes in special ed, paperwork, and how you do an IEP.”

Years ago, the principal requested the first autism unit in her school system. According to the principal, that teacher turned out to be an excellent teacher for students with autism. The teacher moved to another school within the school system where she began mentoring student teachers. Principal A has hired some of the teachers that the first autism teacher within the school system had trained. This indicates that the principal values quality special education teachers as well as the knowledge they share with their colleagues and student teachers.
Utilization of special and general education teachers. The principal stated that special education teachers work with special education on a daily basis and that they stay current with changes in law. Special education teachers are “the ones that are the most aware of the changes in law.” According to the principal, these are part of a fundamental knowledge base and skill set that every special education teacher should possess and maintain. The principal reported that quality special education personnel encompass characteristics with regard to special education in the areas of knowledge and skill. Responses by the principal for item 5 on both scales of the KSSE Survey in conjunction with the teachers’ responses (2.8) on the second scale indicated that the principal relies on special education teachers to know the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of students with disabilities. Data from item 16 on the KSSE Survey indicated that the principal leaves instruction in life skills, such as independent living and employment skills, to special education teachers.

Principal A reported that it is difficult to find quality special education teachers. She stated that it is important to have “high quality personnel in [the] special education department.” Data from item 15 on the KSSE Survey indicated that the principal leaves it up to special education teachers to understand the different learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt instruction to these styles.

During an interview, Principal A stated that it is beneficial if special education teachers are able to interpret data. This is a skill the principal learned to value during her time as a teacher of at-risk students. The principal stated that special education teachers have an expertise in data interpretation. Although the principal understands the meaning of an Intelligence Quotient, she allows special education teachers to explain diagnostic information.
As a teacher of at-risk students, the principal stated that she learned to use data to identify skill deficits to meet the individual needs of each student, then she would tutor students in areas in which they were deficient. She continues to be involved in the process of identifying skill deficits in each student. Scheduled data meetings are found throughout both the principal’s personal calendar and the school calendar. The principal values this quality in special education teachers. “That is a definite strength for your special ed teachers because they are surrounded by data.” The principal stated that their skill in data analysis can be used to help general education teachers understand what the data are telling them about both special education and general education students.

According to the principal, she utilizes both general education teachers’ expertise and their positive attitudes toward students with disabilities. The principal utilizes a third grade teacher’s 3 years of experience as a teacher of students with severe behavioral problems. Principal A placed two students diagnosed with autism and four other students who receive special education services in this teacher’s classroom. The third grade teacher receives additional supports from aides and special education teachers that other general education teachers do not receive.

*Nature and Roles of Special Education*

The principal reports that she understands the needs of students with disabilities. She understands that this student population requires supports beyond those provided to the average student. Moreover, Principal A reports that she understands the importance of having the right personnel in place, that students with disabilities require services that are individualized, and the
importance of using the right strategies in a timely manner. Personnel, individual needs of students with disabilities, and strategies and interventions are subthemes in this section.

**Personnel.** Principal A understands that, students with special needs “demand more time, they demand more effort, they demand more strategies.” According to principal A, she tries to address issues through hiring before they become problems. “I believe in being proactive.” She addresses staffing concerns with central office personnel as soon as she thinks additional faculty or staff might be needed. As the principal learns of “students that are coming to my school with special needs, I address that with the central office.” If necessary, she will request additional units. This was the case when she found out a student with autism was enrolling in her school. She immediately requested an autism unit. “When I first discovered a child coming to my school with autism, I asked for an autism unit.” By being proactive, the principal reported that she became a pioneer in the area of autism for her school district. The principal made statements about being proactive instead of reactive with the special education program during an unstructured observation.

The principal reported that educating students with disabilities takes involvement from all stakeholders. “It takes all of us.” Having the right personnel in place is important when, you’re adjusting medication, you’ve got to have the personnel to be able to deal with those changes. . . . And depending on how long it takes for the doctor to see them, analyze, make the adjustments, it can disrupt a whole learning situation for a month if not longer. And you’ve got to have personnel to deal with those issues, knowledgeable personnel.

The principal stated that this is why having the correct personnel in place is important. Data from item 7 on the first scale on the *KSSE Survey* indicates that the principal thinks it is important for principals to have an understanding of medications and the effects of medications.
When asked what skills do you think are necessary to administer the special education program, the principal responded as follows:

I think that you need to also have a lot of personal skills to know how to work with your special education faculty and staff and how to hire the special education faculty and staff. Because in addition to hiring the teachers, you will be hiring instructional assistants. And when you do that, it takes a very, very special type of person to be able to carry out a special education program.

She reported that she understands her role in hiring special education teachers and aides.

The principal reported that there is a difference between the needs of students with more severe disabilities and the needs of students with mild to moderate disabilities. Students with severe disabilities “require assistance, a lot more assistance than a teacher.” The principal stated that effective special education services cannot be provided to students without the appropriate personnel in place. “Depending on the high needs of your special ed population, with the retardation, that does require assistance. A lot more assistance than a teacher, and also your autistic students need a lot more involvement.” For this reason, the principal reported that instructional aides play an important role in the provision of special education services for this student population. It is “asinine” to think that students with disabilities can receive an appropriate education without the supports they require. A key component of that system of supports is the faculty. “So I would say that to be effective, first of all you have [to have] the proper number of [faculty] units.”

Individual needs of students with disabilities. According to Principal A, the role of special education for students with high incidence disabilities is to provide students with academic or behavioral supports necessary for them to gain the skills needed to coexist within the general education environment without special education supports. The goal is to no longer
require special education services. “I like the fact that . . . just because you are a special
education student on April the 11, 2011 doesn’t mean you’re going to be in special education
two years from now.”

The principal stated that the goal of special education is to no longer require the supports
and services provided by special education. During direct observation, students with intellectual
disabilities were observed working alongside their nondisabled peers in the school store, which
ties into the post-school goal for this student population, which is to work alongside their
nondisabled peers.

Although services will vary depending on students’ individual needs, data on item 32 of
the first scale of the KSSE Survey indicates that the principal thinks it is important to serve
students in their least restrictive placements with interventions that are appropriate for the
student’s individual needs. The principal reported that the services for students with low
incidence disabilities will include skills necessary for them to function independently and within
society. Students with intellectual disabilities need to acquire the skills necessary for them to live
independently. During direct observation, Principal A stated that she wants a kitchen in her
school so that students can learn daily living skills.

While being interviewed, Principal A stated that she wants students with disabilities
included in all activities in her school. “I love my special ed students to see typical children to
learn what’s appropriate behavior [and] inappropriate.” These interactions are an important
component of the education of this population of students. Students with more severe disabilities
“need a lot more . . . involvement.”

According to Principal A, social skills are an important component of an educational
program for a student with an intellectual disability. The week of the second onsite visit, the
The principal had to address an issue with a student with an intellectual disability. The student had rubbed a substitute teacher’s breast and tried to kiss a teacher. The principal dealt with this issue swiftly. She spoke with all teachers and support personnel who are involved with the student. The principal stated that she does not think this behavior is a type of sexual deviance. She stated that she thinks it has to do with his age and not understanding that this behavior is inappropriate.

The principal reported that she understands the differences between students with autism and other students. She stated during direct observation that announcements are rarely made at an unscheduled time throughout the school day because students with autism do not adjust well to change. On a separate occasion, the principal talked about the problem with fire drills and students with autism. She stated that fire drills are stressful for students with autism. Also, the principal reported that students with autism do not like to be touched. The principal stated that students with autism need release time when they get mad. The principal had a room emptied so that students with autism can enter the room and release their energy.

*Strategies and interventions.* The principal stated that she has made a connection between providing young students with interventions and the long-term benefits of this practice. The principal reported that this belief dates back to her days as a teacher of at-risk students. According to the principal, the “younger we start working with these students the more effective our strategies become to where they can learn and be productive citizens.” During direct observation, the principal was adamant that students with disabilities need to begin a formal education at an early age by attending preschool. A flyer recruiting children with disabilities ages three and four is posted in the window of the main office for visitors to see.
Principal A reported that not only do special education teachers need to be able to identify any skill deficits the student has but special education teachers should be able to provide the student with the appropriate supports to enable the student to succeed. The principal reported on item 29 of the first scale on the *KSSE Survey* that it is extremely necessary for principals to be skilled in providing instruction that is based on special education law, rules, and regulations. While being observed, the principal stated that appropriate accommodations need to be provided to students based on each student’s unique needs. Special education teachers must remediate specific skill deficits. Services must be provided at each student’s present level of performance, and the instruction provided to the student should be appropriate for the student’s age. It is “up to [educators] to make sure that [students with disabilities] are taught specific skills at the appropriate level.” The principal reported that she understands that providing students with early interventions is only a first step.

Principal A reported that both the types of interventions and appropriateness of the interventions have an impact on students. Data collected from the school calendar indicated that the principal thinks interventions are important. Student intervention plans are developed throughout the school year and scheduled on this calendar. Teachers have to use the “right strategies” in order for students with disabilities to produce academic gains. It is the responsibility of “educational professionals to figure out what methods, what techniques, what strategies to use” that will enable students to learn. “Knowing what the child is struggling in or doesn’t know is so important.” Small group instruction is an important component of the educational program for students with disabilities. “Why we’re back into grouping because small groups are so important.”
According to the principal, she has attendees of data meetings keep a log that includes information such as the grade level attending, team members in attendance, standards discussed, instructional strategies used, and suggested actions. The principal was observed in a data meeting citing research on reading strategies. The principal stated that the average student needs between 4 and 14 exposures to each word to be able to decode the word. However, low performing students need to be exposed to each word 40 or more times before they are able to decode the word. Later on in the data meeting, the principal was able to identify that a low performing student may be struggling with reading because he has a problem tracking what he is reading. Principal A used an analogy to demonstrate the similarities between a tracking problem and the student listening to the story with a headset while the words are displayed on the computer. If the student is not reading the words, the student is not increasing his ability to decode words. Helping these students to reach their goals is “what it’s all about.”

Summary

Principal A is finishing her 13th year as principal of school A. Themes identified in Case A were (a) special education as a cultural component, (b) compliance, (c) paradigm of special education, and (d) nature and roles of special education. In the first theme, special education as a cultural component, the school atmosphere, value laden hiring, and the principal’s involvement in the special education program were identified as subthemes. The principal’s role as compliance officer as the second theme yielded a first subtheme in policies and procedures and a second subtheme in law. Three subthemes were identified in the third theme. Subthemes of the principal’s paradigm of special education were beliefs, value of knowledge in special education, and utilization of special and general education teachers. Three subthemes were identified in the
fourth theme, nature and roles of special education, as well. Identified subthemes were personnel, individual needs of students with disabilities, and strategies and interventions.

Case B

Contextual Factors

Demographic data in this section come from the demographic section of the KSSE Survey that was completed by Principal B. Data used to describe the setting for Case B was gathered through 2 days of onsite direct observation. A digital camera, digital voice recorder, and pocket-size note memo pad were used to collect and record data.

The setting for Case B is a midsize rural school serving students from diverse ethnic backgrounds (i.e., Caucasian, African American, and Native American). The grade levels of students range from kindergarten through fifth grade. There are 369 students who attend this school. Twenty-five of those students, 7% of the total population, receive special education services. The student and teacher populations are transient.

There are seven buildings on the campus. Classroom doors on some buildings are on the external walls of the buildings. These buildings do not have hallways. In the buildings that have hallways, the classroom doors open to an interior hallway. The principal’s office is in a central location on campus in a building with a hallway. Upon entering the central building on campus, the main office is the first door on the right. In the hall in the same building as the main office, there is a banner, a trophy case, and a bulletin board. The wording on the banner states that this “school participates in Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative.” The bulletin board is for students participating in the poetry club.
After entering the main office, there is a counter that divides a waiting area from the secretary’s desk. There are several seats to the right of the entrance for visitors and students. A door is located on the left side of the counter, and the principal’s office is the second door to the left after entering the door.

When entering the principal’s office from a door in the corner of the office, there is a desk facing the opposite wall. This desk has two computer monitors on top of it and they appear to be seldom used. A small table with a lamp, answering machine, and laser printer are on top of a small wooden table just to the right of the desk. Upon entry into the room, some old monitors and computers can been seen stacked in the corner to the right. The principal’s main L-shaped desk is facing the door. The desk is placed diagonally to the room and a little more than halfway between the entrance and the far corner. A computer monitor sits on top of the side of the desk and just in front of a window that runs the length of the wall. Several stacks of papers, notebooks, and books are messily stacked along the edges of the main section of the desk. A black, 3-ring binder sits atop a calendar in the middle of the main section of the desk. This black, 3-ring binder is used to document meetings between the principal and faculty members as well as students.

There are book shelves running the length of the wall adjacent and to the left of the entrance and to the right of the entrance on the same wall that the door has been placed. On these bookshelves, there are 3-ring binders with titles as Mastering the Maze, SARIC 1998 Administrative Conference: Special Education Solutions, Positive Behavior Supports, Special Education, At-Risk Conference, and Alabama Reading Initiative. The researcher found one special education book, A Principal’s Guide to Special Education.
Behind the last buildings, there is a pavilion on the right side, a building in the middle that is covered with an array of colorful paintings; and a garden, which has been fenced in with eight foot tall wooden planks to keep the animals out, is on the left side of the rear school grounds. Both the pavilion and the garden were paid for by the grants that were written by Principal B. To the far right, a nature trail has been cut out of the woods that surround the campus.

**Participant Description**

Demographic data in this section were collected in two ways. First, data were collected from the demographic section of the *KSSE Survey* that was completed by Principal B. Second, interview data were analyzed to increase the depth of information gathered on the principal as well as validate and clarify demographic information.

Principal B is a female African American. She began teaching in 1978 and is finishing her 33rd year in education. She spent the first 23 years in education as a special education teacher. Then she became a Title I Teacher and stayed in that position for 4 years. Her original goal was to become a director of special education. However, a principalship came open and she decided to apply for the position. She received the appointment to her current position in 2005. Even though she has been the principal at her school for 6 years, she still describes herself as “a special ed person.”

Principal B has obtained a bachelor’s degree in mental retardation, master’s degree in learning disabilities, and a master’s degree in emotional conflicts, all of which are areas of special education. She does not have an educational specialist degree, but she is a candidate for
the degree of education doctorate in organizational leadership with a specialization in instructional technology. She has attained all but dissertation status.

   Principal B has applied for and received several grants. She has been able to obtain funding from grants such as the Save the Children Grant, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grant, and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant.

Preparation

   Principal B has been prepared to oversee special education services through years of formal education, professional development, and experience. Principal B possesses one undergraduate and two graduate degrees in the field of special education. She has 23 years of experience as a special education teacher, 4 years of experience as a Title I Teacher, and 6 years of experience as the leader of the special education program at the school level.

   During her 23 years as a special education teacher, Principal B had a variety of experiences. She was involved in numerous referral, eligibility, reevaluation, and IEP meetings. She was involved in manifestation determinations and the development of behavior intervention plans. She served students with disabilities in an inclusion setting before the federal and state education agencies “talked about inclusion” for students with disabilities.

   As a Title I Teacher, Principal B was able to work with the principal to learn the administrative component to running a special education program. During this time, she was able to work closely with the principal to develop her own understanding of the administrative process. During this time, she was able to develop her own understanding and knowledge of educational components that are unrelated to special education.
Since becoming a principal, Principal B has maintained and continued to increase her knowledge base in special education. She stays current on special education laws. She continues to be a member of the Council for Exceptional Children. She continues to seek out professional development opportunities related to special education. Because the Alabama Alternate Assessment did not exist when she was a special education teacher, the principal is developing her understanding of the Alabama Alternate Assessment so that she can help the less experienced teachers at her school.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

The principal completed both scales on the *KSSE Survey*. Scale 1 of the *KSSE Survey* measures the principal’s perception of the necessity of each survey item as it relates to the role of the elementary school principal. The first 27 items focused on specific knowledge bases, and items 28 through 35 focused on specific skills. Data from scale 1 of the *KSSE Survey* are reported in Table 4.
Table 4

Principal’s Ratings of the Importance of Specific Items on Scale 1 of KSSE Survey: How Necessary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal’s response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Issues in definition and identification procedures for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of typical and exceptional learners</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Basic terminology used in assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ethical concerns related to assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Typical procedures used for screening, prereferral, referral, and classification</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Appropriate application and interpretation of scores</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The relationship between assessment and placement decisions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Methods of monitoring student progress</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Differing learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to these styles</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Basic classroom management theories, methods, and techniques for students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Research and best practices for effective management of teaching and learning for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ways in which technology can assist with planning and managing the teaching and learning environment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students’ behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Teacher attitudes and behaviors that positively or negatively influence the student behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Strategies for crisis prevention/intervention</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Strategies for preparing students to live harmoniously and productively in a multiclass, multietnic, multicultural, and multinational world</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Typical concerns of parents of students with disabilities and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Roles of students, parents, teachers, and other school and community personnel in planning a student’s individualized educational program</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal’s response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. One’s own cultural biases and differences that affect one’s attitude toward students with disabilities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Articulate a personal philosophy of special education, including its relationship to/with general education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Interpret assessment data for instructional planning</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Demonstrate a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The scoring criteria are on a scale of (1-4) for each variable. Where 1 = *not at all necessary*, 2 = *somewhat necessary*, 3 = *necessary*, and 4 = *extremely necessary*.*

Of the 35 knowledge bases and skills represented on the KSSE Survey, Principal B reported 21 of the knowledge bases and skills as extremely necessary for elementary school principals to possess. Thirteen of the knowledge bases and skills are reported as necessary. Item 27 is the only item reported as somewhat necessary. This indicates that the principal does not place as a high value on principals’ understanding their own biases as they relate to the principal’s outlook toward students with disabilities.

The teacher version of the KSSE Survey was distributed to the faculty of the principal for Case B by placing participants’ rights, a copy of the KSSE Survey, and an envelope addressed to the researcher’s home address with prepaid postage in each teacher’s school mailbox. The principal informed teachers of the purpose of the survey and asked them to complete and mail all forms. This was done by making an announcement over the intercom system. Teachers mailing survey responses to the researcher reassured participants that their responses will remain
confidential. They were informed that the principal would not have access to surveys. Of 24 faculty members, 10 (42%) returned surveys. Whereas the first 27 survey items focused on the principal’s knowledge of special education, items 28 through 35 focused on the level at which the principal possesses skills relevant to special education. The principal’s self-reported knowledge, as indicated on the second scale of the *KSSE Survey*, is compared to the mean responses of teachers for each item in Table 5.

Table 5

*Comparison of Principal’s Ratings with Teachers’ Ratings of Principal on Scale 2 of KSSE Survey: How Knowledgeable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal’s response</th>
<th>Teachers’ M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Issues in definition and identification procedures for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of typical and exceptional learners</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Basic terminology used in assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ethical concerns related to assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Typical procedures used for screening, prereferral, referral, and classification</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Appropriate application and interpretation of scores</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The relationship between assessment and placement decisions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Methods of monitoring student progress</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Differing learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to these styles</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Basic classroom management theories, methods, and techniques for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Principal’s response</td>
<td>Teachers’ M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Research and best practices for effective management of teaching and learning for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ways in which technology can assist with planning and managing the teaching and learning environment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students’ behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Teacher attitudes and behaviors that positively or negatively influence the student behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Strategies for crisis prevention/intervention</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Strategies for preparing students to live harmoniously and productively in a multiclass, multiethnic, multicultural, and multinational world</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Typical concerns of parents of students with disabilities and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Roles of students, parents, teachers, and other school and community personnel in planning a student’s individualized educational program</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. One’s own cultural biases and differences that affect one’s attitude toward students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6(9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The scoring criteria are on a scale of (1-4) for each variable. Where 1 = *not at all knowledgeable*, 2 = *somewhat knowledgeable*, 3 = *knowledgeable*, and 4 = *extremely knowledgeable*. Parentheses are used to indicate the number of respondents for each question that was different than 10.

The principal rated herself as a 4.0, extremely knowledgeable, on each of the first 27 items. Of the mean scores based on faculty responses on the principal’s possession of these knowledge bases, 8 items were rated within 0.2 of the principal’s self-rating. Two of those items were rated within 0.1 of the principal’s self-rating. The 3 items rated furthest from the principal’s responses are examined below.

The eight items that were rated by the faculty and align closely with the principal’s self-reported score follow. The mean score based on faculty ratings on two items is 3.9. Those items are item 3, due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement and item 19, ways in which technology can assist with planning and managing the teaching and learning
environment of students with disabilities. The mean score of six items is 3.8. Those items are 2, issues in definition and identification procedures for students with disabilities; 4, rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education; 8, basic terminology used in assessment; 11, typical procedures used for screening, prereferral, referral, and classification; 20, applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students’ behaviors; and 24, typical concerns of parents of students with disabilities and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns.

The three items with a mean score that were rated by faculty members and furthest away from the principal’s self-rating follow. The mean score based on faculty ratings for two items is 3.3. Those items are items 6, characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family and 16, life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities. The mean score based on faculty ratings on one item is 3.4. This item was item 7, effects of various medications of the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities.

Items 28 through 35 focused on the skills the principal possesses. The principal’s self-reported skill as indicated on the second scale of the KSSE Survey is compared to the mean responses of teachers for each item in Table 6. When compared to the principal’s self-reported skills, five items stand out because of their distance from the principal’s self-reported skills. Items 30, interpret assessment data for instructional planning, 32, implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student, and 35, model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities stand out because of how close they are to the principal’s self-reported skills. Items 31, demonstrate a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities and 33, use
collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel, stand out because of how far they are from the principal’s self-reported skills.

Table 6

*Comparison of Principal’s Ratings with Teachers’ Ratings of Principal on Scale 2 of KSSE Survey: How Skilled*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal’s response</th>
<th>Teachers’ (M)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28. Articulate a personal philosophy of special education, including its relationship to/with general education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Interpret assessment data for instructional planning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Demonstrate a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.4(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The scoring criteria are on a scale of (1-4) for each variable. Where 1 = *not at all skilled*, 2 = *somewhat skilled*, 3 = *skilled*, and 4 = *extremely skilled*. Parentheses are used to indicate the number of respondents for each question that was different than 10.

The three items that are rated by the faculty and identified as being close to the principal’s self-reported rating follow. The mean score based on faculty ratings for three items is 3.8. Those items are items 30, interpret assessment data for instructional planning, 32, implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student, and 35, model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities.
Two items are identified because of the distance between the principal’s self-reported score and the mean score of faculty responses. The mean score based on faculty ratings for one item is 3.3. This item is item 33, use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel. The mean score based on faculty ratings for a second item is 3.4. This item is item 31, demonstrate a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities.

Mixed-methods Data Analysis

To identify themes and subthemes, data from an interview, KSSE Survey, calendar, and observations, which occurred on 2 consecutive days in which most annual IEP meetings were scheduled, were reviewed by the researcher. Data were analyzed by identifying codes among data sets. Additional analysis yielded the categorization of coded data. Categories were analyzed to identify themes. Based on the analysis of these data, 24 codes were extracted from those data. Those codes were combined into 10 categories that were narrowed further into four themes that were validated through the triangulation of data from multiple sources (i.e., principal’s survey, teachers’ surveys, principal’s calendar, direct observation, and pictures) (see Appendix Q). The four themes identified within the data are (a) passionately and compassionately engaged in the special education program, (b) student-centered relationships, (c) understanding of special education, and (d) school level management. The four themes are discussed in this section.
Findings

Passionately and Compassionately Engaged in the Special Education Program

Principal B exhibits passion for the field of special education and compassion for students with disabilities. She does both of these in a variety of ways. The principal is actively engaged in the special education program from beginning to end. She is involved in the referral process, the development and implementation of the IEP, and in monitoring student progress. Passion and compassion and being actively engaged in the special education program are subthemes in this section.

Passion and compassion. Principal B stated during direct observation that “I am a special ed person.” The principal stated, during an interview, that every special education teacher knows that Principal B is “a special ed teacher by heart.” She stated that “that was what I started out being was a special ed teacher.” The principal reported that she went back to graduate school to earn an administrative certification with the purpose of being a Director of Special Education (DOSE). She applied for the position the first time it came open in her system, and she was not hired. The second time the position came open, she decided not to apply. The principalship at her school came open, and she decided to apply for the position because she had been informed that some people were applying for the position, and she stated, “I couldn’t work for them, or they did not have the compassion that I felt like they should [have] for the kids.”

The books and binders the principal keeps in her office are an indication of her experience in and passion for special education. She keeps a Principal’s Guide to Special Education book and SARIC 1998 Administrative Conference: Special Education Solutions binder in her office.
The principal reported on items 27 and 35 of the first scale of the *KSSE Survey* that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable of (item 27) one’s own cultural biases and differences that affect one’s attitude toward students with disabilities and that principals be able to (item 35) model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities. The principal reported that she is extremely knowledgeable in the areas measured by item 27 and extremely skilled in the area measured by item 35. Teachers reported that the principal is extremely knowledgeable in the areas measured by item 27 (3.6) and extremely skilled in the area measured by item 35 (3.8).

The principal reported that she knows what makes a good special education teacher. She stated,

> Just anybody can’t be a special ed teacher. You have got to have that, you’ve got to have that compassion. You’ve got to have empathy . . . you’ve got to be a caring person. You just can’t be there just to say I’ve got a job teaching special ed kids. You’ve got to really want to be there.

The principal talked about one of her current special education teachers, who is attending graduate school to earn certification in collaborative education, which the principal reported is a good special education teacher.

> She enjoys it. She loves what she’s doing. And that’s another thing. . . . I mean it’s easy to get burned out in special ed, but she’s enjoying it. And she’s enjoying the [college] classes and learning a lot.

The principal reported that everyone does not have the ability to work with students with disabilities.

> Everybody can’t work with the special needs kids. They just can’t do it. They don’t have the patience. They don’t have the compassion, the empathy. . . . None of that. They say that special ed stuff is not for me. I just don’t want to be bothered.

The principal wants special education teachers who care about students with disabilities to work at school B. The principal reported during direct observation that she is protective of students
with disabilities. She reported that she can tell whether a teacher will work out as a special 
education teacher. “I promise you. I can tell after observing a person whether they’re going to 
work with my babies or not.”

The principal stated “I know my kids.” This statement was made in reference to students 
with disabilities. The principal has an understanding of students with disabilities that the typical 
principals do not possess. Direct observation indicated that Principal B is passionate about 
special education and compassionate about students with disabilities. During direct observation, 
the principal stated, “I take care of my special ed kids.” She stated during an interview that there 
are some principals who,

  don’t have a clue as to what you can do with some of the special ed kids. [Those 
  principals] just want to put them back in a corner and say don’t bother me with them, you 
  know, you don’t bother me. I really don’t want them on my campus anyway.

Principal B reported that unlike those principals, she does want students with disabilities on her 
campus.

The principal reported that times have changed in education, and contemporary educators 
would not do the same things she did in her early years as a special education teacher. She did “a 
lot of things with kids back then [that of course we wouldn’t do now].” Principal B was heavily 
involved in all aspects of her students with disabilities lives in her early years as a classroom 
teacher. She was heavily involved in their lives because of her passion to help students with 
disabilities, and her compassion for each of her students. The principal stated,

  I’d take my kids [students in her class] home with me. I’d take them shopping. I’d take 
  them to the skating rink. I’d take them to the movies. Stuff that they didn’t get to do 
  around here. And I could remember one year I had 18 kids. And I had . . . eight girls and 
  ten boys, and I split it up. I took the girls all one night. And then I split the boys and took 
  five one night . . . did the movies, [and took] them out to eat. Stuff that they had never 
  done before. But now you have to be real careful doing things like that with them. But… 
  that was a long time ago.
The principal taught special education for 23 years. She will have been out of special education for 10 years at the end of the 2010-2011 school year.

The principal reported that there are two students at her school with more severe disabilities who should have gone to a different school as sixth graders. The reason they did not go is because “it was too crowded there.” The principal reported that she has struggled with sending them to that school the next school year. She talked with the DOSE and said “I don’t want to let my babies go over there now . . . I don’t think they’re ready for it.” According to the principal, the DOSE responded by saying “Yeah, but you kept them last year. I think we’re going to have to . . . let them go this year.” The principal stated that she is willing to let the students go; however, “I really hate to see them go over there right now.”

The principal reported that she shows compassion for all children. During direct observation, the principal was observed greeting and hugging students. In an interview, the principal stated “before I made it to you down that hall I was hugging kids.” According to the principal, she knows when something has happened in a student’s life who has been sent to the office for discipline. “I know the parents.” The principal stated “if you have a child come into your class and you know that . . . child’s parent went to jail last night. . . . You should know that, that child is not going to have a good day.” The principal stated that she makes decisions that are based on “common sense.” The principal reported that her response to critics is “how would you cope?” She stated that adults are not able to deal with these situations, so how can we expect students to come to school and deal with these issues in an appropriate way. At school B, “we have a lot of at-risk kids with a lot of things going on in their little lives.” This was evident in direct observation when the parent of a current student was involved in a car accident that took the life of an older brother of a different student. The principal reported that she polled students
years ago and found the following: “Some were wondering where am I going to sleep tonight? What am I going to eat tonight?” The principal went on to say “so you wonder how can they get academics when they’re wondering about the little basic things.”

The principal’s passion for providing students with an appropriate education for the life experiences they need can be seen in the types of grants she has written and received. She received the Save the Children Grant, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grant, and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant. The principal reported that she has been able to provide students with additional opportunities because of the grants she received. Her compassion ties into her understanding of the special education students’ needs for life skills instruction. The principal reported on item 16 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities. She reported on the second scale that she is extremely knowledgeable in this area. Teachers reported that she is knowledgeable (3.3) in this area. The principal stated during direct observation that she hires high school students with disabilities who are working toward the Alabama Occupational Diploma to work on some projects she has during the summer months. During direct observation, the principal reported that she actively engages students in functional skills by having them work in the garden. Pictures gathered during direct observation indicated that the principal does think that providing students with the opportunity to work on functional skills is important for students. The principal has been able to provide students with opportunities such as a walking trail, a fruit and vegetable garden, and a pavilion.
Actively engaged in the special education program. Direct observation data indicated that Principal B’s involvement in special education exceeds that of her peers. The special education program is a focus for the principal. Observation data indicated that, although she does not micromanage, she continues to be heavily involved in the special education program. She reported that she is heavily involved in the special education program as compared to the other principals in her school district. The principal stated, during an interview, that,

a lot of people, well, I can speak for my district. The principals that I work with, they could care less. Well, let me back up. One of the principals, who . . . has resigned, she was a special ed teacher at one point in time . . . that female [principal] and I were more alike than any of the rest of [the principals] in knowledge and concern and this kind of thing.

The principal reported that she is engaged in the special education process. Direct observation data support this claim.

The principal reported that she tries to stay current in special education. “I still keep up with CEC, still a member.” She tries to stay current on “new laws on special education.” She reported on item 20 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special education students’ behaviors. Both the principal and teachers (3.8) reported on the second scale that the principal is extremely knowledgeable in these areas. The principal reported on item 29 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is necessary for principals to be skilled in constructing instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations. She reported on the second scale that she is extremely skilled in these areas. Teachers reported that the principal is extremely skilled (3.6) in these areas.
Keeping up with new information is important to Principal B. She stated, “unless you go out and do it [yourself], you don’t find out anything.” Professional development on special education issues is not provided to principals on a regular basis in her district. “Actually with my special ed program here, when I became the principal . . . I kind of felt left out somewhat because they started SETs. . . . And I was not given privy to be able to go into SETs, which is a web-based software program that special education teachers use to keep the records of students with disabilities. The principal stated, “I think I should have access to SETs, so I can see what’s going on.” She reported, “I feel like, if I had . . . access to SETs, . . . I could follow the kids, and the goals, and . . . the benchmarks that they’re supposed to” make. The principal stated that she could follow the special education program more closely. The principal stated “so I kind of got a little bit out of the loop with that part of it but still maintained being able to see what’s going on with my, my special ed kids. Knowing . . . the referrals.”

The principal reported having a variety of interactions throughout the day in regard to special education issues. She stated that these interactions are on the usual formal things . . . with the IEPs, the eligibility, our referrals, our confidentiality with parents, even medications and all. I mean with all my kids I know who’s got to do, who’s got to take, what they need to do.

These interactions help the principal stay current on special education issues and up-to-date on specific students. The principal reported on item 7 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in their understanding of the effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities. The principal reported on the second scale that she is extremely knowledgeable in these areas. Teachers reported that the principal is knowledgeable (3.4) in these areas.
The principal reported being heavily involved in the referral process. “When I get my results in from testing, . . . I look at the kids.” The principal reported on item 12 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in the appropriate application and interpretation of scores. The principal reported on the second scale that she is extremely knowledgeable in these areas. Teachers reported that the principal is knowledgeable (3.6) in these areas. The principal is involved in the referral process in making referrals. She gave a list of referrals to the appropriate central office staff and stated “look, these are my referrals.” The principal cited one example of her involvement in the referral process:

I called the special ed teacher in yesterday. . . . I give her a synopsis on every one of the kids, and then all of a sudden she said, well, I don’t have those three kids you’re talking about. I said wait a minute, what happened to them? I know these are children I referred. The principal was able to solve the problem by clearing up the misunderstanding. However, by being involved, she was able to know that there was a problem in the referral process.

The principal reported on item 2 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable with issues in definition and identification procedures for students with disabilities. One the second scale, the principal and teachers (3.8) of school B reported that the principal is extremely knowledgeable in these areas.

The principal stays up-to-date on issues concerning students. She discussed how her involvement in the referral process helps her to better understand the students.

So then when we sit down and talk about the kids, it’s not like, okay, here I am hearing for the first time that this child is having a problem. I already know who the children are . . . I’ve helped in the process of choosing these kids.

The principal reported that she is involved in the process of determining which students are selected to be tested for special education.
The principal was observed discussing a referral issue with the district level resource teacher, who is in charge of eligibility. The resource teacher asked the principal why the referral process was dropped on a specific student. The principal responded “it was done last year because the mother refused services.”

The principal reported being involved with teachers at the instructional level. “I pretty much know things that you can do with kids, and a lot of times I’ll tell them [special education teachers] things to try.” She reported on item 30 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be skilled in interpreting assessment data for instructional planning. The principal and teachers (3.8) reported on the second scale that the principal is extremely skilled in this area.

The principal reported also that she participated in special education professional development “up until this past year.” The professional development opportunities she participated in were focused on “literacy and justice.” Although important, the principal stated, “I really want to do something with AAA.” The AAA is the Alabama Alternative Assessment, which is the state assessment that is administered to individuals with severe disabilities who are unable to participate in the regular state assessment. The principal reported, “I’ve got to learn something about the AAA.” The AAA was introduced by the Alabama State Department of Education after Principal B became principal. The principal reported that not having a knowledge base in this assessment has made things more difficult because she has two new special education teachers and “neither one of them [has been] acclimated to the AAA.” The principal described this deficit as her “biggest weakness.” The principal reported that she will address this deficiency in her knowledge base. “If I have to pay for my own training next year, I will have some AAA training so I’ll know . . . what’s supposed to be done.”
In the past, Principal B has been involved in eligibility and IEP meetings. “Normally, with IEP meetings and eligibility meetings I, up until this year, I would try to go to all of the meetings that they had. . . . I’d get a schedule.” This year, “I haven’t gone to as many [eligibility meetings], but I spot check and go in on some of them. . . . But now with my IEP meetings, I’ll go to my IEP meetings.” During direct observation, the principal reported that she and the other principal who was a special education teacher prior to becoming a principal both attend IEP meetings.

The principal was observed in several IEP meetings during 2 days of observations. At times, she would lean in and her facial expressions and body language indicated that she was listening attentively. She was observed listening carefully when the special education teacher read the student’s reading goals, and she shook her head in agreement. The principal was observed agreeing with the recommendation a special education teacher made.

The principal is an active participant in IEP meetings. She was observed reading over different parts of the IEP. As the special education teacher read over the draft copy of the profile page in an IEP meeting, the principal was involved in the process. She made statements such as “we need to add something to the behavior. We’ve had some serious issues.” These issues are “stealing [and] lying, both at home and at school.” The principal stated “we will need to address these behaviors in the IEP.”

The principal was observed participating in conversations that took place in IEP meetings concerning student progress. “He’s progressed since he walked in the doors. He has progress.” The principal reported on item 14 of the KSSE Survey that it is necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in methods of monitoring student progress. The principal reported on the second scale that she is extremely knowledgeable in this area. Teachers reported her to be extremely
knowledgeable (3.5) in this area. The principal questioned members of the IEP team meeting: “Do you think he’ll be able to take the test in a small group?” She was also observed asking “was there anything addressed in his IEP about behavior?” In one IEP meeting, Principal B told the IEP team not to worry about adding goals for the student who receives speech services. The principal stated that she had already talked with the teacher, and the student is doing fine academically.

The principal walked into an IEP meeting late because she was dealing with an issue that was not related to special education. Upon entering the IEP meeting, the principal immediately wanted to know if the special education teacher had told the parent that the student has been sleeping in class. The principal was unable to attend an IEP meeting that occurred earlier in the day. She asked IEP team members, “was there anything addressed in his IEP about behavior?”

*Relationships*

Principal B develops relationships with students, parents, teachers, and district level personnel. She develops relationships that are built upon a student-centered approach to education. She relies upon long-term relationships to facilitate a focus on student learning. Student-centered relationships and meaningful relationships are subthemes in this section.

*Student-centered relationships.* According to Principal B, the fundamental building block of all relationships for her is a student-centered approach to education. The principal’s student-centered approach to education manifests itself in many ways. During an interview, the principal stated that she stops “to talk with the kids” in the hallways. This action was confirmed during direct observation. The principal helped a student with a physical handicap, which prevents the
student from walking without supports, to the lunchroom. The principal was observed gathering food for a young student and her brother to take home because a teacher told the principal that the students did not have anything at home to eat.

Principal B’s student-centered approach to special education begins with her possessive language. She always references students with disabilities as being “my” children. The principal reported that she tries to include students with disabilities in all activities. “My children are included in regular field trips” as well as any activities “that we think will benefit them, I let them go. . . . I’m here to support them.” This student-centered approach helps to build bonds and a level of trust between students with disabilities and the principal.

On multiple occasions, the principal stated that she possesses an in-depth knowledge base of students with disabilities who are enrolled at school B. She is willing to share her knowledge about students with disabilities with teachers to help those students.

I know all my special ed kids, know them by name, know who’s doing what, who probably is having a problem here, and if you need to do this with this child, and why haven’t you done that with that child . . . I do. . . . I’m not bragging, but it’s just that I know my children. And I’m going to support my children. And whatever you’re doing as long as you’re doing what needs to be done with them, I don’t have a problem with it.

The principal uses her knowledge of students and their backgrounds to help teachers provide students with disabilities the best education possible.

During direct observation, the principal was observed having conversations with parents that focused on parents understanding that students come first. Principal B was in attendance at an IEP meeting when she made the following remarks to a parent. “Now I have to interject something. You have got to get him to school and on time.” Principal B informed the parent that the student “needs to be at school. Put him on the bus and let him come to school.” The more he is at school “the better he’ll do.” The principal had no problems with communicating what she
thought was in the best interest of the student to the parent. The parent nodded her head in agreement.

The principal reported on item 24 of the first scale of the *KSSE Survey* that it is extremely necessary for principals to know appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns. The principal and teachers (3.8) reported on the second scale of the *KSSE Survey* that the principal is extremely knowledgeable in the typical concerns of parents of students with disabilities and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns.

Principal B will inform teachers what she thinks is in the best interest of the student, as well. The principal reported on item 4 of the first scale of the *KSSE Survey* that it is extremely necessary for principals to understand the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders with regard to the provision of special education services. Teachers concurred with the principal that she is extremely knowledgeable (3.8) in this area.

According to principal B, she wants special education students to be in the classroom and focused on the student population they are supposed to serve in the general education environment. In an interview, the principal cited a situation that occurred early in the current school year as an example of how she responds to students with disabilities being excluded from the general education classroom. Because of the large number of fourth grade students with disabilities that one of the special education teachers was serving, fourth grade general education teachers wanted the special education teacher to pull the kids out and just take them out [of] their classroom. And I said that can’t happen. No, these kids have to be in there. He is basically a resource to support you or whatever these kids need in there. . . . He’s a support mechanism for those students in that class.

The principal mentioned on multiple occasions that the special education teacher is there for the students with special needs. He is not there to teach classes for the general education teacher.
Principal B reported that she handles her daily schedule in a way that informs faculty members that students come first. If she has something scheduled on her calendar and an issue with a student arises, she will put whatever is scheduled “aside. My children . . . come first.” According to the principal, she will fight for students’ needs. “I’ll go to bat for my children any day, . . . I do it all the time.” Principal B will do what she thinks is right for students even if faculty members disagree. Principal B reported that some faculty members have stated that “she loves those kids too much.” The principal stated “I don’t think you can love them too much.” She went on to state “sometimes it’s only right here that they will get a pat on the back or a hug.”

**Meaningful relationships.** Direct observation indicates that there is a relaxed culture at school B. The principal was observed joking with members of the IEP team between meetings. She served refreshments for parents and team members. The principal reported that it is important to have “good people skills” in order to be an effective leader. She stated that principals should “have good interpersonal skills.” The principal develops meaningful relationships based on long-term relationships.

The principal has an open door policy. “I have an open door policy for my students first, my parents, [and] my faculty.” Additional interview and observation data support the principal’s statement. On item 33 of the first scale of the *KSSE Survey*, the principal reported that it is extremely necessary for a principal to be knowledgeable in the use of collaborative strategies. On the second scale of the *KSSE Survey*, she reported that she is extremely skilled in using collaborative strategies. Teachers reported that the principal is skilled (3.3) in this area.

According to the principal, she has built relationships with parents of students with disabilities. The foundation of these relationships is the 23 years Principal B spent as a special
education teacher. She is quick to point out that “I know the parents.” She has known some families over the course of multiple generations. “I’m at the point that the majority, three fourths of my students, are children of students that I had when I first started teaching.” Principal B refers to some of the students with disabilities being served at school B as “grandchildren.” She taught the parents and grandparents of these students. Relationships with these families have developed over the course of Principal B’s career. Principal B has a “genuine concern” for the students of these families. The principal reported on item 24 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for a principal to know the concerns of parents of students with disabilities. She reported on the second scale of the KSSE Survey that she is extremely knowledgeable in this area. Teachers also reported that the principal is extremely knowledgeable (3.8) in this area.

The principal reported that the relationships that she develops with these families enable her to have an in-depth insight into the environment in which the student lives. Principal B stated that it is as if

I’m seeing them over and over again, and so many times I’ll see some children and teachers may say well this one is not doing that, that one [is not doing this]. I know the background. I know where they’re coming from. I know the things… that [are] happening in their little lives. And you know it’s easy for someone to say, well, that’s no reason for that child to act that way. But when you know why these children are doing, you know, because of things that’s going on in their lives. It would be hard for you as an adult to deal with this. So I . . . take it to heart.

The principal reemphasized, during direct observation, that one reason she does not have problems with parents of students receiving special education services is that she taught the parents. The principal reported on item 6 of the second scale of the KSSE Survey that she is extremely knowledgeable in the characteristics and effects of cultural and environmental factors of the child and family. Teachers reported that she is knowledgeable (3.3) in these areas.
Even though Principal B has a relationship with most parents of students with disabilities, she does not have a relationship with all parents. The names of parents and their phone numbers are written all over the principal’s personal calendar. The principal was observed during direct observation bringing parents in on issues concerning their children. She was observed communicating this to one teacher by telling the teacher that “there needs to be contact with the grandmother.” In addition to instructing teachers to contact parents, direct observation data indicated that the principal communicates with parents and legal guardians on a regular basis.

The principal reported that she has a close relationship with parents. She reported that she sits in on 80% to 90% of annual IEP meetings. The nature of the relationships helps the principal to engage and understand parents. When a parent was not at an IEP team meeting, the principal was observed telling IEP team members “let me give her a call because I know she wants to be here.” The principal reported that she knows when parents want to be involved in their children’s education.

When parents attend IEP meetings, the principal attempts to involve them in the process of developing the student’s IEP. Based on an analysis of the results on item 25 from both scales of the KSSE Survey, Principal B understands the importance of including stakeholders in planning a student’s individualized education program. The principal asked one parent if she wanted to add anything to the profile page of the IEP. She asked another parent “when he is working with the Legos, is he attentive?” The principal builds relationships with parents by involving them in the development of the student’s IEP.

Teachers were observed approaching Principal B with problems. A special education teacher approached the principal about an error that had been made during the administering of state assessments. The student was supposed to have had the state assessment read to him, but
the state assessment was not read to him. The teacher came to the principal to report this problem and invite her to an IEP meeting. Principal B reported that she will try to help and support her teachers however she can. Special education teachers know that “anything they need, they can come to me and say . . . can we do this? Will you help us?”

Principal B reported that she builds relationships with teachers by maintaining an open line of communication. “My teachers can come in anytime, not just my special ed teachers but my regular ed teachers, and talk to me about students. [They] keep me informed about students.” An open line of communication was demonstrated in an IEP meeting when the resource teacher from the central office looked at the principal and asked “what else can we do to facilitate the behavior goal.” The principal responded “we just need to keep communication between the fifth grade teachers and the grandmother.” This interaction demonstrates the relationship the principal has with central office staff as well as her dedication to building and maintaining an open line of communication.

The principal stated that she has “a good relationship” with the DOSE. The principal described the length of her relationship with the DOSE as going “way back to when I first started teaching special ed.” The principal does not rely on the DOSE for anything specific, but Principal B knows that,

> If I needed to talk to her about something, I can. And I can talk to her in . . . a manner in which I could call her and say, hey [DOSE’s name], I don’t agree with this. And it’s not like we’re bickering or having problems, . . . I respect her. She respects my role.

The principal reported that the mutual respect each of them has for the other’s role is based on the experiences they have had together. “We’ve been through the good times, and we’ve been through those times that we both wish hadn’t happened. But . . . we can talk. We have a good relationship.” The principal and DOSE support each other’s role by sharing resources. “We . . .
work with each other in resources in that if it’s something I can get . . . I do it. If she can help me, she’ll help me and vice versa.” The principal reported that the DOSE and Principal B reciprocate their resources.

**Understanding of Special Education**

With 23 years of experience in special education, Principal B has knowledge in special education. She has acquired a broad knowledge of special education and utilizes that knowledge in a variety of ways. The principal has acquired an in-depth understanding of individual student’s needs, and supports students with disabilities based on their individual needs. The two subthemes identified in this theme are broad knowledge of special education and knowledge of students with disabilities gleaned from experience.

*Broad knowledge of special education.* Principal B reported an in-depth understanding of the nature of special education. During direct observation, she stated, “I understand the nature of special education.” During direct observation, the principal reported that she knows the purpose of special education. “I know what the purpose is. It is to provide an appropriate education.” The principal reported on item 1 of the first scale of the *KSSE Survey* that it is extremely necessary for a principal to be knowledgeable in models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice. On the second scale of the survey, the principal reported that she is extremely knowledgeable in these areas. Teachers’ surveys on the second scale of the *KSSE Survey* indicated that she is knowledgeable (3.7) in these areas.

Principal B stated, “I know the law and have no qualms with it.” Data collected during direct observation shows she keeps a copy of *Mastering the Maze*, which includes special
education forms and outlines the procedures and guidelines that are used for special education services in Alabama, in her office. During an interview, the principal reported that she does not discuss special education issues with teachers in inappropriate settings. “We’re not going to talk it in the hall.” The principal reported on item 26 of the KSSE Survey that she is extremely knowledgeable in ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities. Results from teachers’ surveys indicated that the principal is extremely knowledgeable (3.7) in this area.

Data collected during direct observation indicated that the principal’s background and experience in special education impact how she administers the special education program. She reported that she keeps a lot of documentation. She keeps all e-mails. Direct observation notes and picture evidence indicated that the principal documents student conferences and faculty meetings in a black 3-ring binder that she keeps on her desk. She reported that she learned to keep mental notes when she was a special ed teacher. Picture evidence from direct observation indicates that the principal requires teachers to post their schedules. This is a form of documenting the amount of time teachers spend each day on interventions because intervention time is blocked off on each teacher’s schedule.

Principal B stated that you do not determine whether a student will qualify for special education based on his siblings. She reported that some students who have siblings who receive special education services do not qualify for special education services but some do. “You do this on an individual basis.” However, even though the principal stated that she looks at students individually, “it’s just like a flag goes up to me” when a student who has a family history of receiving special education services is having difficulty in the classroom.
Okay, if I know there’s a history of learning disabilities in the family. You know, that there have been some problems with mama and daddy both having been in LD classes. . . . I say, okay, that, that could be. We could, we could take a look at that. We can see.

The principal reported that a family history might indicate potential problems. However, a family’s history does not guarantee a problem. “There have been some that have had parents that were learning disabled that they’re making straight A’s and B’s. And you wonder, okay, so it’s not that way.” The principal reported that a family history is “one of the flags that goes up to me that I’ll say, okay, yeah, that child could be having problems because there is a history there.”

Data collected during direct observation indicated that she is knowledgeable in special education. She was observed in a variety of settings, including IEP meetings, and had demonstrated possessing a wealth of knowledge in special education. During direct observation, the principal stated that she makes sure she attends the really difficult IEPs.

Data collected during direct observation indicated that Principal B sets high expectations for students and does not place limits on them. When a special education teacher placed limitations on a student’s capabilities, the principal responded by stating “I don’t know. He has surprised me” academically. The principal reported on item 34 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be able to demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students. The principal reported on the second scale that she is extremely skilled in this area. Teachers reported that the principal is extremely skilled (3.5) in this area.

Teachers and central office staff exhibited signs of respect during direct observation. Principal B’s knowledge is queried by her peers. In regard to an issue with a student, the resource teacher from the central office asked the principal “what do you think?” Both the eligibility person and resource teacher from the central office told the principal that she cannot
leave school B. They stated that they love her because of her background in special education. The resource teacher stated that it is nice to have a principal with a special education background. During an interview, the principal reported that they wanted her to apply when the coordinator of special education position came open at the central office before she was a principal. “Everybody kept saying, well, aren’t you going to apply? You’re better qualified. You have a degree in administration.”

According to Principal B, not only do special education services depend on the individual needs of the student, but all educational services depend “on the child and what they need.” The principal reported on item 5 of the second scale of the KSSE Survey that she is extremely knowledgeable in the similarities and differences in the needs of typical and exceptional learners. Teachers reported that the principal is extremely knowledgeable (3.5) on the second scale. If something is not working, she encourages teachers to come to her and “we’ll try something else, or I’ll give you some ideas because I can.” The principal reported having confidence in her ability to help teachers meet students’ needs. When Response to Intervention (RtI) was introduced at school B, Principal B stated that she understood that “these kids will be candidates for special ed.” She reported that she saw this as an opportunity to provide students with disabilities additional help, so she “put special ed kids into RtI. Okay, my LD kids, these children can benefit, too, because they’re going to get that extra, extra, extra help.” Direct observation data taken with a digital camera indicates that hands-on learning activities are used in this school. School B is an Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative school.

The principal stated that she bases the services students receive on their IEPs. “If it’s in that plan, we do it. . . . I believe in doing what, what they’re supposed to do.” If it is not in the
plan, it is not required. The principal reported that she has parents of students with disabilities who still state,

    Well, my child is not getting this, and they’re not getting that. And of course, I investigate to see what’s going on, but you know you have to look at parents and see they sometimes don’t see it the way we see it and how we’re doing things the way it is supposed to be done.

The principal reported that parents do not always understand the guidelines schools have to follow.

    Knowledge of students with disabilities gleaned from experience. Principal B has many years of experience as a special education teacher. She has served many students with disabilities through the years. According to Principal B, some of those students have had great success upon exiting school. During direct observation, the principal spoke of three success stories. One former student, who had been labeled as mentally retarded, graduated and is serving as an officer in the Navy. A second student, who had been identified as having a specific learning disability and a speech problem, became an engineer and serves on the Board of Education. A third student, who had been identified as mentally retarded, graduated from college with a degree in sociology and is working on his master’s in special education.

    Principal B reported that she knows her students’ and their needs. This is of particular importance because she stated during direct observation that “You know, no two people are alike, and definitely no two special ed kids are alike.” On multiple occasions, during both direct observation and a semi-structured interview, the principal stated that she has an in-depth understanding of each student.

    I know my kids. Everybody says my goodness you’ve got 370 kids. How do you know these kids? I do, . . . I just make sure I get in, know every one of my special ed kids, know what’s going on with them, know if they’re out of school, [and] what’s happening with them.
The principal stated the reason she knows these kids is because she tries “to see them every day.”

According to the principal, her in-depth understanding of each student and the needs of students with disabilities enables her to place students in a setting that will make them comfortable during state assessments. Principal B stated,

I know the kids. I know the personalities of the people that I have working with them. I look at that as well in assigning who’s going to work with them. Who’s going to do the testing with them . . . that teacher that’s working over there with them, the kids are familiar with her, so it’s not a problem. They’re familiar with the reading coach. That’s not a problem.

The principal reported that she understands what students need. The principal stated that she tries to match students with their special education teachers of roll. The principal stated that she will make sure the special education teacher who developed the student’s IEP and included in the IEP that “the child had to be given the test by the special ed teacher with breaks” will administer the state assessment to that student. The student “definitely knows that special ed teacher.”

The principal reported that students with disabilities need to be included in all areas of education. During direct observation, she stated that she does not believe in sheltering students with disabilities. She reported on item 32 of the KSSE Survey that she is extremely knowledgeable in placing students in their least restrictive environment based on their individual needs. Teachers’ responses indicated that the principal is extremely knowledgeable (3.8) in this area. Principal B stated during direct observation that as principal “I do more than they say we have to do” with our students with disabilities. The principal stated during an interview that she involves “them with things that’s going on” in the school. The principal reported that the students at school B “look out for the special ed kids, and that’s because we don’t place any emphasis on them . . . even our severe and profound kids. You know, our kids look out for them.” Principal B stated that she “was doing a lot of inclusion before they talked about
inclusion.” The principal reported that when she was a special education teacher, special education teachers did not always want to include students with disabilities in activities with the students’ nondisabled peers. According to Principal B, the special education teacher she worked with would “isolate them and wouldn’t involve” students with disabilities in activities.

When she was a special education teacher, Principal B reported that she determined “what [general education] teacher to put my children with.” She “would pick those teachers who were going to help my children and not sit them over in a corner.” She wanted students with disabilities to have “those teachers who would include my children in everything that they were doing. Gave them a, just as much chance as the rest of them.” Principal B reported that she wants students with disabilities to experience the same things as their nondisabled peers. Principal B stated that she would “make sure [students with disabilities] got to get in to do the extracurricular stuff that everybody else did.” She would tell teachers “hey, my kids get to do things like everybody else.” She would ask teachers to “call on my kids. Let them feel what’s going on. Let them know. Let them answer . . . it helps their self-esteem.”

According to Principal B, she “made it fun and exciting for kids” when she was a classroom teacher. She stated, “I always had kids wanting to come to my special ed program instead of saying, oh, you’re a dummy. You’re in special ed. That never happened to me.” As a principal, she allows special education teachers to make it fun for students based on the student’s needs.

Now with my special . . . needs teacher who has my severe and profound kids . . . I kind of turn my head to some things that she . . . does with them. Especially like with birthday parties, and they make cakes and stuff down there. So I’ll just kind of [act] like I didn’t see that.

This is an example of how the principal treats students differently based on their needs.
Principal B’s knowledge of students includes her knowledge of students’ intellectual abilities. The principal reported on item 13 of the KSSE Survey that she is extremely knowledgeable in her understanding of the relationship between assessment and placement decisions. Teachers reported that the principal is extremely knowledgeable (3.5) in her understanding of this relationship. The principal stated, “It’s unreal how I can . . . pretty much just tell you if this child is tested whether or not he is going to qualify for special education.” She cited one incidence in which the mother wanted the student tested for special education. The principal stated that “of course we take that referral. We don’t say no. But I’ve told the psychometrist . . . I can tell you right now the child is not going to qualify. And sure enough” the student did not qualify. She reported on item 3 of the second scale of the KSSE Survey that she is extremely knowledgeable in the due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement. Teachers’ responses (3.9) on the second scale indicated that the principal is extremely knowledgeable. As part of this knowledge base, the principal reported on item 11 that she is extremely knowledgeable in screening, prereferral, referral, and classification procedures. Teachers’ responses indicated that Principal B is extremely knowledgeable (3.8) in these areas.

The principal cited a second incidence in which the parent wanted her child tested for special education services. The principal reported “We haven’t had an eligibility meeting on this little girl. . . . If anything, she has some EC issues. It’s not going to be that she has a learning disability.” The principal stated that she is still waiting on testing results to see if she was correct in her analysis.

The principal reported that she knows what is best for students. During direct observation, the principal was unable to be at an IEP meeting where the IEP team decided to hold a student back during the next school year. According to the teacher, the mother wanted to
hold the student back, as well. The principal responded by stating “I wish you would have come gotten me before you did that. . . . That will not help him.”

The principal was observed in other IEP meetings addressing students’ needs. In one meeting, she told the IEP team that “We’ll have to acclimate him to that third grade hall. He is used to going to the second grade hall.” In a conversation with a special education teacher, the principal was observed telling the special education teacher she wants to start taking away supports to promote independence.

According to Principal B, her knowledge of students with disabilities includes an understanding of how students are able to understand environmental factors because of their sensitivity to their surroundings. The principal reported on item 21 of the *KSSE Survey* that she is extremely knowledgeable in how teachers’ attitudes and behaviors positively or negatively influence student behaviors. Teachers’ reported that Principal B is extremely knowledgeable (3.7) in these areas. Principal B stated,

> These children will sense . . . what’s going on. They know if you don’t want to be bothered with them. They know if you’re apprehensive. They know if you’re frustrated with them. They, they just know, and those are the people that they’ll give the hardest problems to.

Principal B reported that she thinks that the behavior of students with disabilities is based on the behaviors and reactions of the classroom teacher. Referring to a teacher who had classroom management problems with students who receive special education services, the principal stated “it was the way she handled them, and the way she talked to them,” and how she reacted to them. “I just felt like they could sense it. They could feel it.”
School Level Management

The principal manages both resources and personnel at school B. The principal reported that she understands how difficult it is to find quality special education teachers. She hires personnel who she thinks will do a good job even if the principal has to think outside the box to develop caseloads and assign teaching duties within teachers’ certification areas. The principal manages personnel by utilizing their strengths and providing them with the freedom to try things in their classrooms that they want to try. The principal’s management style is to utilize teachers as a resource for students. The principal tries to support teachers with the greatest needs with the most resources. Hiring and managing personnel as well as management style are subthemes in this section.

Hiring and managing personnel. During direct observation, Principal B reported that it is very difficult to find special education teachers because of what is required of them. This datum was supported in an interview when the principal stated that “good special ed teachers are few and far between.” She reported that she has “specific questions that I ask, and I usually look for the reaction from the teacher when I ask the question to see . . . how they respond to it.” She reported that she wants to see their nonverbal reactions.

The principal stated, “I can look at applications and say I think this person” would do a good job. Two new special education teachers were hired at school B for the current school year. The principal reported that she “was blessed in getting” one of the two new special education teachers. Principal B stated that “she is wonderful with” students with disabilities. “I just hope and pray she doesn’t go anywhere.”
According to the principal, this teacher is not certified in special education at the grade level she is teaching. The teacher is “back in school to get a collaborative special ed degree.” The principal reported that she has to be “really smart on this” in order to be able to keep this special education teacher. She has already obtained a degree in . . . early childhood special education. So the majority of her students, which is three, she has five boys, three of them are the older kids. So what I did was I put these children on the other special ed teacher’s caseload because he’s k-12. She’s teaching the children, but they’re on his caseload. He’s doing the managing and, you know, I just pool my resources. And whereas the little ones, I put them on hers. So she would manage those.

The principal has setup caseloads so that “he manages the caseload . . . but she’s actually doing the teaching for those kids and . . . vice versa.” But in her words “they have to work together.”

The principal reported how she manages her teachers. “I don’t crowd my special ed teachers because I feel like I know they can do a good job.” She stated that she gives her special education teachers “the freedom to do some of the things that they want to do.” In an interview, the principal reported that she observed and watched teachers closely the previous year because she had two special education teachers that concerned her. She reported that “I can just sense when . . . the teachers are not doing what they are supposed to do, because of my background.”

The special education teacher who teaches students with more severe disabilities is supported by an aide. According to the principal, the special education teacher and aide have had some disagreements this year. However, the principal stated that she is going to continue to support the special education teacher. “Whatever she says, I’m supporting her.” According to the principal, “I’ve been supporting the teacher. And I told him [aide] whatever she says is what you’re supposed to do.”

The principal stated that she moves teachers around to try and find their “niche.” Principal B stated “I know when it’s not clicking.” She moves teachers “two or three times” to
different grade levels before she finds a fit for them. All except for two teachers who have been moved have found their niche. The principal stated that she had one teacher who “couldn’t handle fourth grade”, so she was moved to first grade. “She’s a dynamic first grade teacher.”

The principal was observed, during direct observation, addressing a teacher with a behavioral management problem. The principal talked to her and tried to get her grade level cohort to help her with discipline. The principal is trying to solve this problem by getting the teacher to collaborate with her peers.

The principal reported that she tries to utilize teachers’ strengths. She reported that there is one teacher who she would use as “a behavioral management teacher or EC teacher” if the principal was allowed to use the teacher in this capacity. The teacher is “not mean. She never raises her voice. She’s very soft spoken. She talks really low and . . . by that second week of school, you don’t know that these are the same kids.” The principal reported on items 18 and 31 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in (18) research and best practices for effective management of teaching and learning for students with disabilities and be able to (31) demonstrate a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities. On the second scale, the principal reported that she is extremely knowledgeable in (18) research and best practices for effective management of teaching and learning and extremely skilled in the area of (31) behavior management. Teacher respondents reported the principal as extremely knowledgeable (3.7) in research and best practices for effective management and skilled (3.4) in behavior management.
Management style. Principal B manages school B in a variety of ways. The principal reported during an interview that “interpersonal people skills, managing, being able to handle varied situations, [and] different scenarios” are important skills for principals to possess in order to administer a special education program. Principals have “to be flexible.” She stated that “you never know what might happen in a special ed setting, or you have to be able to adapt to a lot of situations.” She reported that “there are so many things that come up that are not on my calendar that I have to be flexible.” During direct observation, she reported that she learned how to be flexible when she was a special education teacher.

Principal B reported that she commits resources based on students’ IEPs. In reference to providing accommodations for state assessments, the principal stated “I know Morgan [will] need one on one. She’s got to have it.” The principal stated that she has to have somebody to do Morgan, or I have to get somebody to do Christian. . . .When they say small group, well, they say small group is like 10 kids. Let’s see, okay, I’ve got 12. I’m not going to do that. I’m going to do six and six.

The principal reported that she then must decide how she will group the students with specific teachers “according to who I think would do best with my kids. So I think that’s a part of managing and knowing your kids. Knowing . . . your staff.”

Data collected during direct observation indicated that the principal manages teachers as resources. The principal utilizes faculty resources to support the grade levels with the greatest needs in special education. In the fourth grade, there are 16 students who receive special education services. Two of them just left. The principal reported that “I’ve never had that many students in one grade . . . that were special needs kids.” She reported that, this is an unusually high number of students receiving special education services in a single grade level “for a small school like” school B. In comparison, there are four kids receiving special education services in
fifth grade and one in third grade. Because of the number of students receiving special education services in fourth grade, the principal reported that “I put my resources there.”

The principal stated that she divided up the students with disabilities so “that each one of them [general education teachers] got close to an equal number of special ed kids in there.” She stated that she thought the fourth grade general education teachers had difficulty with the special education population “because they’ve not had that many special education kids in their classes before.” The principal reported that the “special ed teacher spends the majority of his time over there.” In addition to the special education teacher, the principal provides other support with additional personnel. The principal reported that she pulls an intervention teacher “to work with that grade level so it wouldn’t be overwhelming to the regular teachers. So I’m almost triple dipping. Well, I am. I’m more than triple dipping” but the principal wanted to ensure that the general education teachers get the help they need.

Even though the principal committed a large amount of resources to the fourth grade, she reported that she thought the general education teachers were expecting “a different kind of support from that special ed teacher . . . because of the way the special ed teacher we had last year operated.” The special education teacher from the previous year “would bend over backwards and do extra.” The current special education teacher is “going to go by the book and do what he’s supposed to do with those IEPs.” However, he is not going to bend over backwards. The principal stated that she “had to talk to [the general education teachers] and explain to them that sometimes different teachers are going to do different things.” The principal stated that “we’ve had some trying times, but it’s working itself out.”
Summary

Principal B is finishing her 6th year as principal of school B. Themes identified in Case B were (a) passionately and compassionately engaged in the special education program, (b) student-centered relationships, (c) understanding of special education, and (d) school level management. In the first theme, passionately and compassionately engaged in the special education program, the principal’s passion and compassion and her active engagement in the special education program were both identified as subthemes. Relationships as a second theme yielded subthemes in student-centered relationships and meaningful relationships. Two subthemes were identified in the third theme, as well. Subthemes of the third theme, the principal’s understanding of special education, were broad knowledge of special education and knowledge of students with disabilities gleaned from experience. Two subthemes were identified in the fourth theme, school level management. The first subtheme identified was hiring and managing personnel, and the second subtheme identified was management style.

Case C

Contextual Factors

Demographic data in this section comes from the demographic section of the KSSE Survey that was completed by Principal C. Data used to describe the setting for Case C was gathered through 2 days of onsite direct observation. A digital camera, digital voice recorder, and pocket-size note memo pad were used to collect and record data.

The setting for Case C is a large rural school serving a transient student population. The student population is made up of 466 students. Of the 466 students who attend this school, 26 students, 6% of the total population, receive special education services. Due to a high number of
transient students, the number of students receiving special education services fluctuates throughout the school year.

The faculty of school C are involved in many programs and have received many awards for their accomplishments. The mural painted on the front of the school proudly displays these accomplishments. The students and faculty of this school participate in the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative as well as the Alabama Reading Initiative. This school was designated as a Renaissance Master School from 2007-2011, an Alabama Torchbearer School during the 2008-2009 school year, and a Reading Master School during the 2008-2009 school year.

Behind the mural on the front of the school building is the main office. The office door is the first door to the right inside the building. A small corridor leads from this room to the principal’s office, which is the second door on the right. There is a small table and two chairs along the left side of the wall on the interior of the principal’s office next to the entrance. An L-shaped desk runs the length of the wall between two windows on the wall opposite the entrance. The wall to the right and adjacent to the wall with the entrance leads to a small room with several 3-ring binders. The wall to the left and adjacent to the wall the entrance is on has bookshelves.

On the bookshelves behind the principal’s desk, there are a myriad of books and 3-ring binders. Three-ring binders include labels such as Special Education, Inclusion Handbook, Student Support Services, and 504.

There are three interconnected buildings on campus. Bulletin boards are strewn throughout the hallways with student work and state assessment scores. Bulletin boards demonstrate examples of student work throughout the hallways. One bulletin board is used to track student progress longitudinally for specific grade levels on the Stanford 10. A different
bulletin board is used to show the progression of a reading contest occurring between four
classes.

One room is designated as the data room. This room is used to analyze student data and
bring faculty members together for collaborative purposes. Student data cover the walls in this
room. A projector linked to a computer is used at grade level meetings to go over student data
and identify problems specific students had with end-of-quarter test questions. Poster boards are
placed throughout the data room with faculty ideologies that are being used to develop a new
mission statement for the school. Phrases that are positive in nature have been placed in the
shape of a pyramid above the faculty ideologies. Meeting parameters are stated explicitly on the
wall to keep faculty members focused on meetings goals.

Every classroom has a SMART Board and projector. The library has a jungle theme with
elaborate decorations. There is a section for migrant students to check out books with audio tapes
with them. Students are able to follow along as the book is read to them in English.

Participant Description

Demographic data in this section were collected in two ways. First, data were collected
from the demographic section of the KSSE Survey that was completed by Principal C. Second,
 interview data were analyzed to increase the depth of information gathered on the principal as
well as validate and clarify demographic information.

Principal C is a female Caucasian American who has been in education for 19 years. She
began her career in 1992 as an elementary school teacher after receiving a bachelor’s degree in
elementary education. She taught fifth grade students in a general education classroom at a
different school for 11 years. During this time, she was one of the first general education teachers
who taught in an inclusive environment. Afterwards, she spent 1 year as a science resource
teacher for the school system. Because of her “passion for hands-on, inquiry-based learning, she
pursued a master’s in educational leadership in order to pursue a career in curriculum and
instruction at the district level. During the time she spent working toward this degree, Principal C
became a science resource teacher for the school system. From this position, she was offered an
assistant principal’s position at her current school. She was an assistant principal for 3 years, and
she has been the principal at her current school for 4 years.

Preparation

Principal C has been prepared to oversee special education services in a variety of ways. Although Principal C has received training at the university level, the knowledge Principal C has
gained “wasn’t in a book.” Most of her training was from her experiences and training as an
administrator. Most of her preparation to oversee the special education program has not come
from education at the university level.

Principal C took one class that focused on special education when completing
coursework at the university level. The preparation she received from coursework was a small
component of her preparation. It provided the principal with a nominal knowledge base of
special education from which to draw. This coursework has “really not prepared [me] at all.”

Because she does not have a strong knowledge base in special education to draw from,
most of her training comes from previous experiences as a general education classroom teacher
and as a principal. Prior to the inclusion of students with disabilities within the general education
setting movement, Principal C taught a fifth grade inclusion class. The time she spent working
with students with disabilities in this setting helped her to develop her philosophy on the importance of inquiry-based learning.

The principal had “no real experience with IEPs” before becoming an assistant principal. Since becoming an assistant principal and principal, she has gained most of her knowledge of special education through hands-on experiences and professional development provided by the school system.

The principal continues her training through the professional development activities she attends. Also, she receives periodic updates on changes from her teachers, as well. Special education teachers attend training each quarter at the district level. The special education teachers come back to the principal and inform her of any updates and changes for which she needs to be made aware.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

The principal completed both scales on the *KSSE Survey*. Scale 1 of the *KSSE Survey* measures the principal’s perception of the necessity of each survey item as it relates to the role of the elementary school principal. The first 27 items focused on specific knowledge bases, and items 28 through 35 focused on specific skills. Data from scale 1 of the *KSSE Survey* are reported in Table 7.
Table 7

**Principal’s Ratings of the Importance of Specific Items on Scale 1 of KSSE Survey: How Necessary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal’s response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Issues in definition and identification procedures for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of typical and exceptional learners</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Basic terminology used in assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ethical concerns related to assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Typical procedures used for screening, prereferral, referral, and classification</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Appropriate application and interpretation of scores</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The relationship between assessment and placement decisions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Methods of monitoring student progress</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Differing learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to these styles</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Basic classroom management theories, methods, and techniques for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Research and best practices for effective management of teaching and learning for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ways in which technology can assist with planning and managing the teaching and learning environment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students’ behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Teacher attitudes and behaviors that positively or negatively influence the student behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Strategies for crisis prevention/intervention</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Strategies for preparing students to live harmoniously and productively in a multiclass, multietnic, multicultural, and multinational world</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Typical concerns of parents of students with disabilities and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Roles of students, parents, teachers, and other school and community personnel in planning a student’s individualized educational program</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
27. One’s own cultural biases and differences that affect one’s attitude toward students with disabilities
28. Articulate a personal philosophy of special education, including its relationship to/with general education
29. Construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations
30. Interpret assessment data for instructional planning
31. Demonstrate a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities
32. Implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student
33. Use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel
34. Demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students
35. Model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities

Note. The scoring criteria are on a scale of (1-4) for each variable. Where 1 = not at all necessary, 2 = somewhat necessary, 3 = necessary, and 4 = extremely necessary.

Principal C reports all knowledge bases and skills as extremely necessary for an elementary school principal to possess. This indicates that Principal C understands the importance of knowledge and skills as they relate to special education. The principal views all aspects of special education as being important.

During a faculty meeting at the end of the first full day observation after the interview, the teacher version of the KSSE Survey was distributed to the faculty of the principal for Case C. The faculty were provided with envelopes addressed to the researcher as well as postage. The faculty were informed of their rights as participants and assured that their responses would be kept confidential. They were informed that the principal would not have access to surveys. Of the 32 faculty who received surveys, 16 (50%) faculty members returned surveys. Whereas the first 27 survey items focused on the principal’s knowledge of special education, items 28 through 35 focused on the level at which the principal possesses skills relevant to special education. The
principal’s self-reported knowledge, as indicated on the second scale of the *KSSE Survey*, is compared to the mean responses of teachers for each item in Table 8.

**Table 8**

*Comparison of Principal’s Ratings with Teachers’ Ratings of Principal on Scale 2 of KSSE Survey: How Knowledgeable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal’s response</th>
<th>Teachers’ ( M )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Issues in definition and identification procedures for students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of typical and exceptional learners</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.6(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Basic terminology used in assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ethical concerns related to assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.8(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Typical procedures used for screening, prereferral, referral, and classification</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Appropriate application and interpretation of scores</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The relationship between assessment and placement decisions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Methods of monitoring student progress</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Differing learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to these styles</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Basic classroom management theories, methods, and techniques for students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Research and best practices for effective management of teaching and learning for students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ways in which technology can assist with planning and managing the teaching and learning environment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students’ behaviors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
The principal rated herself as a 4.0, extremely knowledgeable, on 7 of the items; a 3.0, knowledgeable, on 15 of the items; and a 2.0, somewhat knowledgeable, on 5 of the items on the first 27 items. The principal’s self-reported mean score for the first 27 items on the second scale of the KSSE Survey is 3.08. The mean score reported by the faculty for these same items is 3.73. Of the mean scores based on faculty responses on the principal’s possession of these knowledge bases, six items were rated within 0.2 of the principal’s self-rating. Five items were rated at greater than 1.0 away from the principal’s self-rating.

The six items that were rated by the faculty and align within 0.2 of the principal’s self-reported score follow. The mean score based on faculty ratings on one item is 4.0. This score matches the self-reported rating of the principal on this item. This is item 26, ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities. The mean scores from three items were ranked within 0.1 of the principal’s self-reported rating. All three item scores were 3.9. Those items are item 4, rights and responsibilities of parents, student, teachers, and
schools as they relate to special education; item 14, methods of monitoring student progress; and item 21, teacher attitudes and behaviors that positively or negatively influence the student behaviors. The mean score for one item was ranked within 0.2 of the principal’s self-reported rating. The mean score for this item was 3.8. This is item 3, due process related to assessment, eligibility, and placement.

The five items with a mean score that were rated by faculty members and more than 1.0 away from the principal’s self-rating follow. In all five cases, the faculty rated the principal’s knowledge base as being higher than the self-reported rating of the principal. The two items with faculty mean scores furthest away are at a distance of 1.7 from the principal’s self-reported rating. The mean scores for faculty ratings on both items are 3.7. Those items are item 1, models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice and item 12, appropriate application and interpretation of scores. The next two items with faculty mean scores slightly closer were at a distance of 1.6 to the principal’s self-reported rating. Those items are item 6, characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family and item 7, effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behaviors of students with disabilities. The mean score for faculty ratings on one item is at a distance of 1.4 from the principal’s self-reported rating. The mean score for faculty ratings on this item is 3.4. This is item 16, life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities.

Items 28 through 35 focused on the skills the principal possesses. The principal’s self-reported skill as indicated on the second scale of the KSSE Survey is compared to the mean responses of teachers for each item in Table 9. When compared to the principal’s self-reported skills, six items stand out because of their distance from the principal’s self-reported skills. The
items are item 28, articulate a personal philosophy of special education, including its relationship to/with general education; item 30, interpret assessment data for instructional planning; item 33, use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel; and item 35, model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities stand out because of how close they are to the principal’s self-reported skills. Items 29 construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations and 32, implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student, stand out because of how far they are from the principal’s self-reported skills.

Table 9

Comparison of Principal’s Ratings with Teachers’ Ratings of Principal on Scale 2 of KSSE Survey: How Skilled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal’s response</th>
<th>Teachers’ M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28. Articulate a personal philosophy of special education, including its relationship to/with general education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Interpret assessment data for instructional planning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Demonstrate a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
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<td>32. Implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
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Note. The scoring criteria are on a scale of (1-4) for each variable. Where 1 = not at all skilled, 2 = somewhat skilled, 3 = skilled, and 4 = extremely skilled.
The four items reported by the faculty within 0.1 of the principal’s mean score follow. The mean faculty scores for all four items were rated slightly below the principal’s self-reported rating. All four items were rated by the faculty at 3.9. Those items are 28, articulate a personal philosophy of special education, including its relationship to/with general education; 30, interpret assessment data for instructional planning; 33, use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel; and 35, model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities.

The two items reported by the faculty that are furthest away from the principal’s self-reported rating follow. The mean scores for both items are rated at 0.8 higher than the principal’s self-reported rating. The mean of faculty ratings for both items is 3.8. Those items are 29, construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations and 32, implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student.

Mixed-methods Data Analysis

To identify themes and subthemes, data from an interview, KSSE Survey, calendar, and observations were reviewed by the researcher. Data were analyzed by identifying codes among data sets. Additional analysis yielded the categorization of coded data. Categories were analyzed to identify themes. Based on the analysis of these data, 24 codes were extracted. Those codes were combined into eight categories that were narrowed further into four themes that were validated through the triangulation of data from multiple sources (i.e., principal’s survey, teachers’ surveys, principal’s calendar, direct observation, and pictures) (see Appendix R). The four themes identified within the data are (a) collaboration with and utilization of faculty and
staff, (b) principal’s special education paradigm, (c) program interventions and strategies, and (d) active leadership. The four themes are discussed in this section.

Findings

Collaboration with and Utilization of Faculty and Staff

Principal C uses collaborative techniques with her faculty and staff. She involves faculty in meetings and staff in the implementation of interventions and instruction of students. She utilizes collaboration as a tool. The principal utilizes the strengths and expertise specific to individual faculty members. The principal’s collaborative approach to education and utilization of faculty and staff are both subthemes found in this theme.

Collaborative approach to education. According to Principal C, she takes a collaborative approach to providing for the educational needs of students with disabilities. The principal reported on item 33 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be skilled in the use of collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel. The principal reported on the second scale that she is extremely skilled in this area. Teachers also reported the principal as extremely skilled (3.9) in this area. The importance that Principal C places on collaboration with and among faculty is seen in the method she used to develop a new mission statement for school C. The principal had teachers write down their thoughts on large paper in the data room as to what they think is important to the faculty.

The principal reported that it is necessary for a principal to “be able to really work with collaboration effectively.” Collaboration is necessary because “you cannot do it by yourself, and
it shouldn’t be left alone just to the special education teachers.” When asked how she supports the special education program, the principal reported that “it all goes back to collaboration. You know, it’s working as a team.” The principal stated,

you have to build relationships. That’s been the key here. You build relationships and trusting relationships. That if something is not working . . . there is an open door policy that they come in and . . . then we sit down and we hash through things.

The principal stated that the “working relationship” that she has developed with her special education teachers has helped her to learn how “to deal with special ed.” When speaking of the “personal and . . . professional relationships” she has built, she describes these two areas as strengths.

Principal C involves special education teachers throughout the educational process. The principal reported that “special education teachers are involved in all . . . PST [problem solving team] meetings.” The principal reported that collaboration occurs during formal meetings, for example, “IEP, METs, parent conferences, any of our data meetings. We’re all involved together.” There are “a lot of informal” meetings. The principal stated that “informal is just as important as formal.” According to the principal, “you’ve got all the formal for all the things you have to do. But there’s a lot that goes on, you know, just in the course of the day in communicating with people.”

She reported one reason for informal collaboration as being “because we are busy and . . . stretched really that we’ll take any and every moment to have a conversation.” Principal C reported multiple methods of informal communication. She stated “we communicate in the halls. We communicate through e-mail. It’s, it’s just keeping it [communication] open all the time.” She problem solved through collaboration with the speech teacher when a student with special needs had a “meltdown.” The two of them took the time they were using during an unplanned
event to discuss “which way we were going to go with the IEP and how we were going to pull all the parties together.”

Informal interactions take place while “passing in the hall. You know so and so, he’s having a bad day. I’m headed this way. Can you go that way?” The principal reported that it “goes back to building relationships with people, a community.” Direct observation data indicated that the principal utilizes e-mail as a form of informal communication. The special education teacher informed the principal that she sent the principal e-mails on a couple of students with disabilities this morning.

During direct observation of fourth quarter grade level data meetings, the principal included three intervention specialists, a reading specialist, a behavioral teacher, a Title I teacher; grade level general education teachers; and either the speech pathologist or a special education teacher at each meeting. The principal has the meeting parameters posted on the wall. The parameters are to (a) stay focused, (b) listen carefully, (c) share the floor, and (d) support one another. When the principal was asked, during an interview, how she supports general education teachers with special education issues or problems, the principal responded “it’s the collaboration.”

During grade level data meetings, the principal and faculty members in attendance discussed the accommodations and interventions that students receive. Those in attendance discussed the accommodation of reteach and retest as well as a plethora of additional accommodations. They discussed if reteach and retest was used as a pre-service intervention or an accommodation based on the student’s IEP. At the end of the kindergarten grade level meeting, the principal encouraged one of the general education teachers to write down some notes for the upcoming IEP meeting. During grade level data meetings, the principal told general
education teachers that they are to write down on the back of the cards distributed to them the interventions that at-risk and other students receive so teachers in the next grade level will know.

When asked how the principal supports special education teachers, Principal C responded that “it goes back to all the collaboration, and the scheduling, and, and the flexibility of it. You’ve got to work with your teachers . . . you’ve got to know what’s going on.” The principal stated, “You really have got to work with everybody to come up with a schedule that they . . . can meet all the needs in the IEPs, . . . it just goes back to that collaborative process.” Direct observation data indicated that the faculty works collaboratively to develop teachers’ class roles for next year. The principal and faculty discussed both the individual needs of students as well as the needs of groups of students. Faculty members discussed the need to reevaluate a student and whether or not he should be administered the Alabama Alternate Assessment during the 2011-2012 school year. As part of the collaborative process, the principal stated that “sometimes you’ve just got to listen. You’ve just got to listen to them.”

When asked during an interview how she manages the special education program at school C, the principal responded as follows:

I think managing is kind of a funny word to use because I think of us here as more collaborative. And it’s not so much that I feel like I’m managing them as much as working with them together. We do all the scheduling together. We’re coming into that time of the year when we’ll plan for next year.

The principal reported that she works with the reading intervention and special education teachers to develop the plan for the next school year. She reported that “We figure out where special education students need to go. We figure out where our PST children need to go as far as . . . personalities, strengths of children, strengths of teachers, and we figure those placements out.” The principal stated, “it’s a lot . . . but it’s all do together.” Instead of managing, the principal reported that “we work together to do it.” According to the principal, she thinks “When
you have a bunch of people looking at things, everybody can work together to put that puzzle
together, and . . . make it the best that it can be.” She reported that “there may be a better way to
do it out there, and I’m sure there probably is, but I feel like we’re doing the very best right now
with the collaborative process.”

Utilization of faculty and staff. Principal C created school pamphlets. Data on school
pamphlets that were collected during direct observation indicated that Principal C reports to the
community that the faculty at school C are “professional educators” who are “highly-qualified
and well trained.” Data collected during direct observation indicated that the principal surrounds
herself during grade level data meetings with three intervention specialists she considers to be
experts in curriculum and instruction. She surrounds herself with the Title I teacher, reading
coach, and a faculty member who teaches character education and chairs the problem solving
team. Principal C uses the character education teacher to provide additional reading interventions
to students throughout the school day. The principal was observed delegating responsibilities to
trusted faculty members. Data collected during direct observation indicated that these three
intervention specialists make up the principal’s trusted inner circle in regard to interventions.
When the principal is confronted with an area that she is not knowledgeable in, she looks to the
expert in that area for guidance.

Principal C stated “The special education team that I work with here, they are incredible.
They go to training every quarter, and then they come back and keep me so well informed.” The
principal reported that the special education teachers at school C “are incredible, and we just . . .
problem solve here so we don’t have to go up” to the central office level.
The principal reported that the great thing about the special education teachers at her school is “they’re not scared of putting more work on themselves. They’re not. They’re going to do what they think the kids need.” The principal stated,

I just feel like the teachers here do a great job identifying specifically what our children need. And when they come in from other schools, they go over those IEPs. And if we don’t think that’s what they need to be getting, then we redo it.

The principal describes teachers at her school as “self-driven” and “well-educated.” She stated, “I think as an administrator one of the biggest mistakes you can make is not empowering the people that you work with and not capitalizing on their intellectual capabilities because one person can’t see everything.”

During direct observation, a special education teacher was observed volunteering to take a personal day and pay for professional development training herself if the system would not pay for it. The principal reported that classroom aides are willing to help out as well. The principal cited an incidence that occurred earlier in the school year when an aide was pulled out of a classroom and “missed one of her sessions, but she didn’t complain. It wasn’t like . . . I’m missing this. I’m supposed to be here, and now I’m having to be up here. They just . . . don’t complain.”

The principal reported “one of my special ed teachers and speech-language pathologists, they are co-LEA” representatives. Having both of these faculty members serve as LEA representatives is great because I just send both of them to everything, and it keeps us really well informed. You’ve got two that are fully informed all the time. So if one’s out of the building . . . you’ve always got another one in there. Whether it’s something going on, a child coming in, we need to get on web SETs . . . I’ve got somebody here. . . . It’s kind of like a backup plan.
When asked during an interview if she relies on their expertise, the principal responded immediately:

Yes. I heard something one time, and I think it’s really true that as a classroom teacher you know a lot about a little. . . . But as an administrator, you know a little bit about a lot of things. And I think it would be foolish of me to think that I could stay on top of everything for special ed and everything else that I have to do. You have to hire people and keep people that know what they’re doing.

The principal utilizes faculty members’ expertise.

The principal reported that she relies on special education teachers to be knowledgeable in the cases they manage. “They are case managers. They know those IEPs backwards and forwards for the cases that are on their caseload.” The principal stated “I really depend on them to work as a team.” According to the principal, the special education teachers at school C know about each student on their roles. If asked about the services students on their roles are supposed to receive, the principal stated that these special education teachers would not have to go and “pull the IEPs” to know the services the students are supposed to receive. “On the kids they have, they’re not going to have to go to the folder.” Having special education personnel you can depend on is important. “If I saw a problem with those special education teachers . . . and you said I can’t depend on them . . ., that’s a really sad position that you’re in, and you are going to have to do something about it.”

The principal stated “I really depend on them [special education teachers] to follow the days . . . , timelines, and everything.” According to the principal, the special education teachers at school C have “type A” personalities. These teachers are “cross your t, dot your i’s, follow the law, and do the best that you can do every time you can do it.” The principal reported “if I didn’t have that, I would have to be tracking these children.” However, she has quality special
education teachers, according to her, and does not concern herself with tracking students with disabilities.

The principal reported that there is a specific reason behind her including special education teachers in data meetings. “In the data meetings, special education teachers are in there for a specific reason, if this is what they [students with disabilities] missed and this is why they missed it, what do we need to do?” The purpose of including special education teachers is to bring in teachers who have an expertise in interventions and instructional strategies. “So those strategies are shared, so it’s really” in order to meet the individual needs of students.

The principal reported that she uses aides for special education “just like a teacher.” Aides are “treated like a staff member.” The principal uses aides to do “early reading intervention . . . and My Sidewalk,” which are both scripted programs. The principal also uses aides to “do inclusion in the classrooms.” The principal treats aides the same way as teachers “so that the children treat them that way,” as well. In the principal’s words, aides are “just another professional [on] this staff that makes it all work.” The principal reported that aides at her school “work with transitioning, they work with toileting, [and] they work with providing instruction.”

Principal’s Special Education Paradigm

The principal reported that her background and experiences have shaped her view of special education. She cites experiences that had a profound impact on her. The principal wants to ensure that only students who need special education services are provided with those services. She has developed a knowledge base in special education through on-the-job experiences as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, and principal. Background and
experiences that shaped the principal’s paradigm as well as knowledge of special education are two subthemes in this section.

*Background and experiences that shaped the principal’s paradigm.* Principal C described the acquisition of her knowledge and view of special education as something that “wasn’t in a book.” Her knowledge is derived from her experience as a parent and a teacher. When she was a fifth grade teacher, she taught at a school that she describes as “one of the first schools to start inclusion when inclusion just started coming out.” The principal reported on item 27 of the first scale of the *KSSE Survey* that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in one’s own cultural biases and differences that affect one’s attitude toward students with disabilities. The principal reported on the second scale that she is knowledgeable in these areas. Teachers reported that the principal is extremely knowledgeable (3.6) in these areas.

During direct observation, the principal reemphasized the impact that two experiences have had on her view of special education. Both experiences were brought up by the principal during an interview that occurred prior to direct observation. The two experiences are her youngest daughter being referred and tested for special education and a former student who was perceived to be lazy but had sleep apnea. Two additional experiences that supported and reinforced the principal’s perception of special education will be discussed in this section, as well. Those experiences deal with what the youngest daughter revealed about how she would have used special education services had she been provided with them and the principal’s experiences with inquiry-based instruction as a classroom teacher. These two experiences will be discussed as additional supporting experiences of the principal’s youngest daughter’s referral for special education services. Those experiences are the principal’s oldest daughter’s college
project and the principal’s experience with positive outcomes for students who are allowed to use inquiry-based learning strategies.

According to data collected during an interview, the first experience that shaped Principal C’s view of special education was her youngest daughter’s referral to special education. This incidence occurred prior to Principal C entering the field of education. Today, Principal C’s youngest daughter is married. She has two bachelor degrees. One degree is in interior design, and the other degree is in business. According to Principal C, her youngest daughter is “almost finished with her master’s degree in design.” At the time the principal’s youngest daughter was referred for special education, the principal was a stay at home mom. She recalls attending an eligibility meeting and the principal of her daughter’s school saying “I think she can make it” in the general education classroom without special education services. Principal C reported that she and her made the decision to refuse services.

The principal’s youngest daughter was “building strategies and had incredible teachers, so we opted not to go special ed and wait and see . . . what would happen with the strategies.” The youngest child thought she had been tested for PACE, a gifted education program, so Principal C and her husband decided not to tell the daughter that she had been tested for special education. Principal C tells the story of when the youngest daughter was in middle school and was riding in the car with her mother, Principal C, and said,

Momma, I know what’s wrong with me. And she said you didn’t test me for PACE when I was little. You tested me for special ed. I’m dyslexic aren’t I. And I just was like what are you talking about? And she said I watched a video on Channel 1, and she said everything those kids were talking about is the fight I fight every day.

Principal C reported that it was difficult to explain to her youngest child why Principal C and her husband had refused special education services for her youngest child. In reference to the decision that was made, Principal C stated “you never know as a parent whether you had made
the right decision, and I think sometimes, even as principal, you worry about all these children so much. Are you making the right decision?”

Principal C reported that she and her husband were unsure as to whether or not they had made the correct decision to refuse services for their youngest daughter. The principal reported that they received confirmation that the correct decision had been made when their oldest daughter was working on an assignment in college. The assignment was for her to find someone with a disability, so she contacted her younger sister and asked her the questions. One question the older daughter asked the younger one was, “If you had known that you were special, would you have used it as a crutch?” The youngest daughter responded, “Yes . . . I’m so glad I never knew.”

The principal reported that a second confirmation occurred when she was a teacher. She was able to see that positive student outcomes occur when they are linked with the correct learning strategy. This positive outcome exists not only for students who do not have any academic disabilities but for students who have academic disabilities. Providing students instruction through an inquiry-based approach, have shaped her view of education, “especially with the inquiry-based approach . . . seeing the lights start going on for them, and for them to be able to get the answer right, . . . and sometimes get it right before the smartest kid in class.” The principal reported that if the teacher provided the principal’s youngest daughter with “a strategy to do, she did it.” And she was successful with the strategy. The principal reported that her youngest daughter’s experience and the principal’s own experience with seeing academic gains with inquiry-based learning are what has helped prepare her for her job as principal.

According to Principal C, a second experience occurred when she was a teacher. The principal reported that she taught a student who
plays in the National Football League, and he played at [name of university]. Huge, huge. My first year teaching, he was massive, and . . . I’m pretty tall. He was already special ed when I got him. And . . . just seemed lethargic and slow about everything he did. Well, when he got to the [name of university], they, the coach said something’s wrong. You know, his professors were complaining that he was falling asleep at . . . nine o’clock classes . . . he was just sluggish on the line. . . . Well, the coach saw something and said we need to do some tests. Well, found out he suffered severely from sleep apnea. Well, they got him on the machines. . . . He started bulking up, and he was tearing people up on the line. He was a defensive player, and . . . now [he] is playing professionally in the NFL. And I always draw back to that point in time. Did, did somebody miss something somewhere along the line? You know, as a child, was he suffering from sleep apnea and he wasn’t getting it because he was basically tired. . . . Or was he really suffering from a learning disability? For me, I just, I want to make sure that we’ve done everything we can do before we get to that point.

Principal C reported that she wants to make sure students who are labeled special education need special education. She does not want students receiving special education services until the eligibility team can rule out any other plausible explanations.

The principal reported that previous experiences and the confirmation of those experiences have shaped her view of special education. She stated, “Based on my experiences with my daughter, my experiences with special education students in the classroom. . . . I don’t want one identified if there’s something that we should’ve done before.”

Knowledge of special education. Principal C reported that the first thing that needs to be done prior to referral is determine if the reason a student is not successful is because of a barrier. Are there “any barriers that we can remove first--like, is there a hearing problem? Is there a vision problem? You know, are they ADD, ADHD and they just need some medicine? And can we work through that?” The principal stated that she wants to be sure that a student requires special education services because walls exist that “you just can’t get through because they’re special ed for a reason. They’re not special ed just because someone said, oh, they’re special. They can’t perform all the time at the same level of the other children.”

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Principal C reported on items 3, 13, and 30 of the first scale of the *KSSE Survey* that it is extremely necessary for principals to be (3) knowledgeable in due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement; (13) knowledgeable in the relationship between assessment and placement decisions; and (30) skilled in interpreting assessment data for instructional planning. Both the principal and teachers reported that the principal is extremely knowledgeable on items 3 (3.8) and 13 (3.6) and extremely skilled on item 30 (3.9).

During direct observation, the principal was approached by a special education teacher in regard to a special education student’s reevaluation. According to the teacher, there was the possibility that the student might qualify under a different category. The principal told the special education teacher to wait to reevaluate the student as long as possible. This student is a transient student. The principal wanted to make sure that the student needs special education. The principal stated that she wants to make sure that the problem is not that the student has not been in one place long enough for interventions to work.

The principal talked about the referral process during an interview. She stated that the student is referred to the problem solving team.

> Once we’ve done everything that we can do and they are not going to make it, then when we submit them for special education testing, . . . if they test and it looks like they qualify or they don’t qualify then I go into those meetings with them. The multidisciplinary eligibility team. . . . That’s the one where you’re having to tell the mom, mom, this is how the test turned out. These are our recommendations, and then the parent has to decide. The parent gets to decide if permission will be granted for the student to receive special education and related services. When Principal C had to make this same decision, the decision was made to refuse special education services.
The principal reported that she wants students with disabilities to test out of special education. She stated, during direct observation, “If they can test out before they enter middle school, I think that’s wonderful.”

When asked how she supports the special education program, the principal stated “it keeps coming back to the same thing. Just following the IEPs, and collaboration with all of the teachers . . . the special education teachers and the classroom teachers.” You have to “always stay within the confines of the law, and you have to stay within the IEP.” The principal stated that in special education “the IEPs mandate what we do. How they are written determines all the scheduling.” The principal reported that “the direction of the special ed program . . . goes back to being driven by the IEPs. They drive everything we do.” The principal was adamant that IEPs drive everything from the scheduling of instructional time to the actual instruction for students receiving special education services at school C.

The principal reported that “IEPs always have to be written based on the needs of the children. Not what you think you want to do the next year.” It is important that “everything’s based on what the children need for the IEPs.”

The principal reported during direct observations that she keeps up with legal updates and changes through the professional organization of which she is a member. These changes come in the form of updates in the magazine she receives. Based on the researcher’s notes and picture data collected during direct observation, the principal keeps a copy of the Alabama Administrative Code in her office. The principal was observed explaining to a general education teacher about a parent’s request for a child to be tested for special education services. “If she had asked us specifically to test her student, then by law, we would have had to have” tested the student.
During an interview, the principal recalled her first IEP meeting as an assistant principal. Parents of a student with a disability were not happy with the services that their child was receiving. “The parents had brought tape recorders.” The principal stated “I didn’t have a lot of special ed experiences,” and “the parents were really upset.” After a teacher explained the services she was providing to the student, the parents “calmed down and realized that the teacher really was providing” the services that the child needed. The teacher thanked the newly appointed assistant principal for backing her up, but Principal C reported that the teacher was in the right. It wasn’t like I was having to back her up because she had done something wrong. It’s just that she needed some backup to say this is the IEP. This is what it says is to be done. This is what’s being done, and this is the extra that is being done.

She referred to this experience as “trial by fire.”

The principal reported on item 26 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for a principal to be knowledgeable in ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities. On the second scale, both the principal and teachers (4.0) reported that the principal is extremely knowledgeable in this area.

When the teacher of a child with autism was going to be out of school, the teacher and principal made sure the student knew the teacher was going to be out of school. “We told him yesterday, and we had a reward system set in place.” Data collected during direct observation indicated that the principal understands the characteristics of autism. The principal reported during an interview that students “trigger for different reasons.” The principal stated that it is important to find “why they trigger. Why do they explode? You know, what’s the antecedent? How can we prevent it? You know, it’s all of those.”

The principal reported on item 34 of scale one of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be able to demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest
educational and quality of life potential for all students. Both the principal and teachers (3.8) at school C reported on the second scale that the principal is extremely skilled in this area.

The principal stated that some students will not live independently. Some students “may be able to live in a group home.” The principal stated that these are students who score “below 55” on an intelligence quotient test and “children that have multiple disabilities.” These students will need to learn “how to keep themselves clean. . . . How to go to the bathroom . . . they need some basic skills of life to just be able to survive.” The principal stated “I think it’s a special calling for special ed because it’s hard . . . to look at some of them . . . and think the best that we can give her is [an] opportunity to learn some skills.” There are some schools that specialize in teaching daily living. “They teach cooking. They’ll teach gardening.” The principal reported that “you want to maximize whatever her ability is.” The schools that specialize in providing students who are intellectually challenged or have multiple handicaps are “going to give her a better chance to do that.”

The principal reported that the nature of special education creates an environment of change. She stated “because with special education, things are going to happen that are going to change your day.” However, it is not just the school day that is changed. According to the principal,

We’ve had to bump and change stuff all year long because that’s just the nature of special ed. When you’re in a school that’s transient, you get one in. You’re like, oh my gosh, we’ve got to bump that around. We’ve got to shift numbers. We’ve got to move people. And then somebody leaves, and you think, well, we can do extra time. Or then you get them back.

The principal reported that the nature of special education is constant change. Change occurs in special education every time a student with special needs enters or exits school.
Program Interventions and Strategies

During direct observation, the principal reported that she supports all teachers through positive feedback, interventions, and instructional strategies. The principal examines interventions and strategies to determine if they will benefit students. “Are there particular strategies that we can implement? Can we put them in reading intervention? Can we get’em in extended day?” The principal stated before a student goes into special education “we try to do everything we can before they go. And when they go, we know them really well.” Program interventions as well as strategies are subthemes in this section.

Program interventions. When Principal C decided to work on her educational leadership degree, she did this with the intent of moving into curriculum and instruction. She stated that “I had a real passion for hands-on, inquiry-based learning.” The principal reported on item 18 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in research and best practices for the effective management of teaching and learning for students with disabilities. She reported on the second scale that she is knowledgeable in research and best practices. Teachers reported that the principal is extremely knowledgeable (3.6) in these areas. According to the principal, the great thing about inquiry-based instruction is you “get that buy in” from kids.

Direct observation data indicated that Principal C focuses the entire faculty on interventions. She is an intervention-based principal. The structure of school C is intervention-based, and the purpose of the interventions is to help students progress to where they are supposed to be academically. The principal reported that she likes hands-on activities. Direct observation data indicated that the principal implements programs that are research-based and proven to be effective. Picture data collected during direct observation indicated that the
Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) and the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) are both implemented at this school. Principal C brought AMSTI to school C. The Alabama Reading Initiative was already being implemented. However, the principal reported that she would have brought ARI to school C if it had not been there because she likes the program. Calendar data indicated the principal provides training for faculty on ARI and conducts ARI walkthroughs on a regular basis. Calendar data also indicated the principal attends AMSTI meetings at the school and district levels on a regular basis.

According to the principal, she likes AMSTI because it is a “hands-on, inquiry-based approach” to learning. She stated that students are learning through interaction. Students learn “through all of that movement and activity . . . because we’re teaching it differently.” The principal reported on item 15 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in the differing learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to these styles. Whereas the principal reported on the second scale that she is knowledgeable in these areas, teachers reported that the principal is extremely knowledgeable (3.8) in these areas.

With math, the principal reported “we don’t teach an algorithm. An algorithm requires you to memorize. If you learn a concept and out of necessity you develop that algorithm, then you know why it works, . . . which is what special education students need.” Special education students want you to “tell me why I’m doing this. Explain this to me. Don’t just tell me to work a formula. Why does the formula work?” According to the principal, “if they work with all the manipulatives and they go, oh, well this is happening and this is happening, the teacher can then say ‘okay, write me an equation that would explain that.’” The principal reported that “all of a
sudden they come up with an algorithm” on their own. The principal reported that “if they see it, they understand it.”

According to the principal, she has provided Ongoing Assessment Project (OGAP) training for Grades 3 through 5. This training helps teachers “understand where the breakdown [in learning] occurs.” The principal stated that she thinks OGAP training “links in really well with AMSTI.” This helps teachers individualize instruction based on students’ needs. This helps teachers say,

This child is missing this particular skill. I’ve got to drop back here. Well, then you might only have to drop back to this level for the next one, and somebody else may be able to go on. But it gives them that framework, and they know where to build on. So that individualizes it.

The principal stated,

I mean there are so many different things that we do based on what their needs are, and we try to target exactly what it is that they’re missing. Not just, oh, Jill failed the end of quarter test. Well, why did she fail it?

The principal reported “it’s not enough to know that they missed it. You’ve got to know why they missed it.” The principal has been so impressed with this training in multiplicative reasoning, that her third through fifth grade teachers received, that she has decided to send kindergarten through second grade teachers to additive reasoning training during the summer of 2011.

The principal reported that she is pleased with the programs that have been implemented at school C. “I feel like we do a really good job here.” The principal stated that special education students work with DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) “up to four times a day.” The principal has “special education teachers and paras do early intervention” with My Sidewalks, which is an intensive reading program. This program is based on each student’s skill level.
Principal C reported that there are a lot of students in kindergarten who either receive special education services or have the potential to qualify for special education services in the future. “I keep telling myself not to worry. We’re going to get them the interventions and services they need.” Principal C focuses on implementing interventions to address the learning issues of students.

**Strategies.** Test data are used in a variety of ways at school C. According to the principal, “we use a lot of data here on children. How they’re testing. What they’re doing, formal, informal. To know what they need.” Because of this, being able to interpret test data is important. Principal C reported that “being able to crunch data” is one of those skills that comes with the job. She stated that “you just get used to looking at it and what you’re looking for.” The principal reported on item 12 of the first scale of the *KSSE Survey* that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in the appropriate application and interpretation of scores. She reported on the second scale that she is somewhat knowledgeable in these areas. Teachers reported that Principal C is extremely knowledgeable (3.7) in the appropriate application and interpretation of scores.

Data collected during direct observation indicated that test data come from end of quarter tests and are reviewed one time each quarter in data meetings. Data meeting dates were identified in the principal’s calendar. During data meetings, the principal was observed writing down every at-risk student’s name, average, and end of quarter test score. Calendar data indicated that end of quarter tests are given to students each quarter. The principal was observed examining each student’s needs and relating those needs to the teacher that they would have the following school year. The principal used the data team to not only identify at-risk students but generate ideas for
interventions. The overall school test scores for each grade level as well as disaggregated special education scores were gone over during each meeting.

During direct observation, the principal and faculty members involved in the meeting discussed monitoring these students. Data drives the decision-making process at these meetings. There is an intense focus on monitoring students. Principal C reported on item 14 of the first scale of the *KSSE Survey* that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in methods of monitoring student progress. Both the principal and teachers (3.9) reported on the second scale that the principal is extremely knowledgeable in this area.

While reviewing data, the principal made an assertion as to why the students in one grade level were performing poorly on the end of quarter test. “They’re not using the gift that you’re giving them.” This statement was made to a general education teacher about special education and general education students not using the strategies that the teacher had taught those students. This response was made in the comparison and analysis between end of quarter assessment grades, low grades, and quarter averages, higher grades.

The principal reported that special education teachers are included in data meetings. Data collected during direct observation indicated that special education teachers are included in data meetings. During an interview, the principal stated “So they crunch. They’re crunching through the data with us.” The principal referred to this process during direct observation as the “mining” of data. The principal stated during an interview that,

we always, we drill down to the individual children. And what the wonderful thing is that they [special education teachers] see things from a different perspective. And some of the strategies they will throw in for a child that may not be special ed, the general education teacher will think is a wonderful strategy. It’s so good to have all those different . . . views.
During direct observation, Principal C stated that faculty members share instructional strategies both vertically, between grade level teachers, and horizontally, between grade levels. The principal was observed leading a discussion on instructional strategies for dealing with a student in a different least restrictive environment during the next school year. On item 32 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey, the principal reported that it is extremely necessary for a principal to be skilled in implementing the least restrictive placement and implementing interventions consistent with the needs of the student. The principal reported on the second scale that she is skilled in these areas. Teachers reported that the principal is extremely skilled (3.8) in these areas. For a different student, the principal identified a strategy the student could use for telling time. The principal reported that she had observed this strategy in another teacher’s classroom, and she asserted “that strategy would work well with special education.”

The principal and faculty members at data meetings were observed discussing specific interventions. “Reteach and re-test” were both discussed as strategies that are used frequently. The principal stated during an interview that “at the data meetings, we look at all the data, and we look at it by individuals, [and] if they don’t master a test, we re-teach it, and we retest it.” Then the teacher will “pull them back into small groups for the math.” The principal also noted that they provide extended day services so that students can receive additional assistance. During direct observation, the principal reported that special education and general education teachers provide extended day services in the areas of reading and math from October through March.

There were a lot of hands-on projects observed throughout the school building. Picture data indicated that some bulletin boards displayed the end result of hands-on projects. Picture data indicated the use of hands-on activities that can be manipulated are used in the classroom. Calendar data indicated that the teacher attends professional development activities that focus on
hands-on activities. There was a student of the month wall outside of the office. The principal reported during direct observation that it builds self-esteem when students “take pride in themselves.”

The principal reported that she thinks the programs, processes, and strategies she has implemented at school C work:

I care about the kids. So for us at this point in time in our lives, it works for us. Now would it work everywhere else? I don’t know. And is there a better way? Maybe, you know. But for now, I think that we’re doing what we need to do.

Principal C is confident that the faculty and staff at school C, as well as herself, are doing everything they can for their students.

*Active Leadership*

Data indicated that the principal is an active leader. She sets goals and achieves them. She is flexible in her schedule and leadership. She is involved throughout the educational process, and she provides positive supports to both students and teachers. The principal reported that part of her job is getting teachers “the things that they need . . . resources that they need . . . whether it’s personnel, or it’s materials, or outside resources.”

*Goal setting and flexibility.* According to the principal, she is goal oriented and thinks “principals really have to be flexible.” Principal C reported that she keeps up with the important appointments in a calendar of appointments. She stated that “you can’t function as an administrator without keeping a calendar of everything that’s going on. You would be a mess.” Because of this, she keeps a calendar that she carries with her. She recalls “When I first took the
position, I made the mistake of writing in pen, and you can’t do that. So I learned quick. You write in pencil.” The reason you write in pencil is because “you’ve got to be flexible.”

The principal writes down “appointments with central office, principals’ meetings, [and] deadlines” in her calendar. She does not keep the “day-to-day functions” of her job in the calendar “because that’s really where you have to be flexible.” Calendar data indicated that the principal remains flexible by making changes in her calendar. She does not keep a list of the tasks that must be completed each day in this calendar. She uses Post-It notes for those tasks. When she first became a principal, she reported that she “tried to . . . keep a really nice checklist” of the tasks she needed to complete each day.

I can write it down on a calendar and I can have it on a checklist, but it’s going to get shifted and moved because the priorities are always going to be on the children themselves. So whatever you’ve planned today as far as . . . I’m going to do a walkthrough at this time or I’m going to do an observation at this time, they can always be superseded by something with the children.

This is why it is important for a principal to be flexible. She stated that “you start to learn in that first year that you’re not going to get to all those . . . things.” The principal stated that “sometimes it gives you a sense of accomplishment to put them on a post-it. Because when you finish it, you throw it in the garbage.” This gives the principal a feeling of accomplishment.

Data collected during direct observation indicated that the school culture is goal oriented. Several pieces of large paper hang on the walls in the school data room. The following question is written on one of the pieces of paper. “What does our school stand for?” One of the answers listed by a teacher is that the school is “goal oriented.” The question “Where is our school headed?” is written on a second piece of paper. One teacher wrote “teachers working toward a common goal.”
During morning announcements over the intercom, a daily goal of 30% completion toward each student’s ARI points was announced. The next day the principal announced that it is time for students to get focused on academics. Because a standardized state assessment was being administered the morning of observations, the principal went to every classroom of the grade level being administered the assessment and encouraged students to do their best. Calendar data indicated that the principal has done this on other occasions.

Another example of the goal-oriented culture at this school is the bulletin board outside the main office that is titled “Tracking Our Success.” This bulletin board displays Stanford 10 results from the reading vocabulary and reading comprehension sections that have been made into bar graphs for third, fourth, and fifth grade levels from the 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 school years. Another bulletin board in a different hallway is titled “Booking it to 100%.” This bulletin board lists four teachers’ names and puts the amount of books each class reads up on the bulletin board so that each teacher’s class can see where they are in comparison to the other classes. This goal-oriented strategy uses competition to motivate students to reach their goals.

When a student with severe disabilities was not accepted at a school that serves the more severely disabled, Principal C stated, during an interview, that she decided it was time to “push back.” She stated “I went a different avenue. And, and very politely . . . asked about, hey, can we look at this again?” Because of the principal’s actions, the student will be served at that school during the next school year. The principal reported that the student’s parents are “very excited for her.” She reported that “we’re excited for her because that’s frustrating when you don’t feel like you’re meeting their needs.” The principal’s goal was to make sure the student received the services she needs to be successful.
Another problem arose when the principal reported that she needed another classroom aide. This occurred at the beginning of the school year. The principal reported “you push” and the central office tells you “no”, so you push again. The central office tells you no again. “You can’t just stand in the middle of the floor and just jump up and down and scream and yell.” The principal reported that one skill an administrator needs is the ability to “work with lots of different people to get the resources that you need for your children and for your teachers.” The principal was able to reach her goal of obtaining an aide.

**Involvement and supports.** The principal reported that she is actively involved in the educational process and a provider of supports. Direct observation data indicated that Principal C is involved in the educational process, is a hands-on administrator, is the instructional leader and facilitator, and knows what is going on in school C. The principal referred to herself, during an interview, as the “go to person” for IEP, eligibility, and problem-solving team meetings. She is the “coach.” The person to whom everyone looks.

The principal is involved in the special education process. She was observed questioning a special education teacher about a special education student. “When do we test [reevaluate] him again?” With regard to students receiving special education services, the principal stated “if they test out, we need to do whatever we have to do” to keep them from going back into special education.

The principal was observed speaking to the speech pathologist about a student. This student had failed the current school year, and the principal and speech pathologist were discussing whether or not the student should be promoted to the next grade level. “If he goes into special education, we will move him up. If he doesn’t, we can’t justify the move.”
The principal reported that she is involved in the educational program at school C in order to provide students and teachers with the supports they need.

I don’t think I could service the children the way they needed to be serviced and take care of the employees the way they needed to be taken care of if I said, well, I’m just going to be the book person, and I know what the law is, or you go write the IEP. You just, you handle it. You’re the special ed teacher. You just handle it, and I’ll come sign off. That’s just the way I am.

She is involved in taking care of both students and employees. She tries to take care of general education and special education teachers. She understands that special education teachers are trying to follow the students’ IEPs and do “what’s best for the child.” General education teachers are trying to do the same, but they have a larger number of students in their classes.

Sometimes you just have to kind of get a balance going, so I think that’s one of the important roles that I play is just keeping the IEPs met, maximizing instruction, and then keeping the faculty . . . where we can breathe.

The principal reported on item 28 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be able to articulate a personal philosophy of special education, including its relationship with general education. Both the principal and teachers (3.9) reported that the principal is extremely skilled in this area.

During direct observation, Principal C reported that a principal has to be a problem solver and mediator. She stated, during an interview, that “there are going to be bumps in the road. I mean it’s not a perfect world because we’re all people, and I’m here to calm the water.” If there is a disagreement between the general education teacher and special education teacher, “then you’ve got to be able to step up to the plate and say, okay, . . . let’s fix this.” The principal reported that this is “really an important role.” According to the principal, “when you see that stress level rising, you’ve got to be able to step in and come up with solutions because everybody’s looking at it from their perspective sometimes.”

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The principal is also involved in providing both students and teachers with rewards and positive reinforcement. During an interview, the principal stated that she has a “sock hop” for students “who worked hard.” She also has a reading night to reward students. During announcements, the principal was observed calling out the names of a group of students who had made progress toward ARI points. Principal C was observed going to every class that was taking a state assessment to give them a motivational speech the morning of the test. She told them that she swapped the schedule around so that they could go to PE. In return, she asked them what they had to do for her. They responded by saying that they had to try hard on the test.

The principal was observed, during data meetings, praising each group of grade level teachers throughout the meeting. She praised teachers for their ability to improve student test scores. The principal would go over what each group of grade level teachers had done well, as well as what each group of teachers needed to work on. She referred to these as “pluses and deltas.”

Principal C also reported that she is actively involved in securing and providing supports and resources. She stated that “we were inundated with a lot of exceptionalities this year, and there was no physical way for us to meet the IEPs.” They just did not have the personnel that was needed to provide students with the services that were written in their IEPs. According to the principal, she understands how important it is to construct instruction based on the legal requirements of special education. The principal reported on item 29 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for a principal to be able to construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations. She reported on the second scale that she is skilled in these areas. Teachers reported the principal is extremely skilled (3.8) in these areas.
The principal stated that “we don’t look at the minimum. We try to maximize. In other words, the IEP may be set at so many minutes per day, per week, or whatever, but we always strive for more.” She stated that providing students with the minimum has “never been our philosophy here.” However, she was “willing to step in and fight that fight to say we have to have help here. You, you’re going to have to find the help.” She also reported that “you have to have that ability to go to bat when you know something’s not right and not just ask the first time, but keep asking.” She reported that receiving that aide was extremely important. “When I tell you we were stretched like a rubber band, we were stretched like a rubber band.”

When they did not have the number of personnel necessary to provide students with the services they require, a teacher came to the principal in tears because she was overwhelmed. Principal C stated that the teacher said “it’s okay [Principal C]. I just really needed you to listen to me.” The principal stated that the teacher was just frustrated because she did not have enough support. Sometimes “you just have to listen.” Listening to teachers is an important way to support them.

Principal C also supports teachers through professional development. She stated that she sends teachers to training whenever they need it. With regard to professional development, the principal stated that “I try to give them all the resources that they need, the support that they need.”

According to Principal C, she tries to put her resources in the area of greatest need. She “concentrated the services at kindergarten” because that is where the greatest need was. There are a lot of students in kindergarten who are either at-risk or receive special education services.
Summary

Principal C is finishing her 4th year as principal of school C. Themes identified in Case C were (a) collaboration with and utilization of faculty and staff, (b) principal’s special education paradigm, (c) program interventions and strategies, and (d) active leadership. In the first theme, collaboration with and utilization of faculty and staff, the principal’s collaborative approach to education, and utilization of faculty and staff were both identified as subthemes. The principal’s special education paradigm was identified as the second theme and yielded the first subtheme in background and experiences that shaped the principal’s paradigm and a second subtheme in knowledge of special education. Two subthemes were identified in the third theme, as well. Subthemes of the third theme, program interventions and strategies, were program interventions and strategies. Two subthemes were identified in the fourth theme, active leadership. The first subtheme was goal setting and flexibility, and the second subtheme was involvement and supports.

Case D

Contextual Factors

Demographic data in this section comes from the demographic section of the KSSE Survey that was completed by Principal D. Data used to describe the setting for Case D was gathered through 2 days of onsite direct observation. A digital camera, digital voice recorder, and pocket-size note memo pad were used to collect and record data.

The setting for Case D is a large urban school. The school has split two times over the past decade. The student population was over 1,300 before the school split the first time. The student population consists of 560 students in kindergarten through fifth grades. Of the total population, 32 (6%) students qualify for and receive special education services. There are five
general education teachers at each grade level. One full-time special education teacher, along with one speech pathologist, who has responsibilities at other schools as well, serve students with disabilities at this school.

There is only one way to enter the building at this site, and security is a top priority. The front door opens to a room with security cameras and two locked doors facing the front door. Although secured, the room is welcoming with plants; trophy cases; a history of the school; and a closed circuit, flat screen television hanging from the upper right hand corner of the room. Just below the television is a diagram representing the values of the school system (e.g., communication, character, etc.). Upon entrance into the room, one secretary is behind a glass window on the right, and the principal’s secretary is in a room with an open door to the left. Behind the principal’s secretary’s desk, which is built into a countertop that divides the room, is a hallway. On the left side of the hallway is a conference room. At the end of the hall is the principal’s office. The principal’s office is a large room with a table and two chairs to the left; an executive desk in the middle with two chairs in front of the desk, and a second desk behind the first desk facing the wall with a hutch on top; a long countertop with cabinets underneath that runs from the far corner to halfway down the wall to the right side; three bookshelves; and two chairs. A second door is placed on the wall between these chairs and opens into the main hall of the school. There is a single window to the left of the table and two chairs. Most of the furniture has been purchased recently and is covered in leather and built from wood. The room is painted in bright yellow, which is the school color, and the carpet is brown and laced with a variety of colors.

From the many plaques and picture frames displaying a variety of professional memberships, certificates, awards, and degrees hanging on the walls in Principal D’s office, one
can easily see that she is heavily involved in training and has received many accolades and awards. A certificate of membership for the Alabama Association of Elementary School Administrators and a National Principals’ Mentor Certification, both in 2008, are encased within picture frames and are proudly displayed. One plaque encases Principal D’s Alabama Renaissance Technology Academy for School Leaders Diploma. A second plaque certifies Principal D as being selected in 1997 as an Outstanding Young Woman of America “in recognition of outstanding professional achievement, superior leadership ability, and exceptional service to the community.” A third plaque recognizes her as the Teacher of The Year in 1996 at the school she was at during that time period. A certificate recognizing her leadership presented in 2004. All of her degrees are proudly displayed, as well.

The principal has a variety of books and 3-ring binders on her bookshelves. Examples of books include *A Principal’s Guide to Special Education* and *Proactive Discipline for Reactive Students*. Three-ring binders include a Special Services handbook, used to organize system training information and materials, and a binder titled Special Education Updates and Gifted Education. A school system handbook produced by the school system’s special education department can be found in one of the bookshelves, as well.

Students are housed in a single, interconnected building. Kindergarten through second grades are housed on one end of the school, and third through fifth grades are housed in the opposite end of the school. The hallways are long and aligned with lockers, posters, and students’ projects. In the main hall of the building are trophy cases displaying faculty and student accomplishments such as several Alabama Parent Teacher Association (PTA): Golden Apple Awards; the 2006-2007 Academic Achievement Award; and both regional and state winner plaques for student teams winning the Destination Imagination Challenges.
Every classroom has technology. The cafeteria is constructed around a rainforest theme and is designated as the Rainforest Café. The library is constructed around a farm theme. On a bulletin board in the kindergarten through third grade wing of the building, all newspaper clippings highlighting students, teachers, and community events are proudly displayed. There are many parent volunteers walking throughout the school building.

Participant Description

Demographic data in this section were collected in two ways. First, data were collected from the demographic section of the KSSE Survey that was completed by Principal D. Second, interview data were analyzed to increase the depth of information gathered on the principal as well as to validate and clarify demographic information.

Principal D is a female African American, who describes herself as an avid reader. She is finishing her 33rd year in education and comes from a family of educators. Her father was a teacher and coach. Her mother was a teacher and elementary school principal. Principal D was an elementary school teacher for 20 years. She was a middle school assistant principal for 3 years. This is her 10th year as principal of site D. Principal D has a bachelor’s degree in early childhood. She has a master’s degree in early childhood and elementary education. She acquired an education specialist degree in administration and a doctorate of education in education leadership.

Preparation

Principal D has been prepared to oversee special education services in a variety of ways. She has received training from undergraduate and graduate coursework. She has received
training through hands-on experiences, professional development organizations, and from the school system with which she is employed, as well.

The principal describes her undergraduate coursework as not having prepared her to deal with special education issues. She took one class that “was very general in nature.” The preparation she received at the masters and educational specialist levels provided her with additional coursework at those levels. She “received quite a bit in [her] doctorate” coursework. “We did a lot of case studies at that level.”

The principal was limited in the amount of time and contact she had with students with disabilities until she became a principal. Most of the principal’s knowledge with special education has come from the hands-on experiences she has had with special education since becoming a principal. She attends IEP meetings and reads about special education topics. She is a member of the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS), which is an organization for education administrative professionals. This organization provides the principal with a lot of professional development in special education.

The principal attends “a lot of professional development in the area of special [education]” outside of that which is provided by CLAS. The school system she works in requires principals to attend professional development on special education topics. The principal attends training provided by lawyers who practice education law and specialize in special education law.

*Assistant Principal*

Due to a large student population, Principal D has an assistant principal. The assistant principal is a male Caucasian with 38 years in education. He spent 10 years as a middle school
math teacher and 21 years at a high school math teacher. He has served as an elementary school assistant principal for 7 years. He has been in his current position for 4 years. The assistant principal has a bachelor’s degree in math education Grades 7 through 12; a master’s, educational specialist, and education doctorate degrees in education leadership and administration. He has 21 semester hours in post-doctoral coursework.

Principal D divides the local education administrative representative duties between them. She alternates kindergarten through second grade and third through fifth grade IEP responsibilities between the two of them each year. The principal wants to make sure that her assistant principal has a variety of experiences with the special education population to prepare him if he becomes a principal in the future.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The principal completed both scales on the KSSE Survey. Scale 1 of the KSSE Survey measures the principal’s perception of the necessity of each survey item as it relates to the role of the elementary school principal. The first 27 items focused on specific knowledge bases, and items 28 through 35 focused on specific skills. Data from scale 1 of the KSSE Survey are reported in Table 10.
Table 10

Principal’s Ratings of the Importance of Specific Items on Scale 1 of KSSE Survey: How Necessary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal’s response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Issues in definition and identification procedures for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of typical and exceptional learners</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Basic terminology used in assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ethical concerns related to assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Typical procedures used for screening, prereferral, referral, and classification</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Appropriate application and interpretation of scores</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The relationship between assessment and placement decisions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Methods of monitoring student progress</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Differing learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to these styles</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Basic classroom management theories, methods, and techniques for students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Research and best practices for effective management of teaching and learning for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ways in which technology can assist with planning and managing the teaching and learning environment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students’ behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Teacher attitudes and behaviors that positively or negatively influence the student behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Strategies for crisis prevention/intervention</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Strategies for preparing students to live harmoniously and productively in a multiclass, multietnic, multicultural, and multinational world</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Typical concerns of parents of students with disabilities and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Roles of students, parents, teachers, and other school and community personnel in planning a student’s individualized educational program</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*(table continues)*
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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal’s response</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27. One’s own cultural biases and differences that affect one’s attitude toward students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Articulate a personal philosophy of special education, including its relationship to/with general education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Interpret assessment data for instructional planning</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Demonstrate a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The scoring criteria are on a scale of (1-4) for each variable. Where 1 = not at all necessary, 2 = somewhat necessary, 3 = necessary, and 4 = extremely necessary.

In reference to the amount of knowledge and skills elementary principals should possess with regard to special education, Principal D reports 20 of the knowledge bases and skills as extremely necessary. She reports 14 of the knowledge bases and skills as necessary and one knowledge base as being somewhat necessary. This indicates that the principal does not think all areas of special education surveyed are vital.

The teacher version of the KSSE Survey and participant’s rights were distributed to the faculty of the principal for Case D. They were hand-delivered to every faculty member. Each faculty member received explicit instructions as to the purpose of the survey and the procedures to be followed. Each faculty member was assured that his or her responses would be kept confidential. Each faculty member was informed that the principal would not have access to any data except after the data of all surveys are compiled. Of 32 faculty members who were given surveys, 22 (69%) returned surveys. Whereas the first 27 survey items focused on the principal’s
knowledge of special education, items 28 through 35 focused on the level at which the principal possesses skills relevant to special education. The principal’s self-reported knowledge, as indicated on the second scale of the KSSE Survey, is compared to the mean responses of teachers for each item in Table 11.

Table 11

*Comparison of Principal’s Ratings with Teachers’ Ratings of Principal on Scale 2 of KSSE Survey: How Knowledgeable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal’s response</th>
<th>Teachers’ M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Issues in definition and identification procedures for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of typical and exceptional learners</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Basic terminology used in assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ethical concerns related to assessment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Typical procedures used for screening, prereferral, referral, and classification</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Appropriate application and interpretation of scores</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The relationship between assessment and placement decisions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Methods of monitoring student progress</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Differing learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to these styles</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Basic classroom management theories, methods, and techniques for students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Research and best practices for effective management of teaching and learning for students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal’s response</th>
<th>Teachers’ M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. Ways in which technology can assist with planning and managing the teaching and learning environment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students’ behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Teacher attitudes and behaviors that positively or negatively influence the student behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Strategies for crisis prevention/intervention</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Strategies for preparing students to live harmoniously and productively in a multiclass, multiethnic, multicultural, and multinational world</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Typical concerns of parents of students with disabilities and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Roles of students, parents, teachers, and other school and community personnel in planning a student’s individualized educational program</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. One’s own cultural biases and differences that affect one’s attitude toward students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The scoring criteria are on a scale of (1-4) for each variable. Where 1 = not at all knowledgeable, 2 = somewhat knowledgeable, 3 = knowledgeable, and 4 = extremely knowledgeable. Parentheses are used to indicate the number of respondents for each question that was different than 22.*

Of the first 27, the principal rated herself as a 4.0, extremely knowledgeable, on 8 of the items; a 3.0, knowledgeable, on 17 of the items; and a 2.0, somewhat knowledgeable, on 2 of the items. The principal’s self-reported mean score for the first 27 items on the second scale of the KSSE Survey is 3.15. The mean score reported by the faculty for these same items is 3.17. Of the mean scores based on faculty responses on the principal’s possession of these knowledge bases, nine items are rated within 0.1 of the principal’s self-rating and six of those items are an exact match at 0.0. Zero items are rated at 1.0 or greater way from the principal’s self-rating. Five items are rated at 0.8 or 0.9 away from the principal’s self-rating.

The six items that are rated by the faculty and align exactly (0.0) with the principal’s self-reported score follow. The mean score based on faculty ratings as well as the principal’s self-reported ratings on all six items is 3.0. Those items are items 5, 15, 17, 18, 19, and 22: (5)
similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of typical and exceptional learners; (15) differing learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to these styles; (17) basic classroom management theories, methods, and techniques for students with disabilities; (18) research and best practices for effective management of teaching and learning for students with disabilities; (19) ways in which technology can assist with planning and managing the teaching and learning environment of students with disabilities; and (22) strategies for crisis prevention/intervention.

The five items with a mean score that were rated by faculty members at 0.8 or 0.9 away from the principal’s self-rating follow. The three items with faculty mean scores furthest away at a distance of 0.9 from the principal’s self-reported rating are the following items: (2) issues in definition and identification procedures for students with disabilities; (7) effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities; and (16) life skills and instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities. The next two items with faculty mean scores slightly closer were at a distance of 0.8 to the principal’s self-reported rating. Those items are (3) due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement and (20) applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students’ behaviors.

Items 28 through 35 focused on the skills the principal possesses. The principal’s self-reported skill as indicated on the second scale of the KSSE Survey is compared to the mean responses of teachers for each item in Table 12. When compared to the principal’s self-reported skills, three items stand out because of their distance from the principal’s self-reported skills. Items 29 and 31 stand out because of how close they are to the principal’s self-reported skills:
(29) construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations and (33) use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel. Item (31) demonstrates a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities and stands out because of how far it is from the principal’s self-reported skills.

The two items reported by the faculty within 0.1 of the principal’s mean score follow. The mean faculty score for one item is an exact match with the principal’s self-reported rating of 3.0. This item is item (33) use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel. The mean faculty score for a second item is a distance of 0.1 from the principal’s self-reported rating of 3.0. This item is item (29) construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations.

The one item reported by the faculty that is the further than 1.0 away from the principal’s self-reported rating follows. The mean for faculty on this item is 1.1 lower than the principal’s self-reported rating. The mean of faculty rating for this item is 2.9. Item 31 demonstrates a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities.
Table 12

Comparison of Principal’s Ratings with Teachers’ Ratings of Principal on Scale 2 of KSSE Survey: How Skilled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal’s response</th>
<th>Teachers’ M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28. Articulate a personal philosophy of special education, including its relationship to/with general education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.8(20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.1(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Interpret assessment data for instructional planning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Demonstrate a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9(19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5(21)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The scoring criteria are on a scale of (1-4) for each variable. Where 1 = not at all skilled, 2 = somewhat skilled, 3 = skilled, and 4 = extremely skilled. Parentheses are used to indicate the number of respondents for each question that was different than 22.

Mixed-methods Data Analysis

To identify themes and subthemes, data from an interview, KSSE Survey, calendar, and observations were reviewed by the researcher. Data were analyzed by identifying codes among data sets. Additional analysis yielded the categorization of coded data. Categories were analyzed to identify themes. Based on the analysis of these data, 25 codes were extracted. Those codes were combined into 11 categories that were narrowed further into four themes that were validated through the triangulation of data from multiple sources (i.e., principal’s survey, teachers’ surveys, principal’s calendar, direct observation, and pictures) (see Appendix S). The four themes identified within the data are (a) communication through collaboration and
community involvement, (b) background and knowledge of special education, (c) interventions and programs, and (d) managerial support. The four themes are discussed in this section.

Findings

Communication through Community Involvement and Collaboration

Principal D communicates her vision to students, faculty, parents, and the community. She collaborates with education professionals who she views as experts in their chosen areas. Communication and collaboration are subthemes in this section.

Communication. According to Principal D, she keeps her faculty and staff up-to-date on her appointments and availability. She began keeping a calendar of appointments for herself; however, she found it beneficial to keep her faculty and staff informed of her schedule, as well. Keeping faculty and staff informed helps special education teachers and others to “know right away, okay, this is not a good date to setup meetings with her because she already has something going on that particular day.” The principal reported that she tries to do “long range planning.” She also tries “to go in and adjust it whenever changes are made.” Principal D stated that the nature of her position causes her to continually adjust her schedules. There are “unexpected things that come up all the time and changes have to be made.” This is why she uses “Blackberry and Outlook” because “you can always go in, adjust, [and] make changes.”

Principal D has a variety of administrative tasks that she must complete each day. During direct observation, she reported that she blocks off 2 hours at the end of each day to complete administrative tasks. She reported that these tasks include reading, composing, and responding to e-mails.
During direct observation, the principal reported that she meets with the assistant principal each morning. During this time, they coordinate their schedules for the day, and they collaborate about any problems in the school.

The commitment of the entire school to parental and community involvement can be seen in the vision statement that hangs in the main hallway of school D. The vision statement ends by stating that students will “reach their highest potential” through “a child-centered environment, a cohesive staff, positive parental involvement, and strong community support.” During direct observation, the principal reported that she has received much parental and community support. There is an established Parent Teacher Association at school D. The principal has also formed a strong Community Advisory Committee that she utilizes to receive feedback from community members. The principal received the Alabama PTA Golden Apple Award for the 2002-2003 school year. This was awarded for having 100% faculty membership in the PTA. She received two plaques from the PTA for her support of students and the PTA. These were received for the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years. Calendar data indicated that the PTA meets on a monthly basis.

The principal stated in an interview that principals “need to be compassionate when it comes to working with the children and the parents” of those students with disabilities. Parents “want to know that you have their child’s best interest at heart. And if you have that along with the knowledge of what is expected, I think those are the most important things you need.” The principal reported that it is important for parents to understand that the principal is working to do what is right for their child. The principal has to communicate this.

Principal D reported on item 24 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable of the typical concerns of parents of students with
disabilities and the appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns. She reported herself as being knowledgeable in these areas on the second scale of the KSSE Survey. Teachers also reported the principal as being knowledgeable (3.2) in these areas. During direct observation, the principal reported that she uses books to address parental concerns. The principal shares books she reads for professional development with parents when they have specific issues or concerns that are covered in a particular book.

During awards day, Principal D was observed presenting certificates to students in different grade levels, at different times, and in front of large audiences of parents. At the end of each ceremony, the principal would give her closing remarks. In those remarks, she would challenge parents to continue their child’s learning throughout the summer. She encouraged parents to obtain library cards for their children, to encourage their children to read, and to work with their children on their math facts during the summer months.

Collaboration. The principal reported on item 33 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in how to use collaborative strategies to work with students, parents, and school and community personnel. On the second scale, Principal D and the teachers (3.0) at school D reported that the principal is knowledgeable in this area.

When asked, during an interview, if she consults with her teachers as experts, principal D responded that “I would consult with them. I do.” She reported that she depends on her teachers and that she and her teachers work together “simultaneously.” The principal stated that she meets with all special education teachers “on a monthly basis.” They “collaborate together.”
The principal has appointed one special education teacher as the lead special education teacher for school D. The current lead special education teacher has served in this capacity for 4 years. Principal D described her relationship with the lead special education teacher as “a good working relationship.” She meets with the lead special education teacher “independently on special cases.” According to the principal, the lead special education teacher will inform the principal when they “need to meet about a special case so she can give . . . an update or whatever.” The principal will approach the lead special education teacher if the principal thinks they need to meet about a specific case. This might occur if the principal “needs more information about” a specific issue, if a parent calls, or if a “teacher has come forth and shared” something that the principal thinks she needs the lead special education teacher’s input on. The principal views this relationship as “interchangeable.” Either the lead special education teacher or the principal can approach the other one with an issue. The principal stated that they “meet on a monthly basis” as well as on “an as-needed basis.”

The principal and lead special education teacher “have a lot of informal meetings.” The principal stated that she involves the lead special education teacher “when a new student comes into the school.” The principal stated,

Before I even place the student, I ask for her to come check the files, look at everything. And then if she denotes anything or sees anything that I, she feels that I need to know as far as the placement, I take that into consideration. So she does have quite a bit of input because I want that. I want to try to make sure that the placement that I make is one that’s going to be the best possible one. Uh, huh, And I feel like in getting all the experts in there, then we’ve done everything that we can possibly do. And it’s not just my eyes looking at it but someone else’s, too.

The principal reported that she approaches the lead special education teacher with all special education related questions.
According to the principal, she tries to include special education and general education teachers by collaborating with them when identifying needs. She stated, “I ask them [special education teachers] to provide input in our plan of action of how we’re going to move forward to bridge and close those gaps. I then include the general ed teachers in that population, as well.” The principal brings faculty members together. This is also true when it comes to meetings.

The principal has formal interactions with teachers on special education issues at “IEP meetings, their collaboration meetings, and faculty meetings.” The principal reported on item 26 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in the ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities. On the second scale, she reported that she is extremely knowledgeable in this area. Teachers reported her as knowledgeable (3.4) in this area. She reported that they have “grade level meetings” as well as “data meetings.” The principal stated, “data meetings are done by cross-grade level. We have k and first together, second and third together, and fourth and fifth, so they can kind of hear” from the student’s previous teacher about any issues the student was having. Calendar data indicates that data meetings are held on a monthly basis, sometimes more.

The principal also reported that she uses faculty meetings as professional learning communities. “My faculty meetings are basically . . . a professional learning community in that everyone in this building presents.” She reported that she believes in the teacher-leader concept. In fact, “when you go somewhere, you’re required to come back and share that with the staff. It’s not principal led only. I lead meetings; however, the majority of the meetings are led by the staff.”
The principal reported that she relies on her special education teachers to help generate ideas when new programs are to be implemented that deal with special education topics. With regard to developing and implementing the program, the principal stated “basically, we do that together, collaboratively.”

Principal D also collaborates with central office personnel. She reported that she collaborates with central office personnel on a “bi-monthly” basis. The principal stated that “we have meetings where the special ed director and their department come in and also give us updates.” According to the principal, the DOSE “has an open door policy.” The principal communicates the needs of her school to the DOSE. The principal and DOSE communicates through e-mail, phone calls, and in person. According to the principal, the DOSE is “very hands-on.”

The principal reported that there is a resource specialist at the central office who assists with special education related problems at the elementary school level. The person comes to the school each Wednesday “to assist the teachers with any cases they might have, or the administration with any questions we might have in the area of special education, or any students that we service.” An example of how the resource specialist is used was given by the principal during an interview.

I had a third grade teacher that was having some disciplinary needs in the classroom. We conversed with the special ed teacher, and then we felt like that it was at the point of bringing in someone higher with us with maybe a little bit more insight. I invited her in. She observed. She gave us feedback. She helped in developing the plan. And then she also came back for follow-up, and she was a part of the meeting with the parents. So that’s how we really utilize her, and we utilize her a lot.

The resource specialist is used as an additional expert to collaborate with when solving special education problems.
Background and Knowledge of Special Education

Principal D’s background and knowledge of special education influence the way she administers the special education program at school D. The principal has had previous experiences within her family, educational experience, and academic experience that have had an impact on the principal she is today as well as the amount of knowledge she has gained in the area of special education. Background and the principal’s knowledge of special education are subthemes in this section.

Background. Principal D reported in an interview that there are two main factors that have formed her view of how she administers the special education program at her school. “I would say personal experiences from my family members as well as working under other administrators who were very passionate about making sure that all children receive [a] quality education.” The principal stated that those principals “were adamant that policies and procedures would be followed” when it came to special education. They also made sure that teachers were “doing what they are supposed to be doing.” According to Principal D, this had an impact on her. As an assistant principal, Principal D’s main responsibility was to oversee the curriculum and instruction component at the school where she was employed. She was able to observe and learn from the leadership the principal provided.

Principal D had a family member who had academic difficulties when he was in elementary school. This family member “was failing, and there was a lot of discrepancy in the process of determining what kind of help he needed.” This led the principal to look at “how would I have handled that if I had been the administrator in charge?” According to the principal, both of these occurrences have “contributed to how I look at and how I handle special education
as a principal.” The principal stated that observing these processes has helped her to formulate how she handles the special education program at school D.

According to the principal, her preparation in special education and related issues was lacking in her undergraduate coursework. She reported having one class that focused on special education. The principal reported this class as “very general in nature.” She received additional training in her master’s and education specialist coursework. “I received quite a bit in my doctorate” coursework, as well. Most of the special education content in her doctoral studies was in the form of case studies. She reported that she received “hands-on experience” as an administrator by “attending” and “observing IEP meetings . . . and learning the law.” The principal reported during direct observation that she used to attend IEP meetings on an almost daily basis before her school split three times. Prior to splitting, she was involved in many IEP meetings with student advocates. These meetings were tape recorded. The principal stated that it was very important to make sure that all policies and procedures were followed. She stated in an interview, “I do a lot of reading, and I attend a lot of professional development in the area of special ed.” She reported, during direct observation, that she does not usually say much during IEP meetings. This is especially true when parents bring a tape recorder.

Direct observation data indicated that the principal is a member of several professional organizations. She keeps up with changes in special education through the training that is provided by the school system she is in and the training she receives from the professional organizations for which she is a member. The principal reported, during an interview, that she is a member of CLAS, which provides her with a lot of professional development on special education. Also, she recently attended training provided by a lawyer on legal updates in special education law.
Knowledge of special education. Principal D reported that “ongoing professional development” is an important component of a special education program. She reported that the greatest area of need for professional development at her school is in dealing with students with specific learning disabilities. “Kids with learning disabilities, to me, is one of the biggest areas that needs the strongest component of professional development for teachers because it’s so diverse.” The principal stated that there are “so many faucets of it that teachers sometimes are overwhelmed with trying to meet the needs of those students.” She reported that the area of specific learning disabilities “requires expertise and a lot of intensive training.”

During direct observation, the lead special education teacher reported that she tries to keep the principal up-to-date on all special education related issues. The lead special education teacher reported that the principal sends her to professional development activities whenever she requests it. During an interview, the principal stated special education teachers provide training on special education issues at the beginning of each school year. “The special education department provides professional development throughout the year.” Special education teachers attend this training on a regular basis throughout the school year.

The principal reported that all general education teachers are included in special education training. She stated that she always includes general education teachers “if they are involved heavily with inclusion students.” On item 28 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey, the principal reported that it is necessary for a principal to be able to articulate a personal philosophy of special education, including its relationship to and with general education. She reported on the second scale that she is skilled in this area. Teachers reported that she is skilled (2.8) in this area.

Knowledge in special education is important to Principal D. “I think the biggest skill is your knowledge--you need to have a wealth of knowledge when it comes to what the needs are
of special ed.” Direct observation data indicated the principal is somewhat knowledgeable in special education. On item 4 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey, the principal reported that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in the rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education. The principal reported on the second scale that she is extremely knowledgeable in these areas. Teachers reported that the principal is extremely knowledgeable (3.5) in these areas. During direct observation, Principal D spoke specifically to having a knowledge base in special education law because of her training. During an interview, the principal stated “I feel I have a pretty good grasp on the law because I can read that on a regular basis.”

The principal stated, during an interview, that IEP team decisions are “based on the data” they have collected. The principal reported that “IEP meetings” determine the services that students with disabilities will receive. It is the IEP team that determines whether or not a student needs a one-on-one aide or will be served in a full inclusion setting.

The principal stated during direct observation that it is important that the IEP does not specify which personnel will provide services. It is important to specify the objective, but not the person. The reason the IEP should not specify specific personnel is that this would limit who could provide the services, and the IEP would have to be revised if a person who is specified in the IEP is unable to provide services for the student.

The principal reported on item 13 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is necessary for a principal to know the relationship between assessment and placement decisions. Both the principal and teachers (3.3) at school D reported that the principal is knowledgeable in this area. The principal reported on item 25 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for a principal to be knowledgeable in the roles of students, parents, teachers, and
other school and community personnel in planning a student’s individualized educational program. Both the principal and teachers (3.3) reported that the principal is knowledgeable in these roles.

The principal reported, during an interview, that she observes teachers who use “co-teaching models” to implement full inclusion. On item 1 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey, the principal reported that it is extremely necessary for principals to have knowledge in models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education. The principal and teachers reported (3.1) on the second scale that the principal is knowledgeable in these areas.

The principal reported on item 20 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students’ behaviors. On the second scale, she reported that she is extremely knowledgeable in these areas. Teachers reported the principal to be knowledgeable (3.2) in these areas. During direct observation, the principal was observed following a student’s behavioral intervention plan. The student was placed in the conference room and isolated from other students. He was monitored by the principal, assistant principal, and school secretary.

Interventions and Programs

No subthemes were identified. Programs and interventions are important components in the education of students at school D. Both of these components are important in creating a child-centered school. During direct observation, the principal stated, “When I became a principal, the first thing I wanted to do was make sure we had a child-centered school.” She wanted to change the walls of the school to make it more interesting. The principal wanted to
create a school that focused on the student. Picture data collected during direct observation indicated that the principal achieved this goal. There is a large mural of a cruise ship painted on the wall in the main hall. Students’ pictures have been placed all over the vessel. A bulletin board has newspaper clippings of students and teachers posted for all to see. Further down the hall, two different hands-on student projects hang on either side of the wall. The cafeteria has been turned into a rainforest and named Rainforest Café. Inside the cafeteria, a pole in the middle of the room has been turned into a tree, and the wall on the side of the cafeteria has been painted to resemble a rain forest. The library has a farm theme.

The principal reported in an interview that she wants to become more knowledgeable in the different types of interventions and programs that are available. “I would like to continue to learn more and more about interventions, programs” that can be used to address student deficits in the areas in which students with specific learning disabilities and dyslexia struggle. Data collected during direct observation supported the claim in that the principal stated her concern is the interventions being used with students who have been identified as having a specific learning disability or dyslexia. During an interview, the principal stated that “common assessments that can be used to determine what those gaps are” is very important. The principal reported on item 30 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be skilled in interpreting assessment data for instructional planning. Principal D reported that she is extremely skilled in this area. Teachers reported her as skilled (3.3) in this area.

The principal is not concerned with the law; however, she is concerned with finding out “how do we reach those students who are supposedly unreachable or have those deficits that are so complex.” The principal “would like to be more equipped and have that kind of knowledge base to support” her teachers. Supporting teachers so they can help students is an important part
of being a principal. Principal D wants to bring “in those innovative programs that can help them to do their job better in meeting the needs of their students.”

During direct observation, the lead special education teacher was asked why she thought there was a small special education population at school D. The teacher reported that pre-service interventions and the implementation of a variety of programs provides an appropriate amount of supports that prevents some students from having to receive special education services in the first place.

The focus of Principal D is to prevent students from going into special education who do not require it. According to the lead special education teacher, one way the principal does this is by encouraging different strategies before students enter special education. When the principal was asked in an interview if her previous experiences with family members had caused her to focus on pre-service interventions before students are identified as requiring special education services, the principal responded as follows:

That’s perfect. That’s a very strong passion of mine, to help teachers to be able to identify early what it is that may be going on with the child to the point that they can put real interventions in place. That child may not really need special education services at all. It’s just that they need strong teachers that understand how to implement highly explicit instruction that’s going to help the child to be more successful in the classroom.

According to the principal, it is not that teachers do not want to provide students with the services they require, but it is that teachers do not “understand or they don’t know enough about quality, formal assessments to determine, specifically, what the next step is.” The principal reported on item 32 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be skilled in interpreting assessment data for instructional planning. The principal reported that she is extremely skilled in this area. Teachers reported that the principal is skilled (3.3) in this area.
The principal stated in an interview that her “ultimate goal with the special education program is to ensure that every child that truly, truly needs special education receives quality services as early as possible to help them be successful citizens in this world.” This is why special education screening procedures and interpreting scores are so important. Principal D reported on items 11 and 12 of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to have knowledge of (11) typical procedures used for screening, prereferral, referral, and classification and necessary for principals to have knowledge in (12) the appropriate application and interpretation of scores. Both the principal and teachers reported that Principal D is knowledgeable in the areas measured by items 11 (3.2) and 12 (3.3).

The principal reported that RtI is going to be helpful in ensuring that students receive pre-service interventions so that students will not be inappropriately identified as requiring special education services. Response to Intervention is going to “force us to do that.” This will prevent a greater number of students from receiving special education services who do not really need these services. It will help reduce the number of students in the special education setting.

According to the principal, she has identified what helps teachers support their students’ learning the most. “The biggest thing that I have found that helps teachers meet the needs of special ed students as well as other students is being very strong in their strategies and skills.” The principal has found that “the stronger they are with strategies the better they’ll be at meeting the needs of students.” According to the principal, it is not that students with disabilities are very different from their peers, the issue is that the “teacher has to be well-equipped in understanding formative assessments” and be able to take that data and develop an effective instructional plan that “includes those research-based strategies that’s going to meet the needs of those students.” The principal stated, “I know for a fact. I have seen that over and over and over.” Principal D
reported on item 18 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in research and best practices for the effective management of teaching and learning of students with disabilities. Both the principal and teachers (3.0) of school D reported on the second scale that the principal is knowledgeable in these areas.

Based on data collected during an interview, the principal ensures that teachers utilize assessment data by scheduling data meetings around the time state assessment data are sent to the school. The principal schedules data meetings at least monthly. Data collected from the principal’s calendar of appointments confirm that data meetings are scheduled on a regular basis. The principal reported during an interview that assessment data that are not from state assessments are reviewed at data meetings, as well. Assessment data used in data meetings are derived from DIBELS and the Alabama Reading and Math Test, which are state assessments; STAR Math; STAR Reading; Scott Foresman; and classroom assessments. Calendar data collected during direct observation indicated that STAR assessments are given for 1 full week in the spring.

Sharing strategies among teachers is important to the principal. This is one way that she supports student learning. According to the principal’s response on item 15 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey, the principal thinks it is necessary for principals to have knowledge of the different learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to their style of learning. The principal and teachers (3.0) reported on the second scale that the principal is knowledgeable in these areas. During direct observation, the lead special education teacher reported that the principal will observe her and recommend to some of the intervention strategies she uses to general education teachers. During an interview, the principal stated that she supports
“individualized student learning” through the use of small group, one-on-one instruction, and tutors. She relies on her teachers to implement these strategies, as needed.

Managerial Style

Principal D plays many roles as the administrator. She supports the special education program in a variety of ways. The principal utilizes the expertise of special education faculty members. She utilizes her faculty in a variety of ways to strengthen the special education program at school D. There are two subthemes found in this theme. Those subthemes are roles and supports and utilization of faculty.

Roles and supports. Principal D stated that there are many incidences that occur each day which prevent her from completing other administrative tasks. During direct observation, she reported that she has read *First Things First* by Covey, Merrill, and Merrill (1994). She stated that you just cannot get everything accomplished you need to each day. Therefore, a principal must establish what is important and get to those tasks before the end of the day. She makes a list of tasks she wants to accomplish each day and tries to complete the tasks on that list.

On item 5 of the first scale of the *KSSE Survey*, the principal reported that it is necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in the similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of both typical and exceptional learners. The principal and teachers (3.0) reported that she is knowledgeable in these areas. The principal works with special education teachers to determine the needs of the students. During an interview, she reported that she meets with special education teachers on a regular basis to look at student data. The principal looks at “where the gaps are” and then works with the special
education teachers to “formulate a plan for special ed.” The principal takes the role she plays in
supporting the special education program seriously. She stated that her role is to

    support the teachers in their efforts to meet the needs of the students. . . . To provide them
    with what they need to do their job well. And to make sure they have adequate time,
    resources, and all of that. I see that as my number one role there.

As part of this role, she thinks it is necessary to move teachers around to improve the level of
education provided to students. During direct observation, the principal reported that she is
moving teachers around to different grade levels to improve the cohesiveness of the group
dynamics as well as the instruction at each grade level. The principal reported that some teachers
are better equipped to teach at certain grade levels.

    The principal’s willingness to move teachers between grade levels in order to provide
students with the greatest academic instruction possible is an indication of this principal’s
commitment to providing students with a quality education. The principal reported on item 34 of
the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be skilled in demonstrating a
commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students.
The principal reported that she is extremely skilled in this area. Teachers reported that the
principal is skilled (3.3) in this area. Picture evidence collected during direct observation
indicates that the vision of the faculty and administration at school D is for students to “reach
their highest potential.” This phrase was taken from the school’s vision statement that hangs in
the main hallway.

    Principal D leads by example. She described herself as the tone setter for the school.
During an interview, she stated, “I feel like I set the tone.” She continues to learn about special
education through her “own outside readings and professional development that I elected to
attend on my own.” This commitment to lifelong learning and special education is modeled in
these ways to faculty members. Whenever the principal acquires new information, she comes back and shares that information with the faculty. “If I don’t come back and share, why should I ask them to do it?” The principal considers the sharing of information to be one of the biggest things that occurs between the faculty and her. She does her best to keep “everyone informed of the latest” changes, and teachers “do the same.”

During direct observation, Principal D reported that she is on morning duty each Monday just like her teachers. When she became principal and took on morning duties, teachers looked to her and asked what she was doing. According to the principal, they told her that she was the principal and did not have to do morning duty. The principal stated that she wanted to model her expectations for the teachers.

The principal reported her management style as “very hands-on” during an interview. She goes into the classroom setting to observe teachers and assist them however she can. “If they have special ed students in their classroom, I do go in to observe the inclusion component. I go to see how the special ed teacher and the general ed teacher are collaborating.” She stated that she also participates in “planning meetings.”

Principal D supports the special education program with resources. She gives special education teachers a “pat on the back for what they do on a regular basis.” She makes sure that they have the monetary funds they need to provide the services students need. The principal stated, “I allocate within my monies through local funds” for special education teachers. The lead special education teacher stated, during direct observation, that the principal provides her with release time, so that she can attend transition meetings for students with disabilities.

The principal must play a variety of roles. During an interview, she stated that she serves as the LEA representative at most IEP meetings. The validity of this statement was reinforced,
during direct observation, when the principal reasserted her role as the LEA representative. She is there to answer any administrative questions dealing with resources, for example, if an aide can be provided for a student. During an interview, the principal stated that she is there for “things of that nature that would come under administrative. I’m there to assist from that standpoint.” During direct observation, the lead special education teacher stated that the principal obtains additional resources from the central office for the special education program. The principal advocates for additional staff from the central office, as well.

The lead special education teacher described the principal as the “liaison.” The principal stated, during an interview, that she plays the role of “mediator” between parents and teachers. During direct observation, the principal reported that one of her roles is to keep parents on-task during IEP meetings. The principal stated during an interview that it is her responsibility to “oversee and make sure that all of the laws, rules, and regulations are being followed and support [teachers] when it comes to bridging any gaps [or] concerns that might be between what the parents feel and the teachers feel.”

Another role the principal plays is to support the ongoing professional development needs of her faculty. With regard to special education teachers, Principal D stated, “I support them for conferences making sure they get professional development just like everybody else.” Special education teachers are provided with time off to attend conferences. The principal reported adequate training is “where the biggest focus needs to be,” in the special education program. It is important to ensure “that adequate training is provided for [special education] teachers, so that they can support [general education] teachers in the classroom.” According to the principal, this is where she sees “the biggest struggle.”
Keeping teachers updated through professional development is important. After all, according to the principal, it’s not that special education teachers do not want to support general education teachers, it is that special education teachers feel “inadequate” and have not had “the intensive training needed to do all that they need to do with the different types” of academic difficulties students with disabilities are having.

The principal reported that she supports general education teachers in much the same way as she does special education teachers. She supports general education teachers with special education through “collaboration, resources, [and] professional development.” The principal conducts evaluations on general education teachers and provides them with feedback. This is why it is important for principals to be knowledgeable in classroom management techniques. Principal D reported on item 17 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is necessary for principals to be knowledgeable in basic classroom management theories, methods, and techniques for students with disabilities. The principal and teachers (3.0) reported on the second scale that Principal D is knowledgeable in these areas.

Utilization of faculty. Principal D stays up-to-date on any special education issues at her school. If there are any problems, the principal is the first one notified of the problem. The special education teacher will “make the needs known at the school level to the principal first.” This is important because “the principal should always know what’s going on in their building before it goes above them.” After the principal is informed of a problem, a decision will be made on whether or not central office staff should be brought in to help with any issues.

The principal has an assistant principal, whom the principal involves in the special education program. According to the principal, she shares her responsibility of overseeing the
special education program with him. In her words, she wants to “share the experience” of overseeing the special education program with him because he needs to gain experience with the special education program in case he ever wants to be a school principal. The principal rotates special education responsibilities with the assistant principal on an annual basis. One year the principal will oversee special education services in Grades K-2, and the assistant principal will oversee special education services in Grades 3-5. Then they will “switch the next year.” The principal stated that she wants to make sure that each of them gains “experience at both levels.”

Even though the principal and assistant principal are each over specific grade levels each year, the principal and assistant principal attend all “collaboration meetings” together. She reported that “we do it as a team. He attends the data meetings right along with me. He’s in every meeting I’m in.” Principal D also makes sure the assistant principal receives the professional development he needs to carry out his job duties successfully. “I want him to know just as much as I know.”

The principal reported that she has a strong working relationship with the special education faculty. Having “a good working relationship” and listening to your teachers are both important. She consults with the lead special education teachers because the principal thinks the lead special education teacher has “a wealth of knowledge” that the principal should utilize. The principal sees them “as a team working together.” The principal stated that the lead special education teacher will come to her for help with any “administrative” issues, and the principal will address special education issues with the lead special education teacher or other faculty in the area of special education, such as the speech pathologist or gifted teacher, as appropriate.

During direct observation, the lead special education teacher stated that the principal trusts special education teachers’ expertise. The lead special education teacher also stated that the
principal will asks questions if she does not know or understand. The principal relies on the special education faculty at school D. The lead special education teacher reported that the principal accepts her recommendations. The principal places special education students in classrooms strategically so that special education teachers can provide services to a greater number of students with disabilities.

During an interview, the principal reported that she meets with the special education faculty at least once a month. When they have inclusion meetings, the general education inclusion teacher is included in the meeting, as well. At that time, the principal, special education teacher, and general education inclusion teacher will “go over the caseloads” together. The principal stated that she will use the web-based special education database used by special education teachers in the state of Alabama to review special education documents “on a regular basis.” She will monitor where students are supposed to be. The principal reported on item 14 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be knowledgeable of methods for monitoring the progress of students with disabilities. The principal reported on the second scale that she is extremely knowledgeable in this area. Teachers reported the principal to be knowledgeable (3.3) in this area.

When developing special education teachers’ schedules, special education teachers provide input. “They develop their schedules based on their caseload. I review the schedules, and I’m the final person to approve it.” However, the elementary resource teacher from the central office will examine special education teachers’ schedules and provide feedback to teachers before they are sent to the principal. Special education teachers “are given the privilege to develop their own schedule within the master schedule.”
According to the principal, special education faculty requested that they be allowed to provide the faculty of school D professional development with regard to special education at the beginning of each school year. The special education faculty informed the principal “that it’d make their job a whole lot easier” if they are allowed to do this. “The special ed department presents an overview to remind the staff of what the guidelines are, what’s expected of them, IEPs, all of that. They do this every single year just to keep us focused.” The principal makes sure this is done each year. The principal reported on item 29 of the first scale of the KSSE Survey that it is extremely necessary for principals to be skilled in constructing instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations. The principal and teachers (3.1) reported on the second scale that the principal is skilled in these areas.

When developing and implementing a new program at school D, the principal provides her faculty with “an overview” or “bring the staff in” from the beginning. The way this is accomplished depends “on what the program is, who it entails, and how detailed or involved it is.” Usually, the principal will provide an overview of the program and the expectations of the faculty. Principal D gives her faculty “a chance to have input as far as how we plan to establish that at the building level.” The principal reported that “they can give input, I can give input, and then together we determine how we’re going to address it.” This principal works with her faculty when implementing new programs.

Summary

Principal D is finishing her 10th year as principal of school D. Themes identified in Case D were (a) communication through collaboration and community involvement, (b) background
and knowledge of special education, (c) interventions and programs, and (d) managerial support. In the first theme, communication through community involvement and collaboration, communication and collaboration were both identified as subthemes. The principal’s background and knowledge of special education was identified as the second theme and yielded a subtheme in the principal’s background and a subtheme in principal’s knowledge of special education. A third theme identified was interventions and programs. No subthemes were identified in the third theme. There were two subthemes identified in the fourth theme, managerial style. The first subtheme was roles and supports, and the second subtheme was utilization of faculty.

Cross-case Analysis

Cross-case Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were collected on each principal with the KSSE Survey during Phase 1. These data are self-reported and descriptive in nature. The mean scores were calculated for the first and second scales for principals A and B who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education, as reported in Tables 13, 14, and 15. The mean scores were also calculated for the first and second scales for principals C and D who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education, as reported in Tables 13, 14, and 15.

The mean scores of principals A and B are compared with the mean scores of principals C and D for items 1 through 35 on the first scale of the KSSE Survey in Table 13. Items 1 through 27 measure how necessary principals report each knowledge base to be for elementary principals to possess. Items 28 through 35 measure how necessary principals report each skill set to be for elementary principals to possess. To answer the first research question of this study, the necessity of these knowledge bases and skill sets are compared between principals who are
identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education (e.g., principals A and B) and principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education (e.g., principals C and D). Conclusions for this question are stated in chapter V.

Table 13

*Means Comparison between Knowledgeable and Skilled Principals’ Mean Ratings and Marginally Knowledgeable and Skilled Principals’ Mean Ratings of the Importance of Specific Items on Scale 1 of the KSSE Survey: How Necessary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal Group AB Response Mean</th>
<th>Principal Group CD Response Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Issues in definition and identification procedures for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of typical and exceptional learners</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Basic terminology used in assessment</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ethical concerns related to assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Typical procedures used for screening, prereferral, referral, and classification</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Appropriate application and interpretation of scores</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The relationship between assessment and placement decisions</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Methods of monitoring student progress</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Differing learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to these styles</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal Group AB Response Mean</th>
<th>Principal Group CD Response Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. Basic classroom management theories, methods, and techniques for students with disabilities</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Research and best practices for effective management of teaching and learning for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ways in which technology can assist with planning and managing the teaching and learning environment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students' behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Teacher attitudes and behaviors that positively or negatively influence the student behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Strategies for crisis prevention/intervention</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Strategies for preparing students to live harmoniously and productively in a multiclass, multiethnic, multicultural, and multinational world</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Typical concerns of parents of students with disabilities and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Roles of students, parents, teachers, and other school and community personnel in planning a student's individualized educational program</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. One's own cultural biases and differences that affect one's attitude toward students with disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Articulate a personal philosophy of special education, including its relationship to/with general education</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Interpret assessment data for instructional planning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Demonstrate a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. The scoring criteria are on a scale of (1-4) for each variable. Where 1 = *not at all necessary*, 2 = *somewhat necessary*, 3 = *necessary*, and 4 = *extremely necessary*. AB = Identifies the mean response of Principal A and Principal B; CD = Identifies the mean response of Principal C and Principal D.*
There were no differences in the mean scores on 26 items between the mean scores for principal group AB and the mean scores for principal group CD on the first scale of the *KSSE Survey*. The first scale of the *KSSE Survey* measures how necessary it is for a principal to possess a particular knowledge base or skill set with regard to the oversight of the special education program. There was a difference of 0.5 between the mean scores for principal group AB and the mean scores for principal group CD on the remaining nine items on the first scale of the *KSSE Survey*. Three of the mean scores were reported to be 0.5 higher by principal group AB than were reported by principal group CD. The knowledge bases identified in items 9 (ethical concerns), 16 (life skills instruction), and 24 (parental concerns) were reported to be more necessary for elementary principals to possess by principal group AB, who are more identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education.

Six of the mean scores were reported to be 0.5 higher by principal group CD than were reported by principal group AB. The knowledge bases identified in items 5 (similarities and differences between typical and exceptional learners), 11 (screening procedures and classification), 14 (methods of monitoring student progress), 22 (crisis prevention/intervention), and 27 (one’s own biases) were reported by principal group CD who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education to be more necessary for elementary principals to possess. The skill set identified in item 29 (construct instruction and professional activities based on special education guidelines) was reported by principal group CD to be more necessary for elementary principals to possess.

The mean scores of principal group AB are compared with the mean scores of principal group CD for items 1 through 27 on the second scale of the *KSSE Survey* in Table 14. These items measure the self-reported knowledge base each set of principals possesses. The mean
scores of principal group AB are compared with the mean scores of principal group CD for items 28 through 35 on the second scale of the KSSE Survey in Table 15. These items measure the self-reported skill sets each principal group possesses. To answer the second research question of this study, the self-reported knowledge bases and skill sets of principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education (e.g., principals A and B) are compared with the self-reported knowledge bases and skill sets of principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled (e.g., principals C and D) in Tables 14 and 15. Conclusions for the second research question are stated in chapter V.

Table 14

Means Comparison between Knowledgeable and Skilled Principals’ Mean Ratings and Marginally Knowledgeable and Skilled Principals’ Mean Ratings of the Amount of Knowledge Possessed as Measured by Scale 2 of KSSE Survey: How Knowledgeable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal Group AB Response Mean</th>
<th>Principal Group CD Response Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Issues in definition and identification procedures for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of typical and exceptional learners</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Basic terminology used in assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ethical concerns related to assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal Group AB Response Mean</th>
<th>Principal Group CD Response Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Typical procedures used for screening, prereferral, referral, and classification</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Appropriate application and interpretation of scores</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The relationship between assessment and placement decisions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Methods of monitoring student progress</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Differing learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to these styles</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Basic classroom management theories, methods, and techniques for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Research and best practices for effective management of teaching and learning for students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ways in which technology can assist with planning and managing the teaching and learning environment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students' behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Teacher attitudes and behaviors that positively or negatively influence the student behaviors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Strategies for crisis prevention/intervention</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Strategies for preparing students to live harmoniously and productively in a multiclass, multiethnic, multicultural, and multinational world</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Typical concerns of parents of students with disabilities and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Roles of students, parents, teachers, and other school and community personnel in planning a student's individualized educational program</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. One's own cultural biases and differences that affect one's attitude toward students with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The scoring criteria are on a scale of (1-4) for each variable. Where 1 = *not at all knowledgeable*, 2 = *somewhat knowledgeable*, 3 = *knowledgeable*, and 4 = *extremely knowledgeable*. AB = Identifies the mean response of Principal A and Principal B; CD = Identifies the mean response of Principal C and Principal D.

The mean scores from the self-reported knowledge base of principal group AB as compared to principal group CD are reported in Table 14. This table is based on principals’ responses to items 1 through 27 on the second scale of the *KSSE Survey*. As seen in Table 14,
there were no differences in the mean scores on 5 items and a 0.5 difference on five items between the mean scores for principal group AB and the mean scores for principal group CD on the second scale of the KSSE Survey. With the exception of the 5 items that each principal group reported themselves as being extremely knowledgeable, principal group AB reported themselves to be more knowledgeable in special education than principal group CD. A difference of 1.0 exists between the groups of principals on 12 items. A difference of 1.5 exists between each group on items 1 (fundamental understanding of special education), 6 (characteristics and effects of the child’s cultural environment), and 12 (application and interpretation of scores). A difference of 2.0 exists between principal groups on items 7 (effects of medications) and 16 (life skills instruction).

Table 15

Means Comparison between Knowledgeable and Skilled Principals’ Mean Ratings and Marginally Knowledgeable and Skilled Principals’ Mean Ratings of the Level of Skill as Measured by Scale 2 of KSSE Survey: How Skilled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Principal Group AB Response Mean</th>
<th>Principal Group CD Response Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28. Articulate a personal philosophy of special education,</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>including its relationship to/with general education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Construct instruction and other professional activities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consistent with the requirements of special education law,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rules, and regulations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Interpret assessment data for instructional planning</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Demonstrate a variety of behavior management techniques</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Implement the least restrictive placement/intervention</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consistent with the needs of the student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents,</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and school and community personnel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educational and quality of life potential for all students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Model appropriate behavior for students and teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toward individuals with disabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The scoring criteria are on a scale of (1-4) for each variable. Where 1 = not at all skilled, 2 = somewhat skilled, 3 = skilled, and 4 = extremely skilled.
The mean scores from the self-reported skill sets of principal group AB as compared to principal group CD are reported in Table 15. This table is based on principals’ responses to items 28 through 35 on the second scale of the \textit{KSSE Survey}. As seen in Table 15, there were no differences in the mean scores on 3 items and a 0.5 difference on 4 items between the mean scores of principal group AB and the mean scores of principal group CD on the second scale of the \textit{KSSE Survey}. There is a 1.0 difference on one item, item 29 (construct instruction and professional activities based on special education guidelines). With the exception of the of the three items in which each principal group reported themselves as being extremely skilled, principal group AB reported themselves to be more skilled in special education than principal group CD.

\textit{Cross-case Data Analysis of Emergent Themes}

Data for each case were collected at each site in the form of (a) archival records, (b) interviews, (c) documentation, and (d) direct observations. A within-case analysis was conducted on each of the four cases by coding data, categorizing data, and identifying emerging themes. Themes were allowed to emerge within cases independently. Allowing themes to emerge independently within-cases adds another level of validity. In this section, emergent themes and subthemes are compared for similarities between principals identified as knowledgeable and skilled in Table 16, principals identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in Table 17, and the similarities and differences between the emergent themes found within the two groups in Table 18.
Cross-case analysis of principals identified as knowledgeable and skilled. After emergent themes were identified within the data collected for cases A and B, similarities between the content of emergent themes were identified between principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education. Similarities exist between the content of emergent themes as well as subthemes. Emergent themes, subthemes, and their content were analyzed, and a new level of emergent themes was developed for similarities that exist between principals A and B. Similarities between emergent themes and subthemes are seen in Table 16.

Table 16

Cross-case Analysis of Principals Who Are Knowledgeable and Skilled in Special Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal (A)</th>
<th>Principal (B)</th>
<th>Similarities in Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Education as a Cultural Component</td>
<td>Passionately and Compassionately</td>
<td>Impact of Background on View of Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Component</td>
<td>Engaged in the Special Education Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>Passion and Compassion</td>
<td>Knowledge and Understanding of Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value Laden Hiring</td>
<td>Actively Engaged in Special Education</td>
<td>Focus on Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>Student-Centered Relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies and Procedures</td>
<td>Meaningful Relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Understanding of Special Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradigm of Special Education</td>
<td>Broad Knowledge of Special Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Knowledge of Students with Disabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gleaned from Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Knowledge in Special Education</td>
<td>School Level Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of Special and General Education Teachers</td>
<td>Hiring and Managing Personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature and Roles of Special Education Personnel</td>
<td>Management Style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. In the first two columns, themes from the within-case analysis of principals A and B are not italicized. Subthemes from the within-case analysis of principals A and B are denoted in italics.
Similarities between Principal A and Principal B were identified in a cross-case analysis. Similarities were then analyzed for emergent themes through the use of a word table as seen in Table 16. Yin (2009) suggests using word tables as a form of pattern matching. Five themes emerged: (a) impact of background on view of special education, (b) knowledge and understanding of special education, (c) focus on special education, (d) involvement, and (e) utilization of faculty.

Similarities exist between Principal A and Principal B throughout the data. Both principals view special education as an important component of the educational program at the school level. A connection between each principal and special education can be traced back to their academic and employment backgrounds as well as previous experiences that have impacted their views of special education. Principal A was a teacher of at-risk students for 5 years. This principal reported that she became aware of the importance of identifying students’ learning styles and providing students with the services they need to be successful. Principal B was an elementary special education teacher for 23 years. Her passion for special education can be seen throughout the data in the within-case analysis. Former students graduating from college and becoming productive members of society has shaped her view on the benefits of special education.

Knowledge and understanding of special education are important to both principals. Principal A places her primary focus of knowledge on special education law. Although she relies on special education teachers to be experts in the area of special education, data indicated that Principal A ensures that special education teachers, general education teachers, and she are informed and up-to-date on special education law. Principal A reported that the goal of special education is for students to learn and use strategies so that they no longer require special
education. This occurs by addressing the individual needs of each student. Principal A places a high value on knowledge in special education, but she does not have a strong special education background like principal B. Whereas the primary focus of Principal A’s knowledge and understanding of special education is centered around special education law, Principal B’s knowledge and understanding of special education was more holistic. Principal B has an in-depth knowledge of special education. Principal B does not utilize special education teachers as experts. She reported that the purpose of special education is to provide students with disabilities an appropriate education. Both principals reported value in providing students with disabilities academic and life experiences. A key difference between Principals A and B is found in the depth of their knowledge in special education procedures. Principal B’s knowledge and skill in special education is considerably more extensive than that of Principal A.

Principals A and B both focus on the special education programs at their schools. Principal A has facilitated an atmosphere at site A that encompasses the special education program. The atmosphere at site A is focused on the provision of special education services to those students who need them. Pre-service interventions are important to Principal A; however, she reported that the earlier students receive the special education services they need the better off they will be long term. Principal A hires faculty members who share her compassion for students with disabilities. Principal B places a heavy emphasis on the special education population at site B. She ensures that students with disabilities at school B are provided the same opportunities as their nondisabled peers. According to her, she has seen how students can flourish when they are provided with an appropriate education by receiving special education services. The principal utilizes her relationships within the community and her knowledge of each student and the student’s family to provide each student with an appropriate education.
Although Principal A relies on special education teachers as experts, she is involved within the special education program. She considers herself to be a “hands-on administrator.” She is kept up-to-date on special education related issues by special education teachers. Principal A works with general education teachers and special education teachers to ensure that students with disabilities are receiving the services that are stated in their IEPs. Principal B is heavily involved in the special education program. She is an active participant in the IEP process. She is involved in the special education process from initial referrals to determining eligibility, developing IEPs, implementing IEPs, and monitoring students’ progress.

Both principals use their faculties in the provision of special education services. They support the special education programs at their respective schools. Both principals try to hire quality special education teachers. Principal B reported that it is difficult to find high quality special education teachers. Both principals reported that it is difficult, yet important, that they themselves stay current on special education issues. One way principals A and B stay current on special education issues is by receiving updates from their special education teachers. Both principals try to use their teachers’ strengths. Principal A ensures that she has an adequate number of faculty members working with the special education population. She reported that it is important to have the right faculty in place so that students receive the supports they need to be successful. Principal B uses faculty members to provide supports in the areas that have the greatest need. She commits resources based on students’ IEPs.

Cross-case analysis of principals identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled.

After emergent themes were identified within the data collected for cases A and B, similarities between the content of emergent themes were identified between principals who are identified as
marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education. Similarities exist between the content of emergent themes as well as subthemes. Emergent themes, subthemes, and their content were analyzed, and a new level of emergent themes was developed for similarities that exist between principals C and D. Similarities between emergent themes and subthemes are seen in Table 17.

Table 17

Cross-case Analysis of Principals Who Are Marginally Knowledgeable and Skilled in Special Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes and Subthemes Comparison</th>
<th>Principal C</th>
<th>Principal D</th>
<th>Similarities in Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration with and Utilization of Faculty and Staff</td>
<td>Communication Through Community Involvement and Collaboration</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Impact of Background on View of Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Approach to Education</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge and Understanding of Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilization of Faculty and Staff</td>
<td>Background and Knowledge of Special Education</td>
<td>Knowledge of Special Education Interventions and Programs</td>
<td>Focus on Pre-service Interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal’s Special Education Paradigm</td>
<td>Background</td>
<td>Collaborative Approach to Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background and Experiences that Shaped the Principal’s Paradigm</td>
<td></td>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Special Education Program Interventions and Strategies</td>
<td>Knowledge of Special Education Interventions and Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Interventions Strategies</td>
<td>Managerial Style</td>
<td>roles and Supports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Leadership</td>
<td>Utilization of Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting and Flexibility Involvement and Supports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. In the first two columns, themes from the within-case analysis of principals C and D are not italicized. Subthemes from the within-case analysis of principals C and D are denoted in italics.
Similarities between Principal C and Principal D were identified in a cross-case analysis. Similarities were then analyzed for emergent themes through the use of a word table as seen in Table 17. Yin (2009) suggests using word tables as a form of pattern matching. Six themes emerged: (a) impact of background on view of special education, (b) knowledge and understanding of special education, (c) focus on pre-service interventions, (d) collaborative approach to education, (e) involvement, and (f) utilization of faculty.

Similarities exist between Principal C and Principal D throughout the data. Each principal’s academic and employment backgrounds as well as previous experiences have impacted their view of special education. Both principals reported having family members who had academic difficulties in school. Principal C’s youngest daughter qualified to receive special education services; however, Principal C and her husband refused special education services. Their daughter learned strategies to help her deal with problems she was having, and she flourished academically. Principal D’s nephew had academic difficulties in school, as well. Principal D observed issues in the process of determining the types of supports he needed. This incidence has impacted how she handles special education services at her school. She ensures that students receive the services they require in a timely manner. Principal C’s background includes experiences that confirmed the use of inquiry-based learning and utilizing appropriate learning strategies to help students who struggle academically. Principal C is careful not to identify a student as having a disability until other potential problems have been ruled out. Both principals want to ensure that all barriers are removed and that the student requires special education to be successful. Because of Principal D’s previous experience with principals she has served under, she ensures that policies and procedures for the provision of special education services are followed in her school.
Although each principal possesses her own understanding of special education, they agree collectively that being knowledgeable in special education is important. Both principals participate in professional development activities related to special education. Principal D reported that her focus is special education law. Both principals reported that decisions should be data-driven. Both principals reported that IEPs drive everything they do with regard to the provision of special education services. Principal C reported that some students with disabilities need more specialized training, for example functional skills, which are offered at other specialized schools. Principal D reported that some disability areas, such as specific learning disability, require an expertise and intensive training for teachers to be able to effectively address the learning issues of these students.

Two common focal points for principals C and D are pre-intervention strategies and programs. Both principals focus on prevention and providing all students with pre-intervention strategies. They utilize a variety of programs to provide interventions. Both principals use special education teachers as intervention experts. Both principals encourage the sharing of effective intervention strategies among faculty members. Interventions and intervention programs used at both schools are research-based. Both principals lead their faculties in identifying learning gaps in students. This is done in data meetings. Data are used to determine knowledge gaps. Data drive the decision-making process. Both principals cited the ability to interpret data as important. Principal C provides tutoring for special education and general education students through an extended day program. Although they were not explicitly stated as to how they are provided, Principal D provides tutoring for students, as well.

Both principals take a collaborative approach to education. They work to build relationships. They reported that one person is not able to do everything. They collaborate with
faculty members through both informal meetings (e.g., hallway) and formal meetings (e.g., grade level and data meetings). Both principals use the expertise of their faculty. Principal C uses the expertise of intervention specialists at her school (i.e., special education teacher, reading specialist, behavioral teacher, and Title I teacher). In addition to the expertise of the special education resource specialist for the elementary level at the central office, Principal D utilizes the expertise of the intervention specialist at her school, as well (i.e., special education teacher). Both principals collaborate with teachers to support and problem-solve with them. Both principals reported that it is important to have multiple professionals involved in order to be more thorough and develop the best possible solutions.

Both principals are actively involved in the special education programs at their schools. They lead through their actions. Principals C and D acknowledge their role as the tone setter for the school. They are involved in the education process and are hands-on administrators. They are the instructional leaders and facilitators of their school. Teachers look to these principals to solve problems. Both principals reported that it is important to listen to teachers. They work with faculty members to determine the instructional needs of their students. They provide supports and resources for students and teachers. They secure funding and provide their faculties with the training they need in order to provide effective instruction for students. They motivate students and praise their teachers. Both principals communicate and collaborate with special education teachers on a regular basis.

Principals C and D utilize their faculty’s expertise. Both principals rely on the expertise of their faculty members, and both principals involve the faculties at their schools in a collaborative approach to education. They empower faculty members and capitalize on their capabilities. When they have questions, they seek information from faculty members with an
expertise in a specific knowledge base. Principals C and D consider special education teachers to be experts in providing special education services to students with disabilities. These principals consider special education teachers to be experts in interventions and instructional strategies. Both principals involve special education teachers in scheduling to ensure students with disabilities review the services that are mandated in their IEPs. Both principals rely on special education teachers to keep them informed on special education related issues within the school and up-to-date on changes in special education policies and procedures.

Cross-case analysis of emergent themes between groups. After emergent themes were identified between cases A and B and cases C and D, a cross-case analysis was conducted between the themes identified in principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education (i.e., principal group AB) and themes identified in principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education (i.e., principal group CD). A word table was used to organize themes for theme comparison. This is shown in Table 18. Similarities exist in four themes: (a) impact of background on view of special education, (b) knowledge and understanding of special education, (c) involvement, and (d) utilization of faculty. Upon further content analysis between themes, differences were identified. Although there are similarities between theme titles, the focus of the content in some emergent themes differs between principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education and principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education. Differences were also identified in both the titles and content of three themes. One theme was found between principals A and B that was not identified as a theme in the cross-case analysis of principals C and D. That theme was a focus on special education by principal group AB. Conversely, two
themes were found in the cross-case analysis between principals C and D that were not found in the cross-case analysis of principals A and B. Those two themes were principal group CD’s focus on pre-service interventions and their collaborative approach to education.

Table 18

Cross-case Analysis between Principals Who Are Knowledgeable and Skilled and Principals Who Are Marginally Knowledgeable and Skilled in Special Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th>CD</th>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact of Background on View of Special Education Knowledge and Understanding of Special Education Focus on Special Education Education Involvement Utilization of Faculty</td>
<td>(AB) Focus on Special Education</td>
<td>(CD) Focus on Pre-service Interventions</td>
<td>(CD) Collaborative Approach to Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of Background on View of Special Education Knowledge and Understanding of Special Education Focus on Pre-service Interventions Involvement Utilization of Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. (AB) = Identifies a theme found between principals A and B that is different from themes found between principals C and D; (CD) = Identifies a theme found between principals C and D that is different from themes found between principals A and B.

Both groups of principals reported that their academic backgrounds, employment backgrounds, and previous experiences have impacted their views of special education. Although both groups of principals reported that the special education program is important, that is where the similarities for this theme stop. Principal group AB reported that they place a particular emphasis on the special education programs at their schools. Principal B reported that she has seen how successful individuals with disabilities can be after they graduate from high school, when they receive an appropriate education. Principal group CD had family members who had
learning difficulties. These principals reported that the way each situation was handled has impacted their views of special education services and pre-intervention strategies. Principal groups AB and CD are similar in that previous experiences have helped to shape both principal groups’ views of special education. However, the effect of these experiences on each principal group has created a different focus within each group.

All four principals reported that it is important to be knowledgeable in special education. The area of special education each principal reported as their focus varied between principals and was not specific to each group. The most substantial difference is found between the principal with experience in special education, Principal B, and all three of her peers. Principals A and D reported that they focus on special education law. Principal C reported that her focus on special education is more general. Principal B reported a more in-depth understanding of all areas of special education. Her knowledge of special education is inclusive of policies and procedures.

All four principals reported that the types of services provided to students with disabilities should be based on their individual needs. Principal group AB reported that it is important to provide students with disabilities with functional skills.

Similarities exist between principal groups AB and CD in their involvement in the special education programs at their schools. All four principals take a hands-on approach to education. Both groups of principals reported that they communicate and collaborate with their special education teachers on a regular basis. A difference in the reported levels of involvement in the special education among all four principals is minimal. Principal B reported that she is more involved in special education processes and procedures than her peers. Although they are involved in the special education program, Principal A and principal group CD rely on special education teachers’ expertise to guide them through special education processes and procedures.
There are similarities in the way principal groups AB and CD utilize their faculties. Both principal groups are kept up-to-date on special education issues, including policy and procedural changes, by their special education teachers. Both principal groups utilize their teachers’ strengths and expertise to maximize the provision of educational services that students with disabilities receive. They work to procure an adequate number of faculty, in order to provide students with disabilities with the services they require. Principals reported that they use faculty members in the greatest area of need, and resources are committed based on each student’s needs. Principal A and Principal group CD reported special education teachers as experts in providing special education services. They also reported special education teachers to be experts in interventions and instructional strategies.

One theme was identified in each principal group that was related to a theme identified in the data of the other principal group. Although both principal groups reported pre-service interventions and special education services as important, Principal group AB reported that they focus on the special education program at their schools more than Principal group CD. Principal group CD reported a focus on pre-service interventions. Although all students receive the same opportunities, Principal group AB is implicit in providing students with disabilities the same opportunities as their nondisabled peers. Conversely, Principal group CD is explicit in providing pre-service interventions to at-risk students.

Although communication and collaboration were identified throughout the data collected on Principal A and Principal B, neither a theme nor a subtheme emerged in the within-case or cross-case analyses in either area. There were insufficient data for a theme or subtheme. Within Principal group CD, a collaborative approach to education was identified as a theme during cross-case analysis. They collaborate with faculty members both formally and informally.
Principal group CD collaborates with the education personnel they view as having an expertise in a specific area. These principals collaborate with their teachers in order to develop the most appropriate solutions for their students. When collaboration was observed during the data collection process within Principal group AB, the focus of collaborative topics of discussion was special education.

Although differences exist between principal groups, overall, principal groups are more alike than they are different. The most substantial differences exist between the principal with experience in special education and principals without experience in special education.

Chapter IV Summary

The findings from data analysis of both quantitative and qualitative methods used in this multi-phase, case study were reported in this chapter. The findings of each case were reported systematically and sequentially. Contextual factors, participant description, and formal and informal preparation for each case were described. A within-case analysis of quantitative data was conducted for each principal. Each quantitative data analysis was followed by a mixed-methods data analysis to identify emerging themes. Within each individual case study, interview data were transcribed, coded, categorized, and emerging themes identified. A spiral approach to data analysis was used in which analysis occurred through visualization; descriptions, classifications, and interpretations; reading and memoing; and data mining of the account (Creswell, 2007). Interview, surveys, archival records, documents, and field notes data were transcribed by the researcher. Each datum within each data set was reviewed multiple times to identify codes. Codes were placed into categories, emerging themes were derived from these categories, and findings were reported. Each case ended with a section summary.
A cross-case analysis of quantitative data was conducted between the responses of Principal group AB and the responses of Principal group CD on the first scale of the KSSE Survey. The mean response score for each item was tabulated for Principals A and B and Principals C and D. Mean responses were compared between principal groups. Three of the mean scores were reported higher at 0.5 by Principal group AB than were reported by Principal group CD. Principal group AB, who are identified as more knowledgeable and skilled in special education, reported that it is necessary for elementary principals to be knowledgeable in (9) ethical concerns related to assessment; (16) life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities; and the (24) typical concerns of parents of student with disabilities and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns.

Six of the mean scores were reported to be 0.5 higher by Principal group CD than were reported by Principal group AB. Principal group CD, who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education, reported that it is necessary for elementary principals to be knowledgeable in the (5) similarities and differences between cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of the typical and exceptional learners; (11) typical procedures used for screening prereferral, referral, and classification; (14) methods of monitoring student progress; (22) strategies for crisis prevention and intervention; and (27) one’s own cultural biases and differences that affect one’s attitude toward students with disabilities. Principal group CD reported that it is necessary for elementary principals to be skilled in (29) constructing instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations.
A cross-case analysis of quantitative data was conducted between the responses of principal group AB and the responses of principal group CD on the second scale of the KSSE Survey. The mean response score for each item was tabulated for principals A and B and principals C and D. Mean responses were compared between principal groups. With the exception of the 5 items that Principal group CD reported that they are as knowledgeable as Principal group AB on items 1 through 27, Principal group AB reported themselves to be more knowledgeable than Principal group CD. Principal group AB reported that they are more knowledgeable in (1) models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice; (6) characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family; and (12) appropriate application and interpretation of scores at a difference of 1.5. Principal group AB reported that they are more knowledgeable in (7) effects of various medications of the education, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities and (16) life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities at a difference of 2.0.

With the exception of the three items that Principal group CD reported that they are as skilled as Principal group AB on items 28 through 35, Principal group AB reported themselves to be more skilled than Principal group CD. Principal group AB reported that they are more skilled in (29) constructing instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations at a difference of 1.0.

A cross-case analysis of the themes found in the data sets of Principals A and B identified five emerging themes between cases. Themes were identified in (a) impact of background on view of special education, (b) knowledge and understanding of special education, (c) focus on special education, (d) involvement, and (d) utilization of faculty.
A cross-case analysis of the themes found in the data sets of Principals C and D identified six emerging themes between cases. Themes were identified in (a) impact of background on view of special education, (b) knowledge and understanding of special education, (c) focus on pre-service interventions, (d) collaborative approach to education, (e) involvement, and (f) utilization of faculty.

A cross-case analysis between Principal groups AB and CD was conducted. The findings of the themes for cases A and B were compared to the themes for cases C and D. Four emerging themes were identified between principal groups. Although similarities exist in themes, some differences were identified in the content of those themes. Similarity in themes was found in (a) impact of background on view of special education, (b) knowledge and understanding of special education, (c) involvement, and (d) utilization of faculty. In addition to the four themes identified for their similarities, three themes were identified for their differences. Whereas the theme (i.e., focus on special education) was found to exist within Principal group AB and focused on providing services to students within the special education program, the theme (i.e., focus on pre-service interventions) was found within Principal group CD and focused on providing pre-service interventions. In addition, a second theme (i.e., collaborative approach to education) was identified as existing within Principal group CD and not Principal group AB. Although data existed that indicated that collaboration is used by Principal group AB, enough data to support a collaborative approach to education as a theme or subtheme did not exist.

Differences were identified among individual principals and between each group of principals in this chapter. Overall, principal groups are more alike than they are different, but differences do exist between groups. Although the most substantial differences exist between the principals with experience in special education and principals without experience in special
education, the differences found between principal groups adds to a growing body of literature in the area of special education leadership.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Overview of Chapter V

This chapter begins with an overview of the purpose of the study. Within this section, the overarching research question and sub-questions are restated. Next, conclusions are drawn based upon the findings in chapter IV. Rival explanations are identified and addressed, as appropriate. The overarching research question and sub-questions are addressed. Links are made based on the conclusions of this study with the conclusions of other research studies, when appropriate. The findings of this study are compared to Kouzes’ and Posner’s (2007) transformational leadership theory. Implications for policy and practice as well as future research are asserted.

Overview of the Study

With the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, schools became accountable for their special education students’ academic progress, graduation rates, and attendance during state testing. At the school level, principals have had to increase their focus on the special education program. School level leadership of special education programs is a concern for principals (Heckert, 2009). Principals have not been adequately trained to oversee the special education program (Hirth & Valesky, 1990; Keeler, 2002; Nelson, 2002; Stevenson, 2002; Volpe, 2006). Researchers have asserted that there is a need for research on quality special education administrative leadership (Bays & Crockett, 2007).
There is a knowledge gap in understanding what principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education do differently than their peers who are not as knowledgeable or skilled in special education. The first part in this process is to understand what knowledge and skills principals who are identified as being knowledgeable and skilled in special education report as necessary for all principals to possess. The next step in this process is to understand the knowledge bases and skill sets that principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled possess that are different from their peers. The purpose of case study research is to develop a deeper understanding of each case. The case studies in this study are used to describe and explain the differences between principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled and principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled. These knowledge bases must be tied to each principal’s background to develop a more holistic picture of each principal. The third step in this process is to understand the roles they play in relation to special education as well as how they support the special education program differently than their peers who are less knowledgeable and skilled in special education. The final step is to gain a deeper understanding of how principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education oversee the special education program than their peers.

The following overarching research question and sub-questions were investigated.

Overarching Question: How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education administer the special education programs at their schools?

1. How do knowledge bases and skills reported as necessary for elementary principals to possess differ between elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education and elementary principals who are as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special
education as measured by the *Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey* (Harlin-Fischer, 1998)? (See Appendix A.)

2. How do knowledge bases and skills reported as being possessed by elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education differ from the knowledge bases and skills reported as being possessed by elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education as measured by the *Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey* (Harlin-Fischer, 1998)? (See Appendix A.)

3. How do the roles played by elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education differ from the roles played by elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education?

4. How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education support special education programs differently than principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education?

5. How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education oversee their programs differently than elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education?

Conclusions

In this section, conclusions are drawn from the findings in chapter IV. Mixed-methods procedures and quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used to identify findings in chapter IV. Those findings are used to form conclusions in this section. Conclusions are drawn that address each sub-question, which addresses the overarching theme. Rival explanations are addressed, as appropriate. The main conclusions of this study are presented in Table 19 prior to
an in-depth reporting of those conclusions. Conclusions are reported in five sections: (a) necessity of knowledge and skill in special education, (b) possession of knowledge and skill in special education, (c) the roles principals play as leader of the special education program, (d) how principals support special education programs, and (e) special education oversight at the school level. Connections are made between this study and Kouzes’ and Posner’s (2007) transformational leadership theory.
### Table 19

**Main Conclusions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>All Principals</th>
<th>Principals who are Knowledgeable and Skilled</th>
<th>Principals who are Marginally Knowledgeable and Skilled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Necessity of Knowledge and Skill in Special Education</strong></td>
<td>-generally agree on necessity of knowledge and skill that principals need to possess in special education</td>
<td>-place emphasis on knowledge in quality of life issues for students with severe disabilities</td>
<td>-place emphasis on knowledge in areas that benefit all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Possession of Knowledge and Skill in Special Education</strong></td>
<td>-knowledgeable in special education law</td>
<td>-more knowledgeable in life skills instruction (e.g., independent living, community, and functional skills)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-skilled in interpreting assessment data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-skilled in setting high expectations for all students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-skilled in modeling appropriate behaviors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Roles Principals Play as Leader of the Special Education Program</strong></td>
<td>-liaison between special education program and parents</td>
<td>-problem-solve collaboratively</td>
<td>-equal role with teachers in leading inclusion program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How Principals Support Special Education Programs</strong></td>
<td>-manager of resources for students with disabilities</td>
<td>-equal role with teachers in leading inclusion program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-provide teachers with needed resources and supports to perform jobs</td>
<td>-purposefully include students with disabilities</td>
<td>-view special education as a last resort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-manage resources and personnel to provide students with disabilities</td>
<td>-view special education as a positive form of support</td>
<td>-focus on pre-service interventions and instructional strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to provide students with disabilities with greatest opportunity for success</td>
<td>-provide students with severe disabilities real-life experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Education Oversight at the School Level</strong></td>
<td>-understand importance of special education</td>
<td>-rely on special education teachers to keep them current with changes in special education</td>
<td>-rely on special education teachers for scheduling, ensuring special education services are provided, and that special education procedures are followed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-expect special education teachers to be knowledgeable in tier III instructional strategies</td>
<td>-focus on providing special education services</td>
<td>-focus on pre-service interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-background impacts leadership of special education program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Necessity of Knowledge and Skill in Special Education

Quantitative data were reported and analyzed in chapter IV and are used to develop conclusions in this section. When appropriate, qualitative data are used to develop a deeper understanding of principals. The first research question examined in this study is how do knowledge bases and skills reported as necessary for elementary principals to possess differ between elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education and elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education as measured by the *Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey (KSSE Survey)* (Harlin-Fischer, 1998)?

Analysis indicates that there is no difference in how principals who are knowledgeable in special education (i.e., principals A and B) and principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education (i.e., principals C and D) report how necessary knowledge bases and skill sets on 26 items on the first scale of the *KSSE Survey*. This finding indicates that principals in this study generally agree on the level of necessity that elementary principals should possess in their knowledge bases and skill sets in special education. Sixteen items were rated as extremely necessary for principals to possess a knowledge base or skill set by all four principals. Seven of these items align with the findings of Harlin-Fischer (1998). Items (3) due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement; (4) rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education; (10) legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessment; (20) applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students’ behaviors; (26) ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities; (34) demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of
life potential for all students; and (35) model appropriate behavior for students and teachers
toward individuals with disabilities were reported as extremely necessary for principals to
possess in both studies. This is a strong indication that all principals should possess these
knowledge bases and skill sets. Six of the seven knowledge bases and skill sets are related to
special education procedural guidelines or legal issues. The only item that is unrelated to either
area is (35) modeling appropriate behavior toward individuals with disabilities. This indicates
that it is important for all principals to have a fundamental understanding of special education
procedures and legal issues. This also indicates that principals understand the importance of
being knowledgeable and skilled in special education law.

Of the 35 items in this study, 9 were not correlated between the two groups of principals.
All 9 items had a difference of 0.5 between the mean responses of principals. The mean scores
for knowledge bases and skill sets in special education measured by the first scale of the KSSE
Survey are reported by both groups as extremely necessary for elementary principals to possess,
with mean scores between 3.5 and 4.0. A score of 3.0 indicates that an item was reported as
necessary. A score of 4.0 indicates that an item was reported as extremely necessary.

 Principals A and B reported three items to be more necessary for elementary principals to
possess than principals C and D. This indicates that principals in this study who are identified as
being knowledgeable and skilled in special education place a higher importance on (9) the ethical
concerns related to assessment; (16) life skills instruction relevant to independent, community,
and personal living employment of students with disabilities; and the (24) typical concerns of
parents of students with disabilities and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these
concerns. This indicates that a link exists between these three items and the level of knowledge
and skill in special education that a principal possesses in connection with their undergraduate
coursework, graduate school coursework, and professional experiences. Principals with more knowledge and skill in special education report a greater need to be knowledgeable in quality of life issues as they relate to students with disabilities and their parents.

Two areas that have had an impact on principals are previous professional development and experiences relating to students receiving special education services, which includes attending individualized education plan meetings. The rival explanation that principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education are more likely to place an emphasis on areas relevant to special education was examined. This rival explanation is valid in that principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education are likely to place more of an emphasis on areas related to the provision of special education beyond pre-service interventions; however, those principals are more likely to participate in coursework, professional development, and attend meetings that will provide them with the training and experiences that help shape their view of what is necessary with regard to special education.

Principals C and D reported six items to be more necessary for elementary school principals to possess than principals A and B. This indicates that principals in this study who have been identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education place a higher importance on (5) the similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of typical and exceptional learners; (11) typical procedures used for screening, prerereferral, referral, and classification; (14) methods of monitoring student progress; (22) strategies for crisis prevention and intervention; (27) one’s own cultural biases and the differences that affect one’s attitude toward students with disabilities; and (29) construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations. With the exceptions of items 27 and 29, all of these items align with
the value that Principals C and D place on meeting the needs of all students through the use of
pre-intervention strategies and research-based programs. Item 27 is viewed by Principals C and
D as more necessary for principals to have knowledge in because of previous experiences with
family members and special education services. Principals C and D view law to be more
important because most of their special education training has centered around professional
development activities that focus on special education law. For principals who do not have
training or experience as a special education teacher, most of their training has focused on
dealing with special education legal issues.

Possession of Knowledge and Skill in Special Education

Quantitative data were reported and analyzed in chapter IV and are used to develop
conclusions in this section. When appropriate, qualitative data are used to develop a deeper
understanding of principals. The second research question examined in this study is how do
knowledge bases and skills reported as being possessed by elementary principals who are
knowledgeable and skilled in special education differ from the knowledge bases and skills
reported as being possessed by elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and
skilled in special education as measured by the Knowledge and Skills in Special Education
Survey (Harlin-Fischer, 1998)? (See Appendix A.)

Analysis indicates that there is no difference in how principals who are identified as
marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education report how knowledgeable they are in
five items on the second scale of the KSSE Survey. This finding indicates that all four principals
in this study consider themselves to be extremely knowledgeable in (3) due process rights related
to assessment, eligibility, and placement; (4) rights and responsibilities of parents, students,
teachers, and schools as they relate to special education; (14) methods of monitoring student progress; (21) teacher attitudes and behaviors that positively or negatively influence student behaviors; and (26) ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities. All of these items focus on special education law and legal issues or knowledge bases that principals would utilize as part of their oversight of the special education program. All four elementary principals self-reporting that they are extremely knowledgeable in these areas is an indication that these knowledge bases are common for elementary school principals in Alabama to possess.

On five items, a margin of 1.5 or greater exists between the mean scores of principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education and principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education. Principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education are self-reported to be more knowledgeable in (1) models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice; (6) characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family; (7) effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities; (12) appropriate application and interpretation of scores; and (16) life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities. All of these items are knowledge bases that deal with the depth of a principal’s knowledge in regard to the provision of special education services. There is a link between a principal’s understanding of special education services and the amount and type of knowledge possessed by the principal. Principals A and B are knowledgeable in areas that have an impact on special education but are not generally linked specifically to special education.
Analysis indicates that there is no difference between how principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education and principals identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education report how skilled they are on three items on the second scale of the KSSE Survey. This conclusion indicates that all four principals in this study consider themselves to be extremely skilled in (30) interpreting assessment data for instructional planning, (34) demonstrating a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students, and (35) modeling appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities. These items represent areas that all four principals value, based on their roles. Because all four elementary principals self-reported that they are extremely skilled in these areas, these skill sets are probably common for elementary school principals in Alabama to possess.

On items 28 through 35, a mean score of 0.5 exists between both sets of principals on four skills. Only one item had a difference between the mean scores of both sets of principals greater than 0.5. Principals A and B reported, at a difference of 1.0 greater than Principal group CD, that they are extremely skilled in (29) constructing instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations. Principals A and B are more knowledgeable with the laws, rules, and regulations associated with special education than Principals C and D. Principals A and B are more comfortable with developing instruction and professional development with regard to special education because of an increased knowledge base and skill set in special education. Instead of providing professional development herself, Principal D has special education teachers provide professional development on special education topics.
An anomaly occurred within the data of case C that must be reported. The teachers at site C viewed Principal C as considerably more knowledgeable in special education than the principal did herself. According to Cruzeiro and Morgan (2006), being competent in special education helps the principal to be viewed as a credible leader. Taken together with the data in this study, a principal can be viewed as a credible leader of the special education program if she is a competent leader of school programs. She must also be knowledgeable and skilled in special education to the extent that faculty respect and value her as a colleague. This principal is viewed by her faculty as knowledgeable in special education because of her in-depth knowledge in strategies, data analysis, and identifying students’ needs, which are the fundamental building blocks of special education services. A rival explanation that teachers were concerned that the principal might see their survey responses and retaliate against them was dismissed because the researcher provided teachers with an assurance letter, self-addressed envelope, postage, and surveys that did not include the participant’s name.

The Roles Principals Play as Leader of the Special Education Program

Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to examine the third research question in this study. The third research question is how do the roles played by elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education differ from the roles played by elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education. The principals in this study understand that they are responsible for the special education program. They understand that they play a role as the school leader (Quigney, 1996).

Principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education utilize the expertise of their special education teachers. This is also true of principal A
who is identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education but does not have a background as a special education teacher. Therefore, the most notable differences in these areas are between the principal who is identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education and has experience as a special education teacher and the other three principals, none of which have experience as a special education teacher. These principals confine themselves within the parameters of a local education agency representative. They play the roles of liaison between the special education program and parents when resolving problems and manager of resources. They work to problem-solve collaboratively, which is consistent with the findings of Bradley (1999). This indicates that principals collaborate with their faculty when making decisions that are related to the special education programs they oversee. These principals facilitate that process. Although they are aware of special education procedures, procedural processes, and procedural timelines, Principals A, C, and D do not possess the depth of understanding of these procedures to the extent that Principal B does. Whereas Principals A, C, and D trust their special education teachers to know special education procedures, procedural processes, and procedural timelines, Principal B demonstrated an in-depth understanding of each of these during direct observation. She follows procedural timelines closely. Principals A, C, and D are not involved in these processes. They leave these responsibilities to the special education teachers at their schools. By doing so, these principals demonstrate a strong trust in their special education teachers’ expertise. This frees them up to focus on other administrative tasks that cannot be overseen by teachers.

Principal B is more than the liaison between the special education program and parents. Principal B plays the role of program leader for the special education program through her facilitation of special education processes. Although all four principals value special education
(Bradley, 1999), the difference between Principal B and her peers is that not only is she actively engaged in the process of resolving problems but she is organizing and directing those processes. She is an actively involved leader of the special education program.

All four principals work with special education teachers and central office staff to problem-solve. However, Principal B is more involved in special education procedures, procedural processes, and procedural timelines than her peers. All four principals have an expectation that special education teachers at their school will follow all special education procedures, procedural processes, and procedural timelines. Just as her peers do, Principal B leaves these responsibilities to her special education teachers. The difference is that she monitors these processes closely. All four principals play the role of manager of resources by placing them in the area of greatest need as it pertains to the needs of students with disabilities.

Principals A, C, and D consider their special education teachers to be experts in special education (Bays & Crockett, 2007). They trust their special education teachers to take care of the inclusion program at their schools (McGrew, 2008). Principal B was much more involved in her role as the leader of the inclusion program than her peers. Whereas principals A, C, and D trust their special education teachers to play an equal role in leading the inclusion program at their schools, Principal B worked with her special education teachers but was the definitive leader of the inclusion program.

All four principals understand that each student’s educational programming should be based on that student’s individual needs. Although all principals allowed special education teachers to make decisions based on each student’s individual needs (Bays & Crockett, 2007), Principal B was more involved in the decision-making process. Principal B is identified as being knowledgeable and skilled in special education with 23 years of experience in special education.
and does not seek the advice of her special education teachers to the same extent as her peers. Although her experience helps her to gain a deeper understanding of the problem, this also undermines her ability to problem-solve collaboratively to address the underlying problem through collaboration. This limitation is based on her choice to not seek the advice of her special education teachers. Principal B requests information from her teachers so that she can develop her own understanding of each situation. This is done so that she can offer her advice as to how each situation can be handled. She considers herself to be an expert in special education and has the expectation that special education teachers at her school will come to her for advice on special education related issues. She relies on her own expertise and experience and expects her special education teachers to rely on that expertise and experience as well. This is because she views herself as possessing considerably more knowledge, skill, and experience in special education than her teachers. She has much more experience in special education than her special education teachers.

*How Principals Support Special Education Programs*

Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to examine the fourth research question in this study. The fourth research question is how do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education support special education programs differently than principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education.

Principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education view the provision of special education services differently than principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education. The extent of a principal’s knowledge has an impact on the special education services provided at the school level (Praisner,
Principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education view the provision of special education services as a positive form of support that students with disabilities require in order to be successful. They do not focus on the negative stereotypes and characteristics associated with the provision of special education services. Principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education understand the importance of preparing students for employment by providing them with the functional skills they need to be successful. They understand the need to begin teaching these skills at an early age. These principals support the special education program by providing students with disabilities the opportunity to address deficits in functional skills through real-life experiences. This is done within the school setting by using the school facilities already in place. This is also done by creating projects to provide students with the opportunity to develop the functional skills they need on campus. This is done by purchasing additional materials through grants and empowering students with disabilities by having them work on these projects with their nondisabled peers.

A positive conclusion drawn in this study for principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education is that they view the provision of special education services as a last resort. They want to ensure that students do not receive special education services until all barriers have been removed that might prevent them from learning in the general education classroom without special education services. Although these principals view the special education program as important, their main focus is on preventative measures such as pre-service interventions and instructional strategies.

Principals who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education see merit in the provision of special education services. They have observed how students with disabilities
can be successful when provided with the special education and related services they require. Although pre-service interventions exist within the schools these principals oversee, pre-service interventions are not emphasized by the administration to the extent that they were in schools with principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education.

Another positive conclusion drawn with regard to principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled is that their goal is to exit students from special education. Once a student is identified as having a disability, Principals A, C, and D want students who are receiving special education services to learn academic survival skills they need to exit the special education program. This is not to say that Principal B does not want students receiving special education services to exit out of special education. Because Principal B was not explicit in stating whether or not she supports students testing out of special education, she cannot be included in the same category as the other principals. Principal B has seen many students continue to receive special education services throughout their elementary and high school years and go on to be successful because of the supports they received. Because of prior experiences that have had a positive impact on her view of special education, Principal B sees merit in continuing special education services.

Principals A, C, and D all stated that they support students in the special education program by providing them with the services they require at an early age. They focus on the early identification of students’ needs. These principals ensure that they address the identified needs of those students. This is not to say that Principal B does not address students’ needs at an early age, but she did not state this explicitly during the data collection process.

Principals A and B support the special education program through the scheduling of activities that teach functional skills, and they provide students with disabilities with the
resources they need to work on their functional skills. There is no evidence to suggest that
Principals C and D focus on the functional skills of students with disabilities at their schools.
Principal C supports students with severe disabilities by working to ensure that they are provided
with the services they require at an alternative school setting that is better equipped to meet their
needs. Although this continuum of services is a viable, sometimes, desirable option, data
collected on Principal C does not indicate that she attempts to provide students with severe
disabilities with opportunities to develop their functional skills on campus. There were multiple
opportunities observed that could have been used to teach students needing to work on functional
skills, but they were not used for this purpose. For example, the school store was run by an adult,
and students were not allowed to work in the store.

According to Foley and Lewis (1999), researchers need to examine the role principals
play in supporting special education teachers. Principals support special education teachers by
providing them with the resources and supports they need to acquire in order to perform their
jobs effectively. All four principals manage resources and personnel to provide students with
disabilities with the greatest opportunity for success. In this regard, both groups of principals are
more alike than different. The difference is that principals identified as knowledgeable and
skilled in special education were purposeful in the inclusion of students with disabilities
whenever possible. This was not explicit for principals identified as marginally knowledgeable
and skilled in special education.

Special Education Oversight at the School Level

Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to examine the fifth research question in
this study. The fifth research question is how do elementary principals who are knowledgeable

and skilled in special education oversee their programs differently than elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education. All principals understand that the special education program is an important component of the educational programming at every school. All principals view knowledge and skill in special education as important. Although Principals A and B, who are identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education, rely on special education teachers as a tool to help them stay current with changes in special education, these principals are better equipped than their peers to solve special education problems because of their understanding of the purpose of special education and their depth of knowledge in special education. Whereas Principals A and B rely on special education teachers to stay current with changes in special education, Principals C and D rely on special education teachers during scheduling to ensure that students with disabilities are receiving the services that are stated in their IEPs (Individualized Education Plan).

Each principal’s background has an impact on how they administer the special education programs at their schools (Praisner, 2003). The more positive a previous experience is the more likely principals are to have a positive opinion of special education services in general (Praisner). This was evident between the two groups of principals in this study. Principals identified as knowledgeable and skilled in special education had previous experiences that were positive. Principals identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education had previous experiences with special education that were negative. Neither of these principal groups were impacted by their knowledge or skill in special education as much as they were from previous experiences that were unrelated to their knowledge and skill in special education. The long-term impact of those experiences created a focus on the provision of special education services for principals who had previous experiences that were viewed as positive and a focus on pre-service
interventions for principals who had previous experiences that were viewed as negative toward
special education. Although Principal C’s experience was positive, it was not positive in regard
to special education.

What each principal perceives to be her responsibilities as well as what she perceives the
purpose of special education to be is impacted by previous experiences. A principal’s
background affects the way a special education program is administered at the school level.
Whereas the primary focus for principals A and B is the special education program at their
schools, the primary focus for principals C and D is pre-service interventions. This is not to say
that a focus on pre-service interventions is not important for students who are at-risk and
students who receive special education services. Pre-service interventions are important for both
groups of students. This is to say that there is considerably less focus by principals C and D on
the special education program. It is important to note that there is considerably less focus on pre-
service interventions by Principals A and B.

A background in special education impacts the principal’s ability to monitor special
education teachers to determine if they are adhering to special education policy and procedural
guidelines. Principal B’s extensive background in special education has had an impact on how
she leads the special education program. Principal B is able to identify when special education
teachers “are not doing what they are supposed to do.” Although they are involved in the
problem-solving process, Principals A, C, and D rely on special education teachers’ expertise to
guide them through special education processes. All four principals expect their special
education teachers to be knowledgeable of intensive strategies so that they can help students with
disabilities overcome barriers. Principal B is able to provide general education and special
education teachers with suggestions on intensive strategies and does not rely as heavily on her
special education teachers to help administer the special education program. The conclusions in this study support Stevenson’s (2002) finding that principals with a certification in special education spend more time involved with the special education program at their schools than their peers.

The findings in this study do not link a principal’s ability to lead a special education program with her knowledge of special education as found in Wiggle and Wilcox (1999) and Bays and Crockett (2007). This study indicates that there is a difference in how principals lead the special education instead of a principal’s ability to lead the special education program. This is not to say that a fundamental understanding of special education is not needed to lead the special education program effectively. To the contrary, a fundamental understanding of special education is necessary to lead the special education program at the school level effectively (Bradley, 1999; Bravenec, 1998). Principals who were identified as marginally knowledgeable in special education lead the special education program, but they are not as involved in the procedures and rely on special education teachers as experts. The principal with experience as a special education teacher, Principal B, has a deeper understanding of special education teachers and is therefore more involved in special education procedures and, ultimately, the special education program. This principal has a higher stake in the special education program because she has dedicated 23 years of her professional career to this area. This study does, however, support the conclusions drawn in Bays and Crockett in that a principal’s regard for the special education program has an impact on her ability to lead the special education program. The key is for principals to demonstrate that the special education program is an important program within the school. An in-depth knowledge base or skill set is not necessary to do this.
Bays and Crockett (2007) found that principals were more focused on legal and procedural issues in the special education program. The conclusions in this study support this claim. To extend this knowledge base on special education leadership, the principal with experience as a special education teacher in this study was less concerned with the legal aspects of special education and more focused on the provision of those services. As suggested by Bays and Crockett, Principal B ensured that students with disabilities receive an appropriate education by observing and evaluating their special education teachers.

The instruction provided for students with disabilities in these four schools was not affected by the principal’s knowledge of special education. A possible explanation for this can be found by linking the strengths of the two principals (i.e., Principals C and D) with the conclusions drawn by Heckert (2009). Heckert concluded that a depth of knowledge in instructional strategies increases a principal’s ability to be the instructional leader of the school. Principals C and D excel in providing students with pre-service interventions and instruction with research-based programs. They were the instructional leaders of their schools. This rival explanation might explain why the instructional strategies used in the special education programs at schools C and D are just as effective regardless of the principal’s knowledge and skill in special education. All students, including students with disabilities, receive these interventions on a daily basis. A second rival explanation is that the special education and general education faculty are experts in providing students with appropriate and effective interventions. Therefore, the level of expertise of teachers is why students are successful. Although there is merit in placing the successes of students on their teachers’ abilities, continued growth would be unlikely without the encouragement and support of the principal.
In addition, resources play a key role at schools C and D. The special education programs were affected by each principal’s ability to procure and manage resources as well as the level of expertise of the special education and general education faculty and staff. This is not to say that principals will not be more effective in leading the special education program at their schools if they increase their knowledge and skill in special education. Principals must possess a fundamental understanding of special education to be effective leaders of school level special education programs (Bradley, 1999). Increasing principals’ knowledge and skill in special education can only improve their ability to develop the special education programs at their schools.

Theoretical Connection

The theoretical framework for this study is found in Kouzes’ and Posner’s (2007) transformational leadership theory, which is based on Burns’ (1978) original work. This theory was advanced by Kouzes and Posner and addresses five ways exemplary leaders lead. Exemplary leaders (a) “Model the Way,” (b) “Inspire a Shared Vision,” (c) “Challenge the Process,” (d) “Enable Others to Act,” and (e) “Encourage the Heart” (Kouzes & Posner, p. 14).

Although all four principals do not possess an in-depth knowledge of or skill in special education, this does not disqualify them from being considered exemplary leaders within the transformational leadership theory model. Both principals identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education are effective principals. They only lack the depth of knowledge and level of skill of Principals A and B with regard to special education. Therefore, this study advances the transformational leadership theory based on each set of principals’ knowledge and skill as they relate to special education.
Principals model the way based on their own values. Principal group AB placed a high value on special education because of their background and previous experiences. Principal group CD had previous experiences that had convinced them of the importance and benefit of providing students with appropriate pre-service intervention strategies. Each principal group modeled the importance of these values to their faculties by placing an emphasis on the programs they value the most. These principals’ actions align with their values that are based on their backgrounds and previous experiences. In this way, the transformational leadership theory is validated in that each principal group modeled their belief system. To say that one system of beliefs is superior to the other would be inaccurate. Both belief systems have notable strengths and weaknesses.

Principals with negative experiences with regard to special education services are more likely to implement programs and procedures that help to prevent students from entering into special education. They model a focus on pre-intervention strategies. Ironically, this focus on pre-intervention strategies enables these leaders to provide more direct special education services by preventing students from entering special education when they do not require special education services to be successful within the general education classroom. Even though the focus of principals who are identified as marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education is to prevent students from entering into special education, this focus has had a positive impact on students with and without disabilities. The fundamental characteristic of modeling the way, set forth within the transformational leadership theory, is supported by this study.

Principals inspire a shared vision that is based on their own values by bringing faculty members together in a collaborative process to develop organizational goals. All four principals
involved faculty members in the decision-making process. The principal who was most experienced in special education, Principal B, was an active participant in the special education process and a vocal member of the IEP team. Even though she had a strong opinion with regard to special education issues, she worked with fellow IEP team members to make a collaborative decision.

Principals do not have to possess an in-depth knowledge in special education to be able to inspire a shared vision for the special education program at the school. Principals C and D were just as effective in leading the special education programs at their schools. They focused on facilitating a collaborative approach to providing students with disabilities special education and related services. By doing so, these principals were able to use the expertise of all faculty members to focus on the needs of all students. A shared vision was formed.

The principal with experience as a special education teacher, Principal B, was less likely to utilize the expertise of her special education faculty. Although this principal brought faculty members together in a collaborative process and allows special education teachers to do their jobs without micromanaging them, the principal tends to rely on her own experience and expertise. Principal B shares her vision for the special education program with the faculty.

Innovation that has an impact on special education does not have to come within the provision of special education services. The process can be challenged prior to the provision of those services. Principals are leaders of innovation and encourage innovation in the classroom and throughout the school. All four principals have adopted innovative programs that are used in their schools. Principal group CD has adopted a wider range of innovative programs at their schools. Most of these programs are used in pre-service intervention programs, which helps to explain why they have chosen to incorporate a greater number of innovative programs.
In this study, principals enable others to act and empower them to take risks in the lessons they teach and the pedagogical methods they use. This was true in all four schools. All four principals place a high value on students acquiring new information and overcoming barriers. These principals encourage teachers to use both traditional and innovative teaching methods to help students learn. Innovation that has an impact on special education does not have to come from within the provision of the special education services. The process can be challenged prior to the provision of those services.

This study advances this part of the theory in that whether or not a principal is knowledgeable and skilled in special education does not have an impact on the extent to which the principal will empower teachers to take risks. The determining factor is the principal’s own paradigm of effective leadership. Regardless of their knowledge and skill in special education, some principals will promote risk-taking within the special education program and some principals will not. Therefore, the findings in this study support the transformational leadership theory in that effective leaders will empower others to act. This study extends this theory because effective principals do not have to be knowledgeable or skilled in the areas in which they are empowering others to take risks.

Principals encourage the hearts of their faculty members through both praise and reward. They celebrate real student accomplishments together. They do not celebrate hollow victories. Principals A and C were observed celebrating the academic gains of students with teachers during data meetings. Principal B was observed celebrating the academic and nonacademic successes of students with disabilities in IEP meetings. This celebration included both faculty members and parents. Principal D was observed celebrating the accomplishments of all students during a grade-level awards day ceremony that was performed at each grade level. The principal,
her assistant principal, grade-level faculty, students, and students’ family members shared in a celebration of their accomplishments. When it comes to students with disabilities, all principals understand the difficulty in which academic gains are made by those students. Principals with teaching experience within the field of special education are more likely to celebrate those victories on a more personal level with those who are closest to the student.

Implications for Policy and Practice

There are six implications for policy and practice that are drawn from the conclusions of this study. Each of these focuses on a different aspect of school-level leadership of the special education programs.

First, principals need additional training that includes policies and procedures in regard to student assessment that moves beyond the management of students with behavioral issues in an attempt to determine the purpose of the behavior. Principals who do not possess an in-depth understanding of special education, because of a lack of experience in special education, tend to focus on special education law. Most of their training is focused on the legalities that are tied to the special education decision-making process. Principals need to gain a deeper understanding of the procedures and timelines involved in student assessment as they relate to the identification (Nelson, 2002) and continuation of services for this student population. A deeper understanding of these procedures and timelines will help principals be more effective in their leadership of the special education program (Harlin-Fischer, 1998). Developing a deeper understanding will help principals to be viewed by the general education and special education faculty as a competent leader of the special education program (Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006). In addition, this will help principals gain a deeper understanding of the special education process and improve their ability
to effectively lead the special education program. By doing this, the faculty will observe the emphasis placed on the special education program by the principal, and the faculty will be more likely to view the special education program as an important part of the education programing at the school level.

In working with students with disabilities and behavioral issues, the training principals receive is not focused on identifying the antecedent of the behavior; what function, if any, the behavior is serving; and how to modify the student’s behavior through a series of steps (i.e., behavior modification program). Instead, the training principals receive is focused on special education law. Because principals focus on legal issues, they do not receive the training in other areas of special education that will improve the instruction that students with disabilities receive. Although training in special education law in how to discipline students with disabilities is important for principals to have a comprehensive understanding of special education, the main intent of the provision of special education services, as it relates to behavior, is to provide students with disabilities with the training, counseling, and supports they need, so that they are able to overcome the behaviors that have a negative impact on their learning.

Second, principals need to spend time learning special education procedures. Principals should be exposed to a broad variety of special education issues during their preparation (O’Brien, 1998). Administrative programs in Alabama require one course in special education at the graduate level. One class that focuses on special education coursework at the graduate school level is not sufficient enough to provide principals with the in-depth understanding of special education necessary for principals to become more involved in the special education program (Stevenson, 2002). Graduate school coursework in administration should include training in how to identify the specific needs of students with disabilities as they relate to identifying the
student’s problem and determining which instructional strategy will effectively address that deficiency. Although progress has been made in this area, additional emphasis in developing principals who are knowledgeable in a variety of instructional strategies is necessary for them to be viewed as the instructional leader of the school by their faculty. An in-depth knowledge of effective instructional strategies will help principals meet the needs of all students because principals with an increased knowledge base in instructional strategies are more effective instructional leaders than principals who are less knowledgeable in instructional strategies (Heckert, 2009).

To improve the educational programs offered at each school, teachers should be able to approach school-level administrators with the expectation that the principal is knowledgeable in instructional strategies and will be able to collaborate with the teacher to help every student overcome instructional barriers and achieve academic success. Without this knowledge base or the skill set necessary to communicate this knowledge base to teachers and work with them effectively, principals are viewed less favorably by their faculty.

There is no substitute for experience as a special education teacher. However, an internship is one way to provide principals with experience in special education and prepare principals for their roles as the leader of the special education program (Bravenec, 1998; Volpe, 2006). Administrative preparatory programs in Alabama require an internship. The amount of time spent on special education issues varies drastically between internships. Preparatory administrative programs should require aspiring administrators to spend more time during their internship on special education issues. When special education issues do arise during internships, too often they tend to focus on discipline issues. Often, special education issues are viewed through the lens of legalities, and a focus on the student is lost. Both the depth and breadth of
internship experiences with special education should be substantial. Administrative internship experiences should include collaborating with a variety of faculty members to solve issues related to the academic difficulties of one or more students with disabilities.

The background knowledge educators possess with regard to special education can have a positive or negative impact on their attitudes (Praisner, 2003; Villa et al., 1996). A principal’s attitude can affect how the special education program at the school is administered (Praisner). Administrative internships should be structured so that candidates can have positive experiences with special education programs and develop an understanding of the weaknesses and strengths of a special education program as well as the value and benefits of having an effective special education program. Administrative candidates should be exposed to the benefit of pre-service interventions for students with and without special needs.

Third, principals rely on special education teachers too much in areas that the principals themselves should possess a stronger knowledge base and skill set. Principals have confidence in their teachers to allow them to take on leadership roles (McGrew, 2008). However, principals are not able to lead the special education program if they rely on their special education teachers to take care of that program in its entirety. Principals are able to form a collegial partnership with special education teachers and continue to lead the special education program while relying on special education teachers to stay within procedural guidelines and timelines.

Principals need a deeper understanding of special education procedures. This is important because principals are supposed to be the leaders of the school-level special education program. Principals need to develop their knowledge base and skill set in special education so that they are able to provide effective oversight. This will enable principals to become more involved in the special education program thereby increasing the focus of the faculty on the special education
program. Additionally, an increased knowledge of special education will help principals understand the role of special education teachers, and the principal will be able to provide special education teachers with the supports they need in order to provide students with disabilities an appropriate education.

Fourth, although principals agree that a strong knowledge base and skill set in special education is necessary for principals to possess, principals need to increase their knowledge in instructional strategies and increase their focus on both pre-service interventions and the provision of special education services. It is important for all principals to possess a knowledge base in due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement; legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessment; the rights and responsibilities of special education stakeholder; applicable laws, rules, regulations, and procedural safeguards with regard to behavioral issues within special education; ethics and confidentiality as they relate to special education; holding students with disabilities to high standards so that they can have a quality life; and modeling appropriate behavior toward students with disabilities.

Principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education place a higher value on understanding the ethical concerns related to assessment, understanding typical parental concerns in special education, and being knowledgeable in instruction that focuses on independent living and employment skills. Principals who are marginal in their knowledge and skill in special education place a higher focus on knowledge and skills that are not specific to the special education program but are important to all students. They do not have a sound understanding of the underlying philosophy of special education, understanding how to apply and interpret scores, and the importance of teaching independent living and employment skills. Professional development is needed in these areas to ensure that all principals understand the
philosophical underpinning of special education services, how to interpret test scores so that an appropriate educational program can be developed, and the importance of teaching students with severe disabilities independent living and employment skills beginning at an early age.

Even though the number of students receiving special education is a small percentage of the overall student population, this is an important program designed to meet the needs of students who are often unable to learn through conventional teaching methods. An increased knowledge base and skill set that empowers principals to be effective leaders of the special education program will help improve instruction for students with disabilities. Principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education need to use their knowledge of and skill in instructional interventions to prevent students who can be successful without those services from receiving special education services. Principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education already focus on pre-service intervention strategies. Principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education need to ensure that they are focusing on pre-service intervention skills so that students who do not require special education services are not identified as needing them.

Fifth, it is important for principals to commit to empowering students with disabilities, especially students with significant disabilities, by providing them with the highest level of educational programming that meets their individual needs and increases their quality of life potential. This can be done by providing them with an appropriate education based on their individual needs. Principals need to gain a deeper understanding of the functional skills students with more severe disabilities need in order for them to become gainfully employed. For students with physical or cognitive impairments, the elementary school setting lays a foundation for the employment skills that they will need in order to become gainfully employed. In addition, it is
important for elementary school principals to provide this student population with the skills they will need to live independently. Students with severe disabilities require meaningful and appropriate opportunities to acquire employment skills and experiences within a structured work environment. Principals can ensure that independent living skills are taught in a variety of environments throughout the school. Having students prepare their own food, learn gardening skills, and how to clean are important skills that elementary school principals can ensure that students with severe disabilities are taught at an early age. Principals need to create an environment that enables students to learn employment skills and empowers them to develop these skills. Principals can use a school store or beautification projects on school grounds to teach students the functional skills they will need in order to function within an employment setting.

Sixth, for students with high incidence disabilities, principals should work to create an atmosphere where the focus of special education is to provide students with the skills and supports they need to achieve academic success without special education services. The principal should lead a school-wide effort that focuses on teaching students how to become self-advocates and independent learners so that they can exit special education and achieve academic success as quickly as possible. The goal of special education is to teach students the skills they need to achieve success independently. With the proper leadership, elementary school students with disabilities can begin to learn self-advocacy and self-determination skills in the elementary school setting. As the instructional leader of the school and special education program, principals play an important role in this process. Principals set the educational tone for the school. How principals lead the special education program has an impact on how teachers work with the special education program. Principals are able to get general education teachers more involved in
the special education program by creating a collaborative environment that brings both general education and special education teachers together.

Future Research

Continued research in high quality special education administrative leadership is needed (Bays & Crockett, 2007). There is a need for research in the school-level leadership of the special education program by principals who have a strong background in special education. Requirements for research participants should include formal training in special education at the university level that resulted in a degree in special education or a related field of study. Another requirement of participants should be experience as a special education teacher or related area.

Future research needs to address how principals administer the special education program at the middle school and high school levels. Among elementary, middle, and high school principals, research is needed to address the differences of how principals administer the special education programs at each level. The roles principals play and how they support special education programs at each school level needs to be examined. How principals manage the special education programs at the different levels should be compared. The principal’s involvement at each level should be examined. This is especially true at the middle school and high school levels because of a paucity of research at these two levels and the need to address transition services as they relate to postsecondary living, employment, and academic goals. In most cases, the middle school level is where transition services are discussed for the first time, and the high school level is where the majority of transition services are provided. Other factors that may have an effect on special education leadership at the secondary level are credits
received for coursework, diploma options, the amount of responsibilities placed on the principal, the presence of one or more assistant principals, and the size of the faculty.

Future research is needed to examine the effects of intensive pre-service intervention programs on students with and without disabilities. For example, students with and without disabilities at a school with an effective Response to Intervention model should be compared to students with and without disabilities that do not have an effective pre-service intervention program in place. The leadership role that the principal plays in each of these settings should be examined.
REFERENCES


Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Version 15.0) [Computer software]. Chicago, IL.


APPENDIX A

PRINCIPAL VERSION: KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION SURVEY
Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey  
Principal Version

Demographics
1. Gender: Male Female
2. How many years have you been a principal? _______
3. How many years have you been a principal in your current school assignment? _____
4. Number of years of general education teaching experience:
   Elementary _______ Middle/Junior High _______ High School _______
5. List your certifications: _______________________________________________________________
6. Number of years of full-time special education teaching experience:
   Elementary _______ Middle/Junior High _______ High School _______
7. What is your highest level of academic achievement?
   M.S.    Ed.S.    Ed.D.    Ph.D.    Other __________________  (Specify)
8. Did you complete an internship as part of your administrative preparation? Yes No
   If you answered “Yes”, go to question 9. If you answered “No”, go to question 10.
9. Was there a special education component to your internship? Yes No
10. How many students are currently enrolled at your school? _______
11. How many students with disabilities are currently enrolled at your school? _______
There are two scales beside each question. Carefully follow the directions when answering each question.

**1st Scale – HOW NECESSARY**
Please circle the degree (1-4) that you think the following knowledge statements are necessary for principals to implement effective programs for students with disabilities.
1 = not at all necessary  2 = somewhat necessary  3 = necessary  4 = extremely necessary

**2nd Scale – HOW KNOWLEDGEABLE**
Please circle the degree (1-4) to which you think you possess the following knowledge.
1 = not at all knowledgeable  2 = somewhat knowledgeable  3 = knowledgeable  4 = extremely knowledgeable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KNOWLEDGE -</th>
<th>1st Scale – How necessary is it that a principal knows:</th>
<th>2nd Scale – How knowledgeable are you with:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Issues in definition and identification procedures for students with disabilities</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of typical and exceptional learners</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>6. Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<td>7. Effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Basic terminology used in assessment</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Ethical concerns related to assessment</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessment</td>
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<td>11. Typical procedures used for screening, prereferral, referral, and classification</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Appropriate application and interpretation of scores</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. The relationship between assessment and placement decisions</td>
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<td>14. Methods of monitoring student progress</td>
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<td>15. Differing learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to these styles</td>
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<td>16. Life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Basic classroom management theories, methods, and techniques for students with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Research and best practices for effective management of teaching and learning for students with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ways in which technology can assist with planning and managing the teaching and learning environment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students' behaviors</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Teacher attitudes and behaviors that positively or negatively influence the student behaviors</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Strategies for crisis prevention/intervention</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Strategies for preparing students to live harmoniously and productively in a multiclass, multiethnic, multicultural, and multinational world</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Typical concerns of parents of students with disabilities and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Roles of students, parents, teachers, and other school and community personnel in planning a student's individualized educational program</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. One's own cultural biases and differences that affect one's attitude toward students with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are two scales beside each question. Carefully follow the directions when answering each question.

**1st Scale – HOW NECESSARY**
Please circle the degree (1-4) that you think the following skills are necessary for principals to implement effective programs for students with disabilities.

1 = not at all necessary  2 = somewhat necessary  3 = necessary  4 = extremely necessary

**2nd Scale – HOW SKILLED**
Please circle the degree (1-4) to which you think you possess the following skills.

1 = not at all skilled  2 = somewhat skilled  3 = skilled  4 = extremely skilled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SKILLS –</th>
<th>1st Scale – How necessary is it that the principal be able to:</th>
<th>2nd Scale: How skilled are you in being able to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28. Articulate a personal philosophy of special education, including its relationship to with general education</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Interpret assessment data for instructional planning</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Demonstrate a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

CASE STUDY PROTOCOL
## Case Study Protocol

### A. Research Questions and Data Collection Instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Calendar of Appointments</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>KSSE Survey Scale 1 (Necessary)</th>
<th>KSSE Survey Scale 2 (Possesses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education administer the special education programs at their schools?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. How do knowledge bases and skills reported as necessary for elementary principals to possess differ between elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education and elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education as measured by the Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey (Harlin-Fischer, 1998)? (see Appendix A)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do knowledge bases and skills reported as being possessed by elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education differ from the knowledge bases and skills reported as being possessed by elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education as measured by the Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey (Harlin-Fischer, 1998)? (see Appendix A)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do the roles played by elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education differ from the roles played by elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education support special education programs differently than principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education oversee their programs differently than elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Data Collection Timeline

**Phase 1**

Day 1
Collect Interview Data
Code, Categorize, and Develop Themes; Align Observation Protocol with Interview Themes

**Phase 2**

Day 1
Collect Interview Data

3 Week Time Lapse

Day 2
Collect Principal’s Calendar of Appointments, Journal, and Conduct First Observation

No Time Lapse

Day 3
Conduct Second Observation
APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD PROPOSAL
November 19, 2010

Rickard Templeton
SPEMA
College of Education
The University of Alabama

Re: IRB # 10-OR-356 “An Examination of How Knowledgeable and Skilled Elementary Principals in Alabama Lead Special Education Programs: Four Case Studies”

Dear Mr. Templeton:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your protocol has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. You have also been granted the requested waiver of written documentation of informed consent. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your application will expire on November 16, 2011. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of Continuing Review and Closure form. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of FORM: Continuing Review and Closure.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Juan Uzdan, Ph.D.
Chair Non-Medical Institutional Review Board
The University of Alabama
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS
REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

I. Identifying Information

Principal Investigator: Richard Templeton
Principal Investigator: Mary Bevine-Smith
Second Investigator: Special Education and
Third Investigator: Multiple Abilities
Department: Special Education and
College: Multiple Abilities
University: The University of Alabama
Address: 615 Summerville DR SW
Huntsville, AL 35840
Telephone: (256) 318-4901
FAX: (256) 318-4901
E-mail: rtempleton@norman12.org

Title of Research Project: An Examination of How Knowledgeable and Skilled Elementary Principals in Alabama Lead Special Education Programs: Four Case Studies

Date Submitted: 
Funding Source: 

Type of Proposal: [ ] New [ ] Revision [ ] Renewal [ ] Completed [ ] Exempt

II. NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION (to be completed by IRB):

Type of Review: [ ] Full Board [ ] Expedited

IRB Action:
[ ] Rejected
[ ] Tabled
[ ] Approved Pending Revisions

Date: __________________

Date: __________________

[ ] Approved-this proposal complies with University and federal regulations for the protection of human subjects

Approval is effective until the following date: __________________

Items approved:
- Research protocol (dated _________)
- Informed consent (dated _________)
- Recruitment materials (dated _________)
- Other (dated _________)

Approval signature: __________________ Date: 1/11/10
### IRB Application Study Personnel Sheet (Insert after Face Sheet)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Degree(s) or student status (e.g., master’s student)</th>
<th>Study Position Title (PI, Interviewer, Data Analyst, etc.)</th>
<th>Study Responsibilities</th>
<th>Date of Certificate of Investigator /staff Human Subjects Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard Templeton, Ed.S. (doctoral student)</td>
<td>Principal Investigator</td>
<td>Study Development, Data Collection, Data Analysis, &amp; Drawing Conclusions</td>
<td>February 20, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Beirne-Smith, Ed.D. (Associate Professor)</td>
<td>Second Investigator</td>
<td>Dissertation Committee Chair</td>
<td>November 1, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn Pistorius, Ed.D.</td>
<td>Research Assistant</td>
<td>Interrator Reliability For Interview Data Analysis</td>
<td>November 5, 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FORM: Request for Waiver of Written Documentation of Informed Consent

Directions: Address the criteria listed below and attach this form to your application. Also, state in your application that you are requesting a waiver of written documentation of informed consent and describe what you will do to obtain consent in the procedure section of your application. The IRB often requires investigators to provide participants with a written information statement about the research when written documentation is waived; you may wish to include one in your initial application.

*NOTE that the UA IRB does not allow passive consent and that waivers may not be granted for FDA-regulated research.*

You are welcome to call Research Compliance staff at 205-348-5152 to discuss your need for a waiver in advance of application submission.

(1) The only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality; or

Statement one does not accurately represent the survey phase of this study.

(2) The research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.

Statement two accurately represents the survey phase of this study for which consent is requested. A request is being made to waive the acquisition of a signed informed consent for this study. The waiver will help to protect the confidentiality of participants because their names will not be directly linked to information that can be viewed by outside sources. The informed consent presented to participants includes all requirements of informed consent. Participants will be able to download an electric copy and/or print a hard copy of the informed consent for their records.
APPENDIX D

DATA COLLECTION CHECKLIST FOR ELEMENTARY CASE STUDY SITES
# Data Collection Checklist
(Chain of Evidence)

Data Collection Site: _______________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collected</th>
<th>Date Collected</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>_____________</td>
<td>KSSE Survey (Demographics)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>_____________</td>
<td>Interview (Protocol)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>_____________</td>
<td>2010-2011 Calendar of Appointments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>_____________</td>
<td>Principal’s Journal (Guidelines)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>_____________</td>
<td>Direct Observation (Protocol)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Notes/Comments: ________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX E

SCHOOL SYSTEM FORM: PERMISSION FOR DISTRICT PRINCIPALS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION SURVEY
Dear Superintendent/Designee,

Richard Templeton, Principal Investigator and a doctoral student from the Special Education and Multiple Abilities Department in the College of Education at The University of Alabama, is conducting a research study called *An Examination of How Knowledgeable and Skilled Elementary Principals Lead Special Education Programs in Alabama: Four Case Studies*. This research study seeks to find out the similarities between how principals, who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education, lead and support their special education programs in comparison to how their peers, who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education, lead and support their special education programs. This research study seeks to define the role that the principal, who is knowledgeable and skilled in special education, plays at the school level.

Data will be collected from selected principals, who meet the criteria for participation in this research study, by completing a web survey. This will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. This survey contains questions about instruction and management, ethics, assessment, theoretical and philosophical issues, legal issues, and skills with regard to special education.

Confidentiality will be protected by using a code in place of the principal’s name. Only the lead investigator, dissertation committee members, and a research assistant will have access to the data. The data are password protected. Only summarized data will be presented at meetings or in publications.

There will be no direct benefits to your school district. The findings will be useful to the Alabama State Department of Education; university administrative preparatory program faculty; superintendents; directors of special education; and elementary school principals in Alabama. The findings will indicate how principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education oversee and support the special education programs at their schools; the roles they play; the similarities between elementary school principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education; and how they are different from their peers. The chief risk is that some of the questions may make principals uncomfortable. Principals may skip any questions they do not wish to answer.

If you have questions about this research study, please contact Richard Templeton at (256) 318-4992 or by e-mail at rtdissertation@gmail.com, or you can contact the dissertation committee chair, Dr. Mary Beirne-Smith, at (205) 348-1438 or by e-mail at mbeirne@bamaed.ua.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact Ms. Tanta Myles, The University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer, at 205-348-8461.

PARTICIPATION IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY. Principals are free not to participate or to stop participating at any time before they submit their surveys.
If you understand the statements above, are at least 19 years old, and freely consent to allowing principals within your school system to participate in this research study, please sign, date, and return this form in the enclosed envelope.

______________________ ______________________ ____________
(Signature)                                (School System)                   (Date)
APPENDIX F

PRINCIPAL FORM: PERMISSION FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION SURVEY
Dear Elementary School Principal,

Richard Templeton, Principal Investigator and a doctoral student from the Special Education and Multiple Abilities Department in the College of Education at the University of Alabama, is conducting a research study called *An Examination of How Knowledgeable and Skilled Elementary Principals Lead Special Education Programs in Alabama: Four Case Studies*. This research study seeks to find out the similarities between how principals, who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education, lead and support their special education programs in comparison to how their peers, who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education, lead and support their special education programs. This research study seeks to define the role that the principal, who is knowledgeable and skilled in special education, plays at the school level.

Taking part in this research study involves completing a web survey and will take approximately 15 minutes. This survey contains questions about instruction and management, ethics, assessment, theoretical and philosophical issues, legal issues, and skills with regard to special education.

Your confidentiality will be protected by using a code in place of your name. Only the lead investigator, dissertation committee members, and a research assistant will have access to the data. The data are password protected. Only summarized data will be presented at meetings or in publications.

There will be no direct benefits to you. The findings will be useful to the Alabama State Department of Education; university administrative preparatory program faculty; superintendents; directors of special education; and elementary school principals in Alabama. The findings will indicate how principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education oversee and support the special education programs at their schools; the roles they play; the similarities between elementary school principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education; and how they are different from their peers. The chief risk is that some of the questions may make principals uncomfortable. Principals may skip any questions they do not wish to answer.

The chief risk is that some of the questions may make you uncomfortable. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

If you have questions about this research study, please contact Richard Templeton at (256) 318-4992 or by e-mail at rrtdissertation@gmail.com, or you can contact the dissertation committee chair, Dr. Mary Beirne-Smith, by phone at (205) 348-1438 or by e-mail at mbeirne@bamaed.ua.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact Ms. Tanta Myles, The University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer, at 205-348-8461.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY. You are free not to participate or to stop participating at any time before you submit your survey.
If you understand the statements above, are at least 19 years old, and freely consent to be in this research study, click on the following link to begin.
APPENDIX G

SCHOOL SYSTEM FORM: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT CASE STUDY RESEARCH
WITHIN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT
Dear Superintendent/Designee,

Congratulations for employing a principal who has been identified as a candidate for participation in the case study phase of this research study. Your school system employs one of four principals in Alabama who have been identified for the case study phase of this research study.

Richard Templeton, Principal Investigator and a doctoral student from the Special Education and Multiple Abilities Department in the College of Education at The University of Alabama, is conducting a research study called *An Examination of How Knowledgeable and Skilled Elementary Principals Lead Special Education Programs in Alabama: Four Case Studies*. This research study seeks to find out the similarities between how principals, who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education, lead and support their special education programs in comparison to how their peers, who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education, lead and support their special education programs. This research study seeks to define the role that the principal, who is knowledgeable and skilled in special education, plays at the school level.

Prior to beginning data collection on the principal in the case study phase, the principal’s faculty will be asked to fill out a survey on the knowledge and skills in special education of the principal. These data will be used to validate the principal’s self-reported survey responses. Surveys will be completed with anonymity and will not be shared with the principal.

Data will be collected for the current school year from the selected principal. Data to be collected includes the following information: (a) a survey, which was completed by the principal when he/she was identified as a candidate for participation, (b) a one hour semi-structured interview, (c) the principal will keep a journal for a two week period, (d) the principal’s schedule and appointments, and (e) a two day direct observation of the principal. Parents and students will not be involved in this research study. The focus is on the principal.

The principal’s confidentiality will be protected by referring to him/her as Case A, Case B, Case C, or Case D when reporting results. Only the lead investigator, dissertation committee members, and a research assistant will have access to the data. The data are kept in a secure location and all electronic files are kept on a secure computer that is password protected. Only summarized data will be presented at meetings or in publications.

There will be no direct benefits to you. The findings will be useful to the Alabama State Department of Education; university administrative preparatory program faculty; superintendents; directors of special education; and elementary school principals in Alabama. The findings will indicate how principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education oversee and support the special education programs at their schools; the roles they play; the similarities between elementary school principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education; and how they are different from their peers.
The chief risk is that some of the questions may make principals uncomfortable. Principals may skip any questions they do not wish to answer.

The chief risks are anxiety and stress due to an in-depth exploration into the participant’s professional life. Due to the large quantity of data collected and the time consuming nature of case study research, there is a risk of inconvenience to participants. The researcher is a trained professional and will collect data both systematically and in a manner that is time efficient. The principal investigator will be on site for three days.

If you have questions about this research study, please contact Richard Templeton at (256) 318-4992 or by e-mail at rrtdissertation@gmail.com, or you can contact the dissertation committee chair, Dr. Mary Beirne-Smith, by phone at (205) 348-1438 or by e-mail at mbeirne@bamaed.ua.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact Ms. Tanta Myles, The University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer, at 205-348-8461.

PARTICIPATION IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY. Principals are free not to participate or to stop participating at any time.

If you understand the statements above, are at least 19 years old, and freely consent to allowing principals within your school system to participate in this research study, please sign, date, and return this form in the enclosed envelope.

______________________ ______________________ ____________
(Signature)                                (School System)                   (Date)

☐ Check this box if you would like to schedule a meeting or presentation for you, your school board members, or your principals.

Comments:________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Principal ____________,

Congratulations for being selected for the case study phase of this research study. Your school system has given this researcher approval to contact you about participating in this research study.

Richard Templeton, Principal Investigator and a doctoral student from the Special Education Multiple Abilities Department in the College of Education at the University of Alabama, is conducting a research study called *An Examination of How Knowledgeable and Skilled Elementary Principals Lead Special Education Programs in Alabama: Four Case Studies*. This research study seeks to find out the similarities between how principals, who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education, lead and support their special education programs in comparison to how their peers, who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education, lead and support their special education programs. This research study seeks to define the role that the principal, who is knowledgeable and skilled in special education, plays at the school level.

Taking part in this research study involves completing a web survey, which you have already completed. Prior to beginning data collection for the case study phase, your faculty will be asked to fill out a survey on your knowledge and skills in special education. These data will be used to validate your self-reported survey responses. Surveys will be completed with anonymity and will not be shared with you.

The case study phase will require the following, which will include information from the current school year: (a) a one hour semi-structured interview, (b) keeping a journal for a two week period, (c) your schedule and appointments, and (d) a two day direct observation of the principal. Parents and students will not be involved in this research study. The focus is on the principal.

Your confidentiality will be protected by referring to you as Case A, Case B, Case C, or Case D when reporting results. Only the lead investigator, dissertation committee members, and a research assistant will have access to the data. The data are kept in a secure location and all electronic files are kept on a secure computer that is password protected. Only summarized data will be presented at meetings or in publications.

There will be no direct benefits to you. The findings will be useful to the Alabama State Department of Education; university administrative preparatory program faculty; superintendents; directors of special education; and elementary school principals in Alabama. The findings will indicate how principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education oversee and support the special education programs at their schools; the roles principals play; the similarities between elementary school principals who are
knowledgeable and skilled in special education; and how principals are different from their peers.

The chief risks are anxiety and stress due to an in-depth exploration into the participant’s professional life. Due to the large quantity of data collected and the time consuming nature of case study research, there is a risk of inconvenience to participants. The researcher is a trained professional and will collect data both systematically and in a manner that is time efficient. The principal investigator will be on site for three days.

If you have questions about this research study, please contact Richard Templeton at (256) 318-4992 or by e-mail at rrtdissertation@gmail.com, or you can contact the dissertation committee chair, Dr. Mary Beirne-Smith, by phone at (205) 348-1438 or by e-mail at mbeirne@bamaed.ua.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact Ms. Tanta Myles, The University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer, at 205-348-8461.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY. You are free not to participate or to stop participating at any time.

If you understand the statements above, are at least 19 years old, and freely consent to participating in this research study, please sign, date, and return this form in the enclosed envelope.

______________________ ______________________ ____________
(Signature)                         (School)                         (Date)

☐ Check this box if you would like to schedule a meeting or presentation.

Comments:________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX I

TEACHER VERSION: KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION SURVEY
Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey
Teacher Version

Demographics

1. Gender: Male Female
2. How many years have you been a teacher? ________
3. How many years have you been a teacher at this school? _____
4. Number of years of general education teaching experience:
   Elementary ________ Middle/Junior High ________ High School ________
5. List your certifications: _______________________________________________________________
6. Number of years of special education teaching experience:
   Elementary ________ Middle/Junior High ________ High School ________
7. What is your highest level of academic achievement?
   B.S.   M.S.   Ed.S.   Ed.D.   Ph.D.   Other __________________
   (Specify)
There are two scales beside each question. Carefully follow the directions when answering each question.

**1st Scale – HOW NECESSARY**

Please circle the degree (1-4) that you think the following knowledge statements are necessary for principals to implement effective programs for students with disabilities.

1 = not at all necessary   2 = somewhat necessary   3 = necessary   4 = extremely necessary

**2nd Scale – HOW KNOWLEDGEABLE**

Please circle the degree (1-4) to which you think your principal possesses the following knowledge.

1 = not at all knowledgeable   2 = somewhat knowledgeable   3 = knowledgeable   4 = extremely knowledgeable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KNOWLEDGE -</th>
<th>1st Scale – How necessary is it that a principal knows:</th>
<th>2nd Scale – How knowledgeable is your principal with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Models, theories, and philosophies that provide the basis for special education practice</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Issues in definition and identification procedures for students with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Due process rights related to assessment, eligibility, and placement</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and schools as they relate to special education</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Similarities and differences between the cognitive, physical, cultural, social, and emotional needs of typical and exceptional learners</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the child and family</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Effects of various medications on the educational, cognitive, physical, social, and emotional behavior of students with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Basic terminology used in assessment</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ethical concerns related to assessment</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Legal regulations, provisions, and guidelines regarding student assessment</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Typical procedures used for screening, prereferral, referral, and classification</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Appropriate application and interpretation of scores</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The relationship between assessment and placement decisions</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Methods of monitoring student progress</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Differing learning styles of students with disabilities and how to adapt teaching to these styles</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Life skills instruction relevant to independent, community, and personal living employment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Basic classroom management theories, methods, and techniques for students with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Research and best practices for effective management of teaching and learning for students with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ways in which technology can assist with planning and managing the teaching and learning environment of students with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Applicable laws, rules and regulations, and procedural safeguards regarding the management of special students' behaviors</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Teacher attitudes and behaviors that positively or negatively influence the student behaviors</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Strategies for crisis prevention/intervention</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Strategies for preparing students to live harmoniously and productively in a multiclass, multiethnic, multicultural, and multinational world</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Typical concerns of parents of students with disabilities and appropriate strategies to help parents deal with these concerns</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Roles of students, parents, teachers, and other school and community personnel in planning a student's individualized educational program</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Ethical practices for confidential communication to others about students with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. One's own cultural biases and differences that affect one's attitude toward students with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are two scales beside each question. Carefully follow the directions when answering each question.

**1st Scale HOW NECESSARY**
Please circle the degree (1-4) that you think the following skills are necessary for principals to implement effective programs for students with disabilities.
1 = not at all necessary  2 = somewhat necessary  3 = necessary  4 = extremely necessary

**2nd Scale HOW SKILLED**
Please circle the degree (1-4) to which you think your principal possesses the following skills.
1 = not at all skilled  2 = somewhat skilled  3 = skilled  4 = extremely skilled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SKILLS –</th>
<th>1st Scale – How necessary is it that the principal be able to:</th>
<th>2nd Scale: How skilled is your principal in being able to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28. Articulate a personal philosophy of special education, including its relationship to/with general education</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Construct instruction and other professional activities consistent with the requirements of special education law, rules, and regulations</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Interpret assessment data for instructional planning</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>31. Demonstrate a variety of behavior management techniques appropriate to the needs of students with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Implement the least restrictive placement/intervention consistent with the needs of the student</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Use collaborative strategies in working with students, parents, and school and community personnel</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Demonstrate a commitment to developing the highest educational and quality of life potential for all students</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Model appropriate behavior for students and teachers toward individuals with disabilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX J

TEACHER FORM: PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE VALIDATION OF PRINCIPAL’S RESPONSES
Teachers,

Your principal has been identified for and agreed to participate in the case study phase of this research study. Your school system has given this researcher approval to conduct case study research within the parameters of this research study.

Richard Templeton, Principal Investigator and a doctoral student from the Special Education Multiple Abilities Department in the College of Education at the University of Alabama, is conducting a research study called An Examination of How Knowledgeable and Skilled Elementary Principals Lead Special Education Programs in Alabama: Four Case Studies. This research study seeks to find out the similarities between how principals, who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education, lead and support their special education programs in comparison to how their peers, who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education, lead and support their special education programs. This research study seeks to define the role that the principal, who is knowledgeable and skilled in special education, plays at the school level.

In order to validate your principal’s self-reported survey responses, you are being asked to fill out surveys on your principal’s knowledge and skill in special education. Surveys will be completed with anonymity and will not be shared with your principal.

Only the lead investigator, dissertation committee members, and a research assistant will have access to the data. The data are kept in a secure location and all electronic files are kept on a secure computer that is password protected. Only summarized data will be presented at meetings or in publications.

There will be no direct benefits to you. The findings will be useful to the Alabama State Department of Education; university administrative preparatory program faculty; superintendents; directors of special education; and elementary school principals in Alabama. The findings will indicate how principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education oversee and support the special education programs at their schools; the roles principals play; the similarities between elementary school principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education; and how they are different from their peers.

The chief risk is that some of the questions may make you uncomfortable. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

If you have questions about this research study, please contact Richard Templeton at (256) 318-4992 or by e-mail at rtdissertation@gmail.com, or you can contact the dissertation committee chair, Dr. Mary Beirne-Smith, by phone at (205) 348-1438 or by e-mail at mbeirne@bamaed.ua.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact Ms. Tanta Myles, The University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer, at 205-348-8461.
YOUR PARTICIPATION IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY. You are free not to participate or to stop participating before submitting your survey.

If you understand the statements above, are at least 19 years old, and freely consent to participation in this research study, please sign, date, and return this form.

______________________ ______________________ ____________
(Signature)                                (School)                               (Date)
APPENDIX K

PERMISSION TO USE AND MODIFY THE PRINCIPAL, GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHER, AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER VERSIONS OF THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION SURVEY
March 29, 2010

615 Summelane DR SW
Hartselle, Al. 35640

Dr. Fischer
Director of Teacher Education
St. Gregory's University
1900 West MacArthur
Shawnee, Oklahoma 74804

I am a doctoral student in the Special Education and Multiple Abilities Department at The University of Alabama. For the dissertation component of my doctoral program, I am conducting research on the knowledge and skills Alabama principals possess with regard to special education and how principals supervise and support the special education programs they oversee.

The purpose of my research is to determine the current special education knowledge base and skill sets of principals and the extent to which principals report specific special education knowledge and skills as necessary to their jobs as the onsite supervisors of special education programs. Additionally, my research examines how principals of various school age students lead and support the special education programs they supervise.

I intend to collect survey data prior to conducting a case study. I am requesting permission to use the Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey you developed in 1998. I am also requesting permission to modify the Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey to meet the needs of my research design.

Cordially,

[Handwritten name]

Richard R. Templeton, Ed.D.
Doctoral Student
Special Education and Multiple Abilities Department
The University of Alabama

[Handwritten signature]

(My signature indicates permission is given.)

3-31-10

Date
APPENDIX L

DATA MANAGEMENT PLAN
Data Management Plan

Section I: Research Questions

The following overarching research question and sub-questions will be investigated.

Overarching Question:

How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education administer the special education programs at their schools?

1. How do knowledge bases and skills reported as necessary for elementary principals to possess differ between elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education and elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education as measured by the Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey (Harlin-Fischer, 1998)? (see Appendix A)

2. How do knowledge bases and skills reported as being possessed by elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education differ from the knowledge bases and skills reported as being possessed by elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education as measured by the Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey (Harlin-Fischer, 1998)? (see Appendix A)

3. How do the roles played by elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education differ from the roles played by elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education?

4. How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education support special education programs differently than principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education?
5. How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education oversee their programs differently than elementary principals who are marginally knowledgeable and skilled in special education?

**Section II: Data Management Plan**

*Knowledge and Skills in Special Education Survey (KSSE Survey)*

Knowledgeable and Skilled in Special Education
- Case A
- Case B

Marginally Knowledgeable and Skilled in Special Education
- Case C
- Case D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Measure(s)</th>
<th>Independent or Grouping Variables(s)</th>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Analyses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>KSSE 1st Scale</td>
<td>Cases A and B C and D</td>
<td>Necessary Scale</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics Means Comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>KSSE 2nd Scale</td>
<td>Cases A and B C and D</td>
<td>Knowledge Scale</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics Means Comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interview Journal Calendar/Appoint. Observation</td>
<td>Cases A and B C and D</td>
<td>Categories &amp; Emerging Themes (A, B, C, D, AB, CD, AB/CD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Interview Journal Calendar/Appoint. Observation</td>
<td>Cases A and B C and D</td>
<td>Categories &amp; Emerging Themes (A, B, C, D, AB, CD, AB/CD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Interview Journal Calendar/Appoint. Observation</td>
<td>Cases A and B C and D</td>
<td>Categories &amp; Emerging Themes (A, B, C, D, AB, CD, AB/CD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX M

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Interview Protocol

Case: ____ Date of Interview: ________ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Overarching Question: How do elementary principals who are knowledgeable and skilled in special education administer the special education programs at their schools?

Introductory and Demographic Questions:
1. Tell me about yourself?
2. How long have you been the principal here?
3. How did you come to this position?
4. Do you keep a calendar of appointments?
   Follow-up Questions:
   a. Is the calendar of appointments a formal indicator of agenda?
   b. If not, what does it represent?
5. How have you been prepared to oversee the special education program?
   Prompts:
   a. What is your educational background?
      i. What is your educational background with regard to special education?
   b. What is your professional background?
      ii. What is your professional background with regard to special education?
6. How do you manage the special education program at your school?
7. How do you provide a direction for the special education program at your school?
   Prompt:
   a. How do you lead the special education program at your school?
8. What roles do you play in the special education program at your school?
   Prompts:
   a. Discuss some of the roles you play as the school level leader of the special education program?
   b. What do you think your role is as the school level leader of the special education program?
9. What do you think your role with the special education should be?
10. How do you use information (background knowledge, educational preparation, etc.) to guide how you manage the special education program at your school?
11. What skills do you think are necessary to administer the special education program?
    Prompt:
a. What abilities do you think are necessary for a principal to possess in order to run the special education program at your school?

12. What is your relationship with the director of special education?
   Prompt:
   a. How do you utilize the director of special education?

13. How do you support the special education program?

14. How do you support individualized student learning?

15. How do you provide professional development on special education topics for your general education and special education teachers?

16. How do you support the special education teachers at your school?

17. How do you support the general education teachers with special education issues or problems?

18. How do you use aides for special education at your school?

19. What formal and informal interactions do you have with teachers with regard to special education related issues?

20. What issues or other areas of special education have not been addressed that need to be addressed as to how elementary principals administer special education programs?

*Schedule some time immediately after the interview to sit down and write a short memo on how the interview went and what I think are some of the emergent themes.

ReSEARCHER’S Notes: (These notes are the researcher’s thoughts on the overall experience of each day.)

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APPENDIX N

GUIDELINES FOR JOURNAL ENTRIES
Guidelines for Journal Entries

Directions

Keep a daily journal for two weeks in the journal provided for you by the researcher. Indicate the date in which each entry was made. The focus of each journal entry should be the special education issue(s) and/or event(s) you dealt with that day. Note any issue(s) and/or event(s) with regard to special education no matter how miniscule or unimportant it might seem. Be sure to include any occurrence(s) when you supervise and/or support the special education program you are responsible for overseeing. Also, be sure to include how any issue(s) and/or event(s) was resolved, why you took the action(s) you did, and the outcome(s). Be as detailed as possible.

Journal Entry Format

Date:

Issue(s)/Event(s)

Occurrences(s) of Supervision/Support:

How was the issue(s)/event(s) resolved?

What was the outcome?
APPENDIX O

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL
Observation Protocol

Case: ____ Date of Observation: ________ Day of Observation (circle one): Day 1 Day 2

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

For what evidence am I looking?

How does the principal administer the special education with regard to…
- the role he/she plays?
- the way he/she supports the program?
- how he/she oversees the program?

Directions: 1. Identify each event and/or situation related to my research questions.
2. Include the setting in which the event occurred. (Draw a picture of the setting.)
3. Document the interaction that occurred. (Include the participants.)
4. Take notes on where the principal goes throughout the school day.

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APPENDIX P

CASE A DATA MATRIX
### Case A Data Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/Subtheme</th>
<th>Principal's Survey</th>
<th>Teachers' Surveys</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Calendar(s)</th>
<th>Direct Observation</th>
<th>Pictures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Special Education as a Cultural Component</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Atmosphere</td>
<td>Scale 1:4:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:4:4</td>
<td>“principal's attitude towards these kids [students with disabilities] determines a lot.”</td>
<td>PA57</td>
<td>“I am accountable for everything under me.”</td>
<td>PA1, PA2, PA6, PA7, PA9, PA17, PA18, PA20, PA22, PA30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scale 1:24:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:24:4</td>
<td>“good, strong direction of what you're wanting to accomplish with your special education program.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hand written comments on every student's report card. Communicates with parents by jotting down notes on report card (e.g., too many tardies or absences). Student advocate - encourages parents to make requests for specific accommodations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scale 1:33:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:33:4</td>
<td>“to believe that these children can learn, will learn [emphasis added].”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scale 1:35:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:35:4</td>
<td>“needs of that child.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scale 1:21:3(M)</td>
<td>Scale 2:21:3(M)</td>
<td>“liaison”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scale 1:28:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:28:4</td>
<td>“you have that information and you can work with them and explain to them... we can provide these services... When you get into those tough, tough situations, then you... have a trust level. They know that... you know the law. [Also], you know what they can and cannot have. So it's best for you all the way around to make that a goal to be knowledgeable of special ed.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Value Laden Hiring</td>
<td>Scale 1:21:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:21:4</td>
<td>“I count on them [special education teachers] so much.”</td>
<td>PA31-PA57, all</td>
<td>Principal A is out of her office most of the day. She is all over the place. Students with disabilities are &quot;precious&quot;. When referring to all hires, the principal looks for specific traits and characteristics that she thinks are important.</td>
<td>PA20</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scale 2:21:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:21:3(M)</td>
<td>“You know the principal may or may not be able to be involved... but that [special education] teacher has to be involved.”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“They may be a little different, but they still have a good brain. They still have the ability to learn. They still laugh. They still love. So it touches us all, makes us all more human. Makes us all more appreciative of what we have. And then to see the struggles, and the kids are in school just about every day. It's very rare they're out. It really makes you a better person when you look at the struggles and diversities [they go through]. How many of them get on a bus in the morning and have to be loaded and strapped in, and the 45 minute, if not longer, ride to come to [school name] and get out, and have smiles on their face, and to eat breakfast, and to start their day knowing that they're loved.”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“in it for a genuine love and care of kids”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“not able to perform their job with a loving, kind heart, they need to sincerely look at another job.”</td>
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<tr>
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<td>“top notch educators, that are in special ed with a loving heart.”</td>
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<td>“a sincere interest in their students.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Involvement</td>
<td>Scale 1:28:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:28:4</td>
<td>“hands-on administrator”</td>
<td>PA31, PA46, PA47, PA48</td>
<td>After school and before the faculty meeting, an SE teacher approached the principal. The SE teacher stated that she just wanted to keep the principal informed as to how this issue has progressed. The principal receives a lot of feedback throughout the day from SE teachers. I can hear her talking about a</td>
<td>PA27, PA28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scale 2:28:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:28:3(M)</td>
<td>“side-by-side with them [special education teachers], and being involved with them [is necessary] to even know what kind of support they need.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“So... [there are] forms that you are to take that child's IEP to the P.E. teacher, to the art teacher, to the music, all those that work with that child so that they know. And when</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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you do that, that child, that one child now becomes everybody’s child, which is the way it should be, because we’re all responsible.” “engaged in the educational process for those children and are aware of what is in that individualized plan for that student’s learning.”

special education issue outside.
Special education teacher approached the principal, and asked her to participate in an IEP meeting the next day. Dr. White approached a special education teacher about a problem with a student. She wants to be aware of everything going on in her school.

According to one school employee, the principal likes to stay informed, but she is not a micromanager.
Dr. White seems to always be kept informed of SE issues.
Lots of conversations with SE teachers throughout the day. The principal was receiving constant updates on a special education issue, situation, or student.
The principal was sought out and addressed by SE teachers more than GE faculty even though SE teachers make up such a small percentage of the faculty.
She is involved in training. Examined students’ progress and those who need intensive reading instruction.

| 2. Compliance | a. Policies and Procedures | Scale 1:2:4 | Scale 2:2:9(M) | Policies and procedures guide how I manage the… special education program at my school.” “that from beginning to end people are involved in… IEP [meetings]. They don’t get up, they don’t leave, they don’t sign paperwork and not attend the meeting.” “being involved in individualized education plan meetings” “you know I will ask. Often it’s brought up to discuss, you know, what’s going on in the classroom.” “it’s crucial that the state department have a decision, have a plan in place, let our downtown supervisors know it, and then implement it. Teach the teachers from there. And a lot of times you do not see that consistency. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve had my teachers to say “well, I got two different answers from the state department.” So [there are] some things I think that… need restructuring and looking at, looking at from our state department special ed division. Well, all of it, state department to our local [level]. I can’t say enough about that collaboration and that discussion has got to be in place.” | PA25 PA35 | “The two things that will get a principal are money and special education.” “In mediation three times.” “Documents!! Uses a form titled Team Meeting to document grade level meetings. Enables the principal to know what the teachers discussed during these data meetings. Incidence where a special education teacher was written-up for not completing lesson plans. Takes test procedures seriously. The special education teacher approached the principal and told her that she had just found out that the IEP process does not have to be closed by the 27th. They just have to have a draft copy in there by the 27th. Understands the IEP process as well as the legal requirements of IEP team members. She spoke of the importance of including other teachers (e.g., P.E. teacher) who might need to be aware of specific concerns related to the child’s health. She spoke of having to have specific members at IEP team meetings and that all | PA29 |
| a. Beliefs | Scale 1:1:4 | Scale 2:1:3(M) | "We expect these things from your child just like we expect these things for the other children. "laymen’s terms"
"It's going to take a strong attorney. It's going to take a very strong person that's in charge of your special ed." | Student centered. "students come first"
She is examining with the faculty ways she can get students engaged at 7:30am while in the lunchroom.
Tutoring, etc. She does not like wasted time that could be spent learning.
She was adamant that students with disabilities can learn.
Students with disabilities can learn.
Wanted "all students can learn" and "high expectations" in mission statement. |
| --- | --- | --- | | | |
| b. Value of Knowledge in Special Education | All ratings for scale 1 |  | "knowledge is power."
"very, very smart for a principal to know... everything there is to know about special education."
"I do rely a lot on my special ed
First autism teacher was excellent. This autism teacher mentored student teachers.
Over time, this enabled the principal to hire some of those |
| b. Law | Scale 1:3:4 | Scale 2:3:4 | Scale 1:10:4 | Scale 2:10:4 | Scale 1:20:4 | Scale 2:20:4 | "important for you to know the laws...[and] what's expected for IEPs. And that's the big thing."
"I think that’s why it’s so crucial that staff development actually be done yearly for not only special ed but for the regular classroom teacher. I think it’s important for all of us to know that special ed law."
"I think the best thing you can do as an administrator is [to keep general education teachers] informed of the changes in... special ed law and how it applies to their day-in and day-out"
"need to be educated on how that law has been changed, and how it applies to them. So, I am big on law.”
"is a legal, binding document, and you better make sure that you’re doing what it tells us [you are supposed to be] doing.”
"I think you need to know how the law applies to carrying out that individual education plan.”
"strictly enforced, and... expected.”
"I represent my school as well as”
"are included in IEP meetings.”
"they have read the IEP...[and] are familiar with the IEP”
"If anything, if I ever go to court, it would [not] be...[because I didn’t] follow the law. It was a matter of 'how it was interpreted, or I, I did everything that was within my power to do what special ed law requires of me. And I think that they would, they would be more near to smack your hand for you trying to do what you thought was legal and right than if you just ignored and didn’t do it at all.”
"are knowledgeable and follow the law regarding... special education.” | PA36 PA37
She referred to ADAP. She is aware of organizations that are advocates.
Attends training provided by Julie Weatherly and J. R. Brooks. She is aware of lawyers who specialize in SE. | PA10 PA12

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3. Paradigm of Special Education
teachers because they work with it every day.”
“know law.”
“better know updates, changes in special ed, paperwork, and how you do an IEP.”
teachers who the first autism teacher mentored.

c. Utilization of Special and General Education Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale 1:5:3</th>
<th>Scale 2:5:4</th>
<th>Scale 1:15:3</th>
<th>Scale 2:15:4</th>
<th>Scale 1:16:3</th>
<th>Scale 2:16:4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teachers who the first autism teacher mentored.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PA51</th>
<th>PA56</th>
<th>PA60</th>
<th>PA62</th>
<th>PA67</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The principal stated that she understands what an IQ score is but leans on SE teachers to explain the diagnostic information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third grade teacher was asked how she is supported in the classroom. This teacher has two students with autism and four other students who receive SE services. She spent three years as a behavioral teacher. She told me that because of background in dealing with students with behavioral problems, Dr. White utilizes her whenever there are students with inappropriate behaviors. Dr. White utilizes this GE teacher’s expertise by assigning certain students to her class. Teacher stated she enjoys working with students with disabilities.</td>
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4. Nature and Roles of Special Education

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Personnel</th>
<th>Scale 1:7:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:7:4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Made statements about being proactive in her view of special education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proactive planner for SE. She stated that we should be proactive instead of reactive with regard to SE.</td>
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| "demand more time, they demand more effort, they demand more strategies.” |
| "I believe in being proactive.” |
| "students that are coming to my school with special needs, I address that with the central office.” |
| "When I first discovered a child coming to my school with autism, I asked for an autism unit.” |
| "It takes all of us” |
| "you’re adjusting medication, you’ve got to have the personnel to be able to deal with those changes…. And depending on how long it takes for the doctor to see them, analyze, make the adjustments, it can disrupt a whole learning situation for a month if not longer. And you’ve got to have personnel to deal with those issues, knowledgeable personnel.” |
| "I think that you need to also have a lot of personal skills to know how to work with your special education faculty and staff and how to hire the special education faculty and staff. Because in addition to hiring the teachers, you will be hiring instructional assistants. And when you do that, it takes a very, very special type of person to be able to carry out a special education program.” |
| "require assistance, a lot more assistance than a teacher.” |
| "Depending on the high needs of your special ed population, with the retardation, that does require assistance. A lot more assistance than a teacher, and also your autistic students need a lot more involvement.” |
| b. Individual Needs of Students with Disabilities | Scale 1:32:4 Scale 2:32:4 | Scale 2:32:3.1(M) | “I love my special ed students to see typical children to learn what’s appropriate behavior [and] inappropriate”  
“need a lot more... involvement.”  
“I like the fact that... just because you are a special education student on April the 11, 2011 doesn’t mean you’re going to be in special education two years from now” | School store. One of the special education students with a significant intellectual disability was working in the store with a nondisabled peer.  
Principal stated that she wished the MR unit had a kitchen so daily living skills could be taught.  
A student with a severe intellectual disability rubbed a substitute teacher’s breast, tried to kiss a teacher.  
Principal said that the student is very loving. She did not think it was some type of sexual deviance. She said that 4th graders are generally very loving and that it could just be that he is at the age that he does not understand the inappropriateness of his behavior.  
She made the statement that she does not like to make announcements over the intercom system because students with autism do not adjust well to change.  
On a separate occasion, she talked about fire drills and students with autism.  
She made the statement that students with autism do not like to be touched.  
Students with autism need some release time when they are mad. The principal had a room stripped for a student so he could go into the room and release his energy. |
|---|---|---|---|
| c. Strategies and Interventions | Scale 1:29:4 Scale 2:29:4 | Scale 2:29:2.9(M) | “younger we start working with these students the more effective our strategies become to where they can learn and be productive citizens.”  
“up to educators] to make sure that [students with disabilities] are taught specific skills at the appropriate level”  
“right strategies”  
“educational professionals to figure out what methods, what techniques, what strategies to use”  
“Knowing what the child is struggling in or doesn’t know is so important.”  
“Why we’re back into grouping because small groups are so important.”  
“what it’s all about.” | PA60 PA62  
Adiant about special education students starting young and attending preschool.  
Providing accommodations for students because we need to address their individual needs.  
Principal recognized the important differences in the data meeting between average readers and slow/low performing students. The principal cited research that stated the average reader needs 4-14 exposures to a word where as slow/low performing student needs 40 plus exposures to that word.  
Identified that a student might be having problems with reading because the student has a vision problem with regard to tracking what he is reading.  
With regard to reading progress, the principal gave the example of students sitting in the computer lab | PA29  
PA23
<p>| listening to text on a headset instead of reading the text. Student should receive at least 60 minutes of some type of intervention or service. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/Subtheme</th>
<th>Principal's Survey</th>
<th>Teachers' Surveys</th>
<th>Calendar(s)</th>
<th>Direct Observation</th>
<th>Pictures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Passionately and Compassionately Engaged in the Special Education Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Passion and Compassion</td>
<td>Scale 1:16:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:16:4</td>
<td>&quot;a special ed teacher by heart.&quot;</td>
<td>Described herself, &quot;I am a special ed person.&quot;</td>
<td>P81</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scale 1:27:2</td>
<td>Scale 2:27:4</td>
<td>&quot;that was what I started out being was a special ed teacher.&quot;</td>
<td>Believes SE kids are hers.</td>
<td>P88</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scale 1:35:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:35:4</td>
<td>&quot;I actually went back to become a special ed coordinator&quot;</td>
<td>Closely guards them.</td>
<td>P99</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scale 2:16:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:16:3.3(l)</td>
<td>&quot;I couldn't work for them, or they did not have the compassion that I felt like they should [have] for the kids.&quot;</td>
<td>Parting thought. If I heard her say it one, I heard her say it a thousand times. &quot;I know my kids.&quot;</td>
<td>P91</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scale 1:27:2</td>
<td>Scale 2:27:3.6(M)</td>
<td>&quot;just anybody can't be a special ed teacher. You have got to have that, You've got to have that compassion. You've got to have empathy.... you've got to be a caring person. You just can't be there just to say I've got a job teaching special ed kids. You've got to really want to be there.&quot;</td>
<td>The principal is passionate about special education, and she loves these kids.</td>
<td>P92</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scale 1:35:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:35:3.8(H)</td>
<td>&quot;She enjoys it. She loves what she's doing. And that's another thing.... I mean it's easy to get burned out in special ed, but she's enjoying it. And she's enjoying the [college] classes and learning a lot.&quot;</td>
<td>Direct observation quote &quot;I take care of my special ed kids.&quot;</td>
<td>P811</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scale 2:27:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:27:3.6(M)</td>
<td>&quot;Everybody can't work with the special needs kids. They just can't do it. They don't have the patience. They don't have the compassion, the empathy.... None of that. They say that special ed stuff is not for me. I just don't want to be bothered.&quot;</td>
<td>Observed principal greeting and hugging students.</td>
<td>P812</td>
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<td>&quot;I promise you. I can tell after observing a person whether they're going to work with my babies or not.&quot;</td>
<td>Car accident. Parent of one student killed another student's older brother.</td>
<td>P813</td>
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<td>&quot;It's not like some principals don't have a clue as to what you can do with some of the special ed kids. They just want to put them back in a core and say don't bother me with them, you know, you don't bother me. I really don't want them on my campus anyway. But I do.&quot;</td>
<td>Principal stated she uses AOD students to work on some projects she has during the summer months. She helps them obtain job hours.</td>
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<td>&quot;a lot of things with kids back then [that of course we wouldn't do now].&quot;</td>
<td>Actively engages all students in daily living skills as evident in the garden pictures. Linked to her background in SE on the importance of working on daily living skills.</td>
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them go this year.”
“And I was talking to that same special ed teacher yesterday because we are getting ready to lose two little boys that’ll go to the high school. And I’m think, okay, hey, we didn’t let them go last year, which they should’ve gone as sixth graders. It just, it was too crowded there, and I’m still debating now, I talked to the special ed coordinator. And I said look, I don’t want to let my babies go over there now, or yet, I don’t think they’re ready for it. And, um, she said yea but you kept them last year I think we’re going to have to want to let them go this year. But, um, I really hate to see them go over there right now. And although they, um, both of them are getting ready to be thirteen, that’s just chronologically thirteen not mentally thirteen. Um… what’s the next…”
“I really hate to see them go over there right now.”
“I know the parents.”
“before I made it to you down that hall I was hugging kids”
“if you have a child come into your class and you know that… child’s parent went to jail last night… You should know that, that child is not going to have a good day”
“common sense.”
“how would you cope?”
“we have a lot of at-risk kids with a lot of things going on in their little lives.”
“Some… were wondering where am I going to sleep tonight. What am I going to eat tonight?”
“so you wonder how can they get academics when they’re wondering about the little basic things.”

| b. Actively Engaged in Special Education Program | Scale 1:2:4 | Scale 2:2:4 | “a lot of people, well, I can speak for my district. The principals that I work with, they could care less.” |
| | Scale 1:7:3 | Scale 2:7:4 | Well, let me back up. One of the principals, who… has resigned, she was a special ed teacher at one point in time… that female [principal] and I were more alike than any of the rest of [the principals] in knowledge and concern and this kind of thing.” |
| | Scale 1:12:3 | Scale 2:12:4 | “I still keep up with CEC. Still a member.” |
| | Scale 1:14:3 | Scale 2:14:4 | “new laws on special education.” |
| | Scale 1:20:4 | Scale 2:20:4 | “unless you go out and do it [yourself], you don’t find out anything.” |
| | Scale 1:29:3 | Scale 2:29:4 | “Actually with my special ed program here, when I became the principal… I kind of felt left out somewhat because they started SETs… And I was not given privy to be able to go into SETs” |
| | Scale 1:30:4 | Scale 2:30:4 | “I think I should have access to SETs, so I can see what’s going on” |
| | | | “I feel like, if I had… access to SETs… I could follow the kids, and the goals, and… the benchmarks that they’re supposed to” |
| | | | “I could follow it more closely.” |

The level of involvement of Principal B in the special education program is substantial as compared to her peers. But it’s the depth and focus of her involvement that sets her apart. Her world still revolves around special education. She does not micromanage the special education program, but she is heavily involved in it at all levels. She is very involved in the special education program. She thinks that other principals are not as involved in the special education program as she is because they do not care about it as much as she does. The principal is heavily engaged in special education process. “it was done last year because the mother refused services.” She said that other than the other principal who was a special education teacher at
2. Relationships

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<td>2:4:3.8(H)</td>
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<td>2:24:3.8(H)</td>
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<td>2:33:3.3I(L)</td>
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“so I kind of got a little bit out of the loop with that part of it but still maintained being able to see what’s going on with my, my special ed kids. Knowing... the referrals.”

“the usual formal things... with the IEPs, the eligibility, our referrals, our confidentiality with parents, even medications and all. I mean with all my kids I know who’s got to do, who’s got to take, what they need to do.”

“When I get my results in from testing... I look at the kids.”

“look, these are my referrals.”

“I called the special ed teacher in yesterday... I give her a synopsis on every one of the kids, and then all of a sudden she said, well, I don’t have those three kids you’re talking about. I said wait a minute, what happened to them? I now these are children I referred.”

“So then when we sit down and talk about the kids, it’s not like, okay, here I am hearing for the first time that this child is having a problem. I already know who the children are... I’ve helped in the process of choosing these kids.”

“I pretty much know things that you can do with kids, and a lot of times I’ll tell them [special education teachers] things to try.”

“up until this past year.”

“literacy and justice”

“I really want to do something with AAA.”

“I’ve got to learn something about the AAA.”

“neither one of them [have been] acclimated to the AAA”

“biggest weakness”

“If I have to pay for my own training next year, I will have some AAA training so I’ll know... what’s supposed to be done.”

“Normally, with IEP meetings and eligibility meetings I, up until this year, I would try to go to all of the meetings that they had... I’d get a schedule”

“I haven’t gone to as many [eligibility meetings], but I spot check and go in on some of them... But now with my IEP meetings, I’ll go to my IEP meetings.”

one time, no other principals in her district attend IEP meetings.

Principal B leans in and listens attentively.

Listened very carefully when the special education teacher read the student’s reading goals. The principal shook her head in agreement.

Agreed with special education on a recommendation the teacher made at the IEP meeting.

Reads over certain parts of the IEP. Presumably knows where to look.

"we need to add something to the behavior. We’ve had some serious issues.”

“stealing [and] lying both at home and at school.”

“we will need to address these behaviors in the IEP.”

“He’s progressed since he walked in the doors. He has progress.”

"Do you think he’ll be able to take the test in a small group?”

“was there anything addressed in his IEP about behavior?”

Principal B told them not to worry about adding goals for a student who receives speech services. She had already talked to the teacher and the student is doing fine academically.

Walked into an IEP meeting late. She came in and immediately wanted to know if the special education teacher had told the parent about the sleeping.

“was there anything addressed in his IEP about behavior?”

Principal stops and talks with students in hall. Gives them hugs.

Thursday, April 7th at around 7:30. She just helped a student with a physical handicap to the student’s feet. They point outward. The principal helped her to the lunchroom.

Got food for little girl and her little brother to take home.

“Now I have to interject something. You have got to get him to school and on time.”

Principal B informed the
Relationships

b. Meaningful Relationships

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<td>1:6:4</td>
<td>2:6:4</td>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>2:6:3.3(L)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:24:4</td>
<td>2:24:4</td>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>2:24:3.8(I)</td>
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<td>1:25:4</td>
<td>2:25:4</td>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>2:25:3.6(M)</td>
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The drugstore."

"I know all my special ed kids, know them by name, know who’s doing what, who probably is having a problem here, and if you need to do this with this child, and why haven’t you done that with that child... I do... I’m not bragging, but it’s just that I know my children. And I’m going to support my children. And whatever you’re doing as long as you’re doing what needs to be done with the, I don’t have a problem with it."

"aside. My children... come first." "I’ll go to bat for my children any day... I do it all the time."

"she loves those kids too much." "I don’t think you can love them too much"

"sometimes it’s only right here that they will get a pat on the back or a hug."

PB21

Parent that the student "needs to be at school. Put him on the bus and let him come to school."
The more he is at school "the better he’ll do."

PB22

Very laid back school culture.
The principal jokes with IEP team members between meetings.
Served refreshments.
Open door policy with parents and students.
One reason I don’t have a problem with SE parents is because I had them in class.
"there needs to be contact with the grandmother."
The principal has had a lot of communication with the guardian./Communicates quite often with parents of SE students.
Sits in on 80-90% of IEP meetings throughout the year.
Doesn’t sit in on eligibility and reevals due to time restraints this time of year.
"let me give her a call because I know she wants to be here."
Principal asked if the parent wanted to add anything to the profile page.

"when he is working with the Legos, is he attentive?"

7-28 Special ed teacher was going through her paperwork last night and found out that she did not read one of the state assessments to a student who was supposed to have it read to him. The principal is thinking about what to do about that problem. The teacher was letting her know about an IEP meeting that was going to occur first thing this morning, as well.

"what else can we do to facilitate the behavior goal."

"we just need to keep communication between the fifth grade teachers and the grandmother."
we’re bickering or having problems… I respect her. She respects my role.”
“We’ve been through the good times, and we’ve been through those times that we both wish hadn’t happened. But… we can talk. We have a good relationship.”
“We… work with each other in resources in that if it’s something I can get… I do it. If she can help me, she’ll help me and vice versa.”

3. Understanding of Special Education

<table>
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<tr>
<th>a. Broad Knowledge of Special Education</th>
<th>Scale 1:1:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:1:4</th>
<th>Scale 1:5:3</th>
<th>Scale 2:5:4</th>
<th>Scale 1:26:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:26:4</th>
<th>Scale 1:34:4</th>
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<tr>
<td>1:26:4</td>
<td>2:1:3.7(M)</td>
<td>2:5:3.5(M)</td>
<td>2:26:3.7(M)</td>
<td>2:26:3.7(M)</td>
<td>2:34:3.5(M)</td>
<td>2:34:3.5(M)</td>
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| “You do this on an individual basis”   | “It’s just like a flag goes up to me” | “Okay, if I know there’s a history of learning disabilities in the family. You know, that there have been some problems with mama and daddy both having been in LD classes…. I say, okay, that, that could be. We could, we could take a look at that. We can see.” | “There have been some that have had parents that were learning disabled that they’re making straight A’s and B’s. And you wonder, okay, so it’s not that way.” | “one of the flags that goes up to me that I’ll say, okay, yeah, that child could be having problems because there is a history there.” | “Everybody kept saying, well, aren’t you going to apply? You’re better qualified. You have a degree in administration.” “on the child and what they need.” “we’ll try something else, or I’ll give you some ideas because I can.” | “these kids will be candidates for special ed.” “put [her] special ed kids into RtI. Okay, my LD kids, these children can benefit, too, because they’re going to get that extra, extra, extra help.” “If it’s in that plan, we do it… I believe in doing what, what they’re supposed to do.” “well, my child is not getting this, and they’re not getting that. And of course, I investigate to see what’s going on, but you know you have to look at parents and see they sometimes don’t see it the way we see it and how we’re doing things the way it is supposed to be done.” | “I understand the nature of special education.” “I know the law and have no qualms with it.” “I know what the purpose is. It is to provide an appropriate education.” “We’re not going to talk it in the hall.” Background and experience impact how she administers the special education program. Keeps all e-mails! Documents! Documents faculty and student conference and meetings in black 3-ring binder on desk. Keeps mental notes. Learned that as a special education teacher. It is obvious that Mrs. B is knowledgeable in all areas of special education. My first impression is that she is knowledgeable, and because she is knowledgeable in special education she views her role differently than most principals. It is her comfort zone. She oversees the special education differently than most principals do because she understands the nature of special education and the nature of the program for which she is responsible for overseeing. She makes sure she attends the really difficult ones (IEP meetings). High expectations for special education student. Special education teacher was putting limitations on the student and the principal responded “I don’t know, he has surprised me [academically],” C.O. Elig. And Resource teacher told the principal she can’t leave. They love her because of her SE background. (Respected by peers) “what do you think?” Resource teacher from C.O. stated that it is nice to have a principal with a special ed background.

b. Knowledge of... | Scale 1:3:4 | Scale 1:3:4 | Scale 1:3:4 | Scale 1:3:4 | Scale 1:3:4 | Scale 1:3:4 | Scale 1:3:4 | Scale 1:3:4 |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I know my kids. Everybody says my A second former SE student,</td>
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379
| Students with Disabilities Gleaned from Experience | Scale 2:3:4 | 2:3:3.9(H) | goodness you’ve got 370 kids. How do you know these kids? I do…. I just make sure I get in, know every one of my special ed kids, know what’s going on with them, know if they’re out of school, [and] what’s happening with them.” “to see them every day”.
| Scale 1:11:3 | Scale | 2:11:3.8(H) | “I know the kids. I know the personalities of the people that I have working with them. I look at that as well, in assigning who’s going to work with them. Who’s going to do the testing with them… that teacher that’s working over there with them, the kids are familiar with her, so it’s not a problem. They’re familiar with the reading coach. That’s not a problem.” “the child had to be given the test by the special ed teacher with breaks” “definitely knows that special ed teacher.” “look out for the special ed kids, and that’s because we don’t place any emphasis on them… even our severe and profound kids. You know, our kids look out for them.” “them with things that’s going on” “I was doing a lot of inclusion before they talked about inclusion.” “isolate them and wouldn’t involve” “what [general education] teacher to put my children with.” “would pick those teachers who were going to help my children and not sit them over in a corner.” “those teachers who would include my children in everything that they were doing. Gave them a, just as much chance as the rest of them.” “make sure [students with disabilities] got to get in to do the extracurricular stuff that everybody else did.” “hey, my kids get to do things like everybody else.” “call on my kids. Let them feel what’s going on. Let them know. Let them answer… it helps their self-esteem.” “made it fun and exciting for kids” “I always had kids wanting to come to my special ed program instead of saying, oh, you’re a dummy. You’re in special ed. That, that never happened to me.” “Now with my special… needs teacher who has my severe and profound kids… I kind of turn my head to some things that she… does with them. Especially like with birthday parties, and they make cakes and stuff down there. So I’ll just kind of [act] like I didn’t see that.” “it’s unreal how I can… pretty much just tell you if this child is tested whether or not he is going to qualify for special education.” “of course we take that referral. We don’t say no. But I’ve told the psychometrist… I can tell you right | who war MR, graduated with a college degree. (Navy Officer)

Another SLD student graduate, became an engineer, and is now on the Board of Education. (His main problem was speech).

Doesn’t believe in sheltering SE students. One MR student graduated from college and is working on his master’s in SE. B.S. in sociology.

“You know, no two people are alike, and definitely no two special ed kids are alike”

“I do more than they say we have to do” 12:30 Library

SE teacher told the principal that the mother of a student wanted to hold the SE student back next year. The principal said “I wish you would have come gotten me before you did that. I would have made an executive decision to move him on. [can’t do this!] That will not help him [the student].”

“We’ll have to acclimate him to tat 3rd grade hall. He is used to going to the 2nd grade hall.”

Wants to start taking away supports to promote independence. |
now the child is not going to qualify. And sure enough?  
“We haven’t had an eligibility meeting on this little girl… If anything, she has come EC issues. It’s not going to be that she has a learning disability.”  
“these children will sense… what’s going on. They know if you don’t want to be bothered with them. They know if you’re apprehensive. They know if you’re frustrated with them. They, they just know, and those are the people that they’ll give the hardest problems to.”  
“It was the way she handled them, and the way she talked to them, and the way her reactions to them they [interrupts herself] I just felt like they could sense it. They could feel it.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. School Level Management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Hiring and Managing Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale 1:31:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:18:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:31:4</td>
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<tr>
<td>“good special ed teachers are few and far between.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“was blessed in getting”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“back in school to get a collaborative special ed degree.”</td>
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<td>“they have to work together.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview Quote “Well, last year I kind of stayed more on… like observing and watching”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I can just sense when… the teachers are not doing what they are supposed to do because of my background.”</td>
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</table>

She stated that it is very difficult to find special education teachers because of what is required of them.  
**Teacher with behavior management problem – the principal talked to her and tried to get her cohort to help her with discipline.**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Management Style</strong></th>
<th>Interpersonal people skills, managing, being able to handle varied situations, and different scenarios.</th>
<th>I'm very flexible and I learned that as a special ed teacher. The principal was coordinating and getting teachers to cover classes.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;to be flexible.&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;you never know what might happen in a special ed setting, or you have to be able to adapt to a lot of situations.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;there are so many things that come up that are not on my calendar that I have to be flexible.&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;I know Morgan [will] need one on one. She's got to have it.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;somebody to do Morgan, or I have to get somebody to do Christian... When they say small group, well, they say small group is like 10 kids. Let's see, okay, I've got 12. I'm not going to do that. I'm going to do six and six.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;according to who I think would do best with my kids. So I think that's a part of managing and knowing your kids. Knowing... your staff.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;I've never had that many students in one grade... that were special needs kids.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;for a small school like&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;I put my resources there.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;that each one of them [general education teachers] got close to an equal number of having the special ed kids in there.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;because they've not had that many special education kids in their classes before.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;special ed teacher spends the majority of his time over there.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;to work with that grade level so it wouldn't be overwhelming to the regular teachers. So I'm almost triple dipping. Well, I am. I'm more than triple dipping&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;a different kind of support from that special ed teacher... because of the way the special ed teacher we had last year operated.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;would bend over backwards and do extra.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;going to go by the book and do what he's supposed to do with those IEPs.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;had to talk to [the general education teachers] and explain to them that... sometimes different teachers are going to do different things.&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;we've had some trying times, but&quot;</td>
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</table>
it's working itself out."
# Case C Data Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/Subtheme</th>
<th>Principal's Survey</th>
<th>Teachers' Surveys</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Calendar(s)</th>
<th>Direct Observation</th>
<th>Pictures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Collaboration with and Utilization of Faculty and Staff</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Collaborative Approach to Education</td>
<td>Scale 1:33:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:33-3.9(h)</td>
<td>“be able to really work with collaboration effectively,” “you cannot do it by yourself, and it shouldn’t be left alone just to the special education teachers.” “It all goes back to collaboration. You know, it’s working as a team.” “you have to build relationships. That’s been the key here. You build relationships and trusting relationships. That if something is not working… there is an open door policy that they come in and… then we sit down and we hash through things.” “working relationship” “to deal with special ed.” “personal and… professional relationships” “special education teachers are involved in all… PST [problem solving team] meetings.” “IEP, METS, Parent conferences, any of our data meetings. We’re all involved together.” “a lot of informal” “informal is just as important as the formal.” “you’ve got all the formal for all the things you have to do. But there’s a lot that goes on, you know, just in the course of the day in communicating with people.” “because we are busy and… stretched really that we’ll take any and every moment to have a conversation.” “we communicate in the halls. We communicate through e-mail. It’s, it’s just keeping it [communication] open all the time.” “meltdown” “which way we were going to go with the IEP and how we were going to pull all the parties together.” “passing in the hall. You know so and so, he’s having a bad day. I’m headed this way. Can you go that way?” “goes back to building relationships with people, a community.” “it’s the collaboration” “it goes back to all the collaboration, and the scheduling, and, and the flexibility of it. You’ve got to work with your teachers… you’ve got to know what’s going on.” “You really have got to work with everybody to come up with a schedule that they… can meet all the needs in the IEPs…. it just goes back to that collaborative process.” “And sometimes you need to be able to listen. “sometimes you’ve just got to listen. You’ve just got to listen to them.” “I think managing is kind of a funny word to use because I think of us</td>
<td>PC39</td>
<td>Special education teacher told the principal she sent her a few e-mails on a couple of students this morning. All meetings included the principal, 3 intervention specialists, special education teacher or speech pathologist, and grade level teachers. Present were kindergarten teachers, reading specialist, behavioral teacher, Title I, and speech pathologist. Attendees at all grade level meetings are the principal, the three intervention teachers, a special education teacher/speech pathologist, and the grade level teachers. In the meetings, they were talking about accommodations. They were discussing if the student received reteach and retest or if they had that in addition to accommodations. Document: PST Third Quarter Agenda April 4th and 5th The principal encouraged one general education teacher to write down some notes for an upcoming IEP meeting. Teachers are to write down on the back of the cards distributed to them information on students who are at-risk and other students receiving interventions so next year’s teacher will know. Worked with faculty collaboratively to develop teachers’ class roles for next year. Discussed individual and groups of students. Discussed reevaluating a student. Discussed the possibility of the student taking the AAA during the next school year.</td>
<td>PC9 PC10 PC11 PC12 PC20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
here as more collaborative. And it’s not so much that I feel like I’m managing them as much as working with them together. We do all the scheduling together. We’re coming into that time of the year when we’ll plan for next year.”

“we work with the reading intervention teachers and look at, and bring the special ed teacher in.”

“We figure out where special education students need to go. We figure out where our PST children need to go as far as… personalities, strengths of children, strengths of teachers, and we figure those placements out.”

“It’s a lot… but it’s all do together.”

“we work together to do it.”

“When you have a bunch of people looking at things, everybody can work together to put that puzzle together, and… make it the best that it can be.”

“there may be a better way to do it out there, and I’m sure there probably is, But I feel like we’re doing… the very best right now with the collaborative process.”

b. Utilization of Faculty and Staff

“The special education team that I work with here, they are incredible. They go to training every quarter, and then they come back and… keep me so well informed.”

“are incredible, and we just… problem solve her so we don’t have to go up”

“They’re not scared of putting more work on themselves. They’re not. They’re going to do what they think the kids need.”

“I just feel like the teachers here do a great job identifying specifically what our children need. And when they come in from other schools, they go over those IEPs. And if we don’t think that’s what they need to be getting, then we redo it.”

“self-driven”

“well educated.”

“I think as an administrator one of the biggest mistakes you can make is not empowering the people that you work with and not capitalizing on their intellectual capabilities because one person can’t see everything.”

“missed one of her sessions, but she didn’t complain. It wasn’t like… I’m missing this. I’m supposed to be here, and now I’m having to be up here. They just… don’t complain.”

“One of my special ed teachers and speech-language pathologists, they are co-LEA”

“is great because I just send both of them to everything, and it keeps us really well informed. You’ve got two that are fully informed all the time. So if one’s out of the building… you’ve always got another one in there. Whether it’s something going on, a child coming in, we need to get on web SETs… I’ve got somebody here… it’s kind of like a

Direct quote from pamphlet “professional educators” who are “highly-qualified and well trained”.

The principal has surrounded herself with her experts! (Title I, character education /PST Chair, and reading coach.

She uses her intervention teachers as experts in curriculum and instruction.

The character education teacher is used to address behavior. She is also used to provide reading interventions throughout the school day.

Delegates responsibilities to trusted faculty members (intervention teachers).

Case C Intervention Teachers: These three makeup the principal’s trusted inner circle. When the principal was confronted with information by a teacher in which the principal was not knowledgeable, the principal looked to the expert in that area (reading coach) for assurance.

Direct observation quote.

“When I have a technical issue, I refer it to a person who is supposed to know.”

This was in reference to special education.

Special education teacher volunteered to take a personal day and pay for training (PD) herself if the system wouldn’t pay for it.

Observation – speech pathologist shares LEA responsibilities with one of the special education teachers.
backup plan.”
“... I heard something one time, and I think it’s really true that as a classroom teacher you know a lot about a little... But as an administrator, you know a little bit about a lot of things. And I think it would be foolish of me to think that I could stay on top of everything for special ed and everything else that I have to do. You have to hire people and keep people that know what they’re doing.”
“They are case managers. They know those IEPs backwards and forwards for the cases that are on their caseload.”
“I really depend on them to work as a team.”
“... pull the IEPs”
“... On the kids they have, they’re not going to have to go to the folder.”
“... if I saw a problem with those special education teachers... and you said I can’t depend on them... that’s a really sad position that you’re in, and you are going to have to do something about it.”
“I really depend on them [special education teachers] to follow the days,... timelines, and everything.”
“... type A”
“... cross your t, do your i’s, follow the law, and do the best that you can do every time you can do it.”
“... if I didn’t have that, I would have to be tracking these children.”
“In the data meetings,... special education teachers are in there for a specific reason... if this is what they [students with disabilities] missed and this is why they missed it, what do we need to do”
“So those strategies are shared, so it’s really”
“... just like a teacher.”
“... treated like a staff member.”
“... early reading intervention... and My Sidewalk”
“... do inclusion in the classrooms.”
“... so that the children treat them that way”
“I look at them as teachers and treat them that way so that the children treat them that way.”
“... just another professional this staff that makes it all work.”
“... work with transitioning, they work with toileting, [and] they work with providing instruction.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Principal's Special Education Paradigm</th>
<th>Scale 1:27:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:27:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:27:3.6(M)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Background and Experiences that Shaped the Principal's Paradigm</td>
<td>1:27:4</td>
<td>2:27:4</td>
<td>2:27:3.6(M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“wasn’t in a book.”</td>
<td>“one of the first school... to start inclusion when inclusion... just started coming out.”</td>
<td>“almost finished with her master’s degree in design.”</td>
<td>“I think she can make it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“building strategies and had incredible teachers, so we opted not to go special ed and wait and see... what would happen with the strategies”</td>
<td>“Momma, I know what’s wrong with me. And she said you didn’t test me”</td>
<td>According to the principal, there are two issues that have shaped her view of special education. First, her youngest daughter. Second, football player who everyone said was lazy but turned out to have sleep apnea.</td>
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</table>
b. Knowledge of Special Education

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:3:4</td>
<td>2:3:4</td>
<td>2:3:3.8(H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:13:4</td>
<td>2:13:4</td>
<td>2:13:3.6(M)</td>
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“any barriers that we can remove first like, is there a hearing problem? Is there a vision problem? You know, are they ADD, ADHD and they just need some medicine? And... I don’t want one identified if there’s something that we should’ve done before.”

Special education teacher told principal about a situation with a student who qualified speech and language impaired. Special education PC16
can we work through that?"
"you just can’t get through because they’re special ed for a reason. They’re not special ed just because someone said, oh, they’re special. They can’t perform all the time at the same level of the other children."

Once we’ve done everything that we can do and they are not going to make it, then when we submit them for special education testing,... if they test and it looks like they qualify or they don’t qualify then I go into those meetings with them. The multidisciplinary eligibility team... That’s the one where you’re having to tell the mom, mom, this is how the test turned out. These are our recommendations, and then the parent has to decide.

"it keeps coming back to the same thing. Just following the IEPs, and collaboration with all of the teachers... the special education teachers and the classroom teachers."

"always stay within the confines of the law, and you have to stay within the IEP."

"the IEPs mandate what we do. How they are written determines all the scheduling."

"the direction of the special ed program... goes back to being driven by the IEPs. They drive everything we do."

"IEPs always have to be written based on the needs of the children. Not what you think you want to do the next year."

"everything’s based on what the children need for the IEPs."

"The parents had brought tape recorders"

"I didn’t have a lot of special ed experiences"

"the parents were really upset."

"calmed down and realized that the teacher really was providing"

"was in the right. It wasn’t like I was having to back her up because she had done something wrong. It’s just that she needed some backup to say this is the IEP. This is what it says is to be done. This is what’s being done, and this is the extra that is being done."

"trial by fire."

"We told him yesterday, and we had a reward system set in place."

"may be able to live in a group home"

"below 55"

"children that have multiple disabilities."

"how to keep themselves clean.... How to go to the bathroom...they need some basic skills of life to just be able to survive."

"I think it’s a special calling for special ed because it’s hard...to look at some of them... and think the best that we can give her is [an] opportunity to learn some skills.”

teacher talked about reevaluating him and he might qualify under a different category. Principal wanted to wait until reeval was up on as long as possible because this student is transient and the problem might be he is never in one place long enough for interventions to work (triangulates the fact that she does not want students in special education unless absolutely necessary."

Direct observation quote “If they can test out before they enter middle school, I think that’s wonderful.”

She keeps up with legal updates and changes through the professional organization that she is a part of. These changes come in the form updates in the magazine she receives.

The red binder next to the 504 binder is a copy of the AAC, special education services.

Direct quote from observation. A GE Kindergarten teacher asked the principal about a student who had insinuated the possibility of having her child tested for SE at the beginning of the year. The principal responded by stating that “If she had asked us specifically to test her student, then by law, we would have had to have."

The principal seems to understand the characteristics of autism.

"trigger for different reasons."

"why they trigger. Why do they explode? You know, what’s the antecedent? How can we prevent it? You know, it’s all of those.”
### 3. Program Interventions and Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale 1.15:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:15:3(M)</th>
<th>Scale 1:18:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:18:3(M)</th>
<th>Interview quote: “And then I started working on my educational leadership degree. And kind of with the thought that I was going to go more toward curriculum and instruction. I had a real passion for hands-on, inquiry-based learning.” “hands-on, inquiry-based approach” to learning. She stated that students are learning through interaction. Students learn “through all of that movement and activity... because we’re teaching it differently.” “we don’t teach an algorithm. An algorithm requires you to memorize. If you learn a concept and out of necessity you develop that algorithm, then you know why it works. So with our children building the concepts, which is what special education students need”. “tell me why I’m doing this. Explain this to me. Don’t just tell me to work a formula. Why does the formula work?” “if they work with all the manipulatives and they go, oh, well this is happening and this is happening.” “ok, write me an equation that would explain that” “all of a sudden they come up with an algorithm” “if they see it, they understand it.” “understand where the breakdown [in learning] occurs.” “links in really well with AMSTI.” “this child is missing this particular skill. I’ve got to drop back here. Well, then you might only have to drop back to this level for the next one, and somebody else may be able to go on. But it gives them that framework, and they know where to build on. So that individualizes it.” “I mean there are so many different ways to teach. They teach cooking. They’ll teach gardening.” “you want to maximize whatever her ability is.” “going to give her a better chance to do that.” “because with special education, things are going to happen that are going to change your day.” “We’ve had to bump and change stuff all year long because that’s just the nature of special ed. When you’re in a school that’s transient, you get one. You’re like, oh my gosh, we’ve got to bump that around. We’ve got to shift numbers. We’ve got to move people. And then somebody leaves, and you think, well, we can do extra time. Or then you get them back.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supports all teachers through positive feedback, interventions, and instructional strategies.</td>
<td>PC13</td>
<td>PC34</td>
<td>PC35</td>
<td>PC36</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PC38</td>
<td>PC41</td>
<td>PC42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Program Interventions</td>
<td>PC14</td>
<td>PC33</td>
<td>PC35</td>
<td>PC36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scale 1:15:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:15:3(M)</td>
<td>Scale 1:18:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:18:3(M)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### 3. Program Interventions and Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale 1:15:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:15:3</th>
<th>Scale 1:18:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:18:3</th>
<th>Interview quote: “And then I started working on my educational leadership degree. And kind of with the thought that I was going to go more toward curriculum and instruction. I had a real passion for hands-on, inquiry-based learning.” “hands-on, inquiry-based approach” to learning. She stated that students are learning through interaction. Students learn “through all of that movement and activity... because we’re teaching it differently.” “we don’t teach an algorithm. An algorithm requires you to memorize. If you learn a concept and out of necessity you develop that algorithm, then you know why it works. So with our children building the concepts, which is what special education students need”. “tell me why I’m doing this. Explain this to me. Don’t just tell me to work a formula. Why does the formula work?” “if they work with all the manipulatives and they go, oh, well this is happening and this is happening.” “ok, write me an equation that would explain that” “all of a sudden they come up with an algorithm” “if they see it, they understand it.” “understand where the breakdown [in learning] occurs.” “links in really well with AMSTI.” “this child is missing this particular skill. I’ve got to drop back here. Well, then you might only have to drop back to this level for the next one, and somebody else may be able to go on. But it gives them that framework, and they know where to build on. So that individualizes it.” “I mean there are so many different ways to teach. They teach cooking. They’ll teach gardening.” “you want to maximize whatever her ability is.” “going to give her a better chance to do that.” “because with special education, things are going to happen that are going to change your day.” “We’ve had to bump and change stuff all year long because that’s just the nature of special ed. When you’re in a school that’s transient, you get one. You’re like, oh my gosh, we’ve got to bump that around. We’ve got to shift numbers. We’ve got to move people. And then somebody leaves, and you think, well, we can do extra time. Or then you get them back.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supports all teachers through positive feedback, interventions, and instructional strategies.</td>
<td>PC13</td>
<td>PC34</td>
<td>PC35</td>
<td>PC36</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PC38</td>
<td>PC41</td>
<td>PC42</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Program Interventions</td>
<td>PC14</td>
<td>PC33</td>
<td>PC35</td>
<td>PC36</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
things that we do based on what their needs are, and we try to target exactly what it is that they’re missing. Not just, oh, Jill failed the end of quarter test. Well, why did she fail it?”
“it’s not enough to know that they missed it. You’ve got to know why they missed it.”
“I feel like we do a really good job here.”
“up to four times a day.”
“special education teachers and paras do early intervention”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>b. Strategies</th>
<th>Scale 1:12:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:12:2</th>
<th>Scale 1:14:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:14:4</th>
<th>Scale 1:32:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:32:3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:12:3.7(L)</td>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>2:14:3.9(H)</td>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>2:32:3.8(H)</td>
<td>Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“we use a lot of data here on children. How they’re testing. What they’re doing, formal, informal. To know what they need.”</td>
<td>“being able to crunch data”</td>
<td>“you just get used to looking at it and what you’re looking for.”</td>
<td>“So they crunch. They’re crunching through the data with us.”</td>
<td>“we always, we drill down to the individual children. And what the wonderful thing is that they [special education teachers] see things from a different perspective. And some of the strategies they will throw in for a child that may not be special ed,”</td>
<td>“it’s so good to have all those different... views”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“at the data meetings, we look at all the data, and we look at it by individuals.... if they don’t master a test, we re-teach it, and we retest it.”</td>
<td>“pull them back into small groups for the math”</td>
<td>“I care about the kids. So for us at this point in time in our lives, it works for us. Now would it work everywhere else? I don’t know. And is there a better way? Maybe, you know. But for now I think that we’re doing what we need to do.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PC33</td>
<td>PC37</td>
<td>PC39</td>
<td>PC41</td>
<td>PC23</td>
<td>PC27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EQT – End of Quarter Test</td>
<td>They have data meetings one time each quarter.</td>
<td>Principal wrote down every at-risk student’s name, average, and EQT score.</td>
<td>The principal used the data team to not only identify at-risk students but generate ideas for interventions.</td>
<td>Went over school test scores for grade level, disaggregated special education scores and went over them briefly.Discussed monitoring at-risk students. Unbelievable data driven decision making (examined weaknesses within each teacher’s students’ grades and test scores”</td>
<td>Focused student monitoring. Direct observation. “They’re not using the gift that you’re giving them.” Talking to a general education teacher about special education and general education students in regard to strategies the teacher provided students with. This was a response to the comparison and analysis between end of quarter assessment grades, low grades, and quarter averages, higher grades. Special education teachers are included in data meetings. Direct observation. Principal referred to the “mining” of data. Spoke while walking to lunch. Principal C stated that faculty members share instructional strategies both vertically, and horizontally. The principal was observed leading a discussion on instructional strategies for dealing with a student in a different least restrictive environment for the next school year. Direct observation quote: “that strategy would work well with special education.” Direct observation quote “Reteach and ret-est” were used frequently. (Data Meetings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PC28</td>
<td>PC29</td>
<td>PC30</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4. Active Leadership

#### a. Goal Setting and Flexibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview quote</th>
<th>Interview quotes</th>
<th>&quot;What does our school stand for?&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;goal oriented &quot;</th>
<th>&quot;Where is our school headed?&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;principals really have to be flexible.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Those are the big things you put down, appointments with central office, principals' meetings, deadlines.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;teachers working toward a common goal.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Where is our school headed?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;goal oriented&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview quotes</td>
<td>Interview quotes</td>
<td>This school has a culture that is very goal oriented. For example ARI, it was announced over the intercom that students had to be at 30% by the end of the day, and school personnel change the percentage each day of the week.</td>
<td>&quot;Where is our school headed?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;goal oriented&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;appointments with central office, principals' meetings, [and] deadlines.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;day-to-day functions&quot;</td>
<td>During announcements, the principal made sure to call out a group of students who made progress toward ARI points. This was positive reinforcement. Also stated that it was time for students to get focused on academics. She seems to be very goal oriented. Encouraged students to do their best on a state assessment.</td>
<td>&quot;Where is our school headed?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Where is our school headed?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;because that's really where you have to be flexible.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;tried to... keep a really nice checklist.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Tracking Our Success&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;goal oriented&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;goal oriented&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I can write it down on a calendar and I can have it on a checklist, but it's going to get shifted and moved because the priorities are always going to be on the children themselves. So whatever you've planned today as far as... I'm going to do a walkthrough at this time or I'm going to do an observation at this time, they can always be superseded by something with the children.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;you start to learn in that first year that you're not going to get to all those... things.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Booking it to 100%&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;goal oriented&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;goal oriented&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;sometimes it gives you a sense of accomplishment to put them on a post-it. Because when you finish it, you throw it in the garbage.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;push back&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;students receive additional assistance in extended day. Special education teachers do extended day for their students in reading and math from October through March. General education teachers do the same for their kids. Direct observation data. There are a lot of hands-on projects. Some bulletin boards have them displayed. Student of the month wall outside of office. Direct observation quote &quot;Take pride in themselves, and that builds self-esteem.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;What does our school stand for?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;goal oriented&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I went a different avenue. And, and very politely... asked about, hey, can we look at this again?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;very excited for her.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;students receive additional assistance in extended day. Special education teachers do extended day for their students in reading and math from October through March. General education teachers do the same for their kids. Direct observation data. There are a lot of hands-on projects. Some bulletin boards have them displayed. Student of the month wall outside of office. Direct observation quote &quot;Take pride in themselves, and that builds self-esteem.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;What does our school stand for?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;goal oriented&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;we're excited for her because... that's frustrating when you don't feel like you're... meeting their needs.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;we're excited for her because... that's frustrating when you don't feel like you're... meeting their needs.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;students receive additional assistance in extended day. Special education teachers do extended day for their students in reading and math from October through March. General education teachers do the same for their kids. Direct observation data. There are a lot of hands-on projects. Some bulletin boards have them displayed. Student of the month wall outside of office. Direct observation quote &quot;Take pride in themselves, and that builds self-esteem.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;What does our school stand for?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;goal oriented&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Involvement and Supports</td>
<td>Scale 1:28:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:28:4</td>
<td>Scale 1:29:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:29:3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"I try to give them all the resources that they need. The support that they need."

"concentrated the services at kindergarten"
APPENDIX S

CASE D DATA MATRIX
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/Subtheme</th>
<th>Principal's Survey</th>
<th>Teachers' Surveys</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Calendar(s)</th>
<th>Direct Observation</th>
<th>Pictures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Communication Through Community Involvement and Collaboration</td>
<td>Scale 1:24:3 (M)</td>
<td>Scale 2:24:3</td>
<td>“know right away, okay, this is not a good date to setup meetings with here because she already has something going on that particular day.”</td>
<td>PD62</td>
<td>She blocks two hours off at the end of the day to get through administrative tasks such as e-mails and completing tasks on her computer. She usually works for an additional hour at home each day.</td>
<td>PD6, PD21, PD29, PD30, PD31, PD46, PD47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scale 1:26:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:26:4 (H)</td>
<td>“long range planning.”</td>
<td>PD63</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scale 1:33:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:33:3 (H)</td>
<td>“to go in and adjust it whenever changes are made.”</td>
<td>PD64</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scale 2:33:3 (H)</td>
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<td>“unexpected things that come up all the time and changes have to be made.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Collaboration</td>
<td>Scale 1:26:4</td>
<td>Scale 2:26:4 (H)</td>
<td>“I would consult with them. I do.”</td>
<td>PD60</td>
<td></td>
<td>PD6, PD62, PD63, PD64, PD66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scale 2:26:4</td>
<td>Scale 1:33:4</td>
<td>“simultaneously.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scale 2:33:3</td>
<td>Scale 2:33:3 (H)</td>
<td>“on a monthly basis.”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“collaborate together.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“a good working relationship.”</td>
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<td>“independently on... special cases.”</td>
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<td>“need to meet about a special case so she can give... an update or whatever.”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“needs more information about”</td>
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<td>“teacher has come forth and shared”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“interchangeable.”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“meet on a monthly basis”</td>
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<td>“as needed basis.”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“have a lot of informal meetings.”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“when a new student comes into the school.”</td>
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<td>“Before I even place the student, I ask for her to come check the files, look at everything. And then if she denotes anything or sees anything that I, she feels that I need to know as far as the placement, I take that into consideration. So she does have quite a bit of input because I want that. I want to try to make sure that the placement that I make is one that’s going to be the best possible one. Uh, huh, And I feel like in getting all the experts in there, then we’ve done everything that we can possibly do. And it’s not just my eyes looking at it but someone else’s, too.”</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I ask them [special education teachers] to provide input in our plan of action of how we’re going to move forward to bridge and close</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
2. Background and Knowledge of Special Education

| a. Background                                                                 | School split 3 times because of numbers. The principal reported that she was sitting in on IEP meetings almost daily. She reported that it is much better now. The school had a high maintenance special education student body before splitting for the 3rd time. There were lots of student advocates. They tape recorded lots of IEP meetings. So the principal reported that they did, too. She stated that they had to make sure they followed policies and procedures. Principal D commented at lunch that she sits in on IEP meetings but does not say much. She stated that this is especially true when parents | PD16 |

"I would say personal experiences from my family members as well as working under other administrators... that were very passionate about making sure that all children... receive [a] quality education."

"were adamant that policies and procedures would be followed"

"doing what they are supposed to be doing."

"was failing, and there was a lot of discrepancy... in the process of determining... what kind of help he needed."

"how would I have handled that if I had been the administrator in charge?"

"contributed to how I look at and how I handle special education as a principal."

"very general in nature."

those gaps. I then include the general ed teachers in that population, as well."

"IEP meetings, their collaboration meetings, and... faculty meetings."

"grade level meetings"

"data meetings."

"data meetings are done by cross-grade level. We have k and first together, second and third together, and fourth and fifth, so they can kind of hear"

"My faculty meetings are basically... a professional learning community in that everyone in this building presents."

"when you go somewhere, you're required to come back and share that with the staff. It's not principal led only. I lead meetings; however, the majority of the meetings are led by the staff."

"basically, we do that together, collaboratively."

"bi-monthly"

"we have meetings where... the special ed director and their department come in and also give us updates."

"has an open door policy."

"very hands-on."

"to assist the teachers with any cases they might have, or the administration with any questions we might have in the area of special education, or any students that we service."

"I had a third grade teacher that was having some disciplinary needs in the classroom. We conversed with the special ed teacher, and then we felt like that it was at the point of bringing in someone higher with us with maybe a little bit more insight. I invited her in. She observed. She gave us feedback. She helped in developing the plan. And then she also came back for follow-up, and she was a part of the meeting with the parents. So that's how we really utilize her, and we utilize her a lot."

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b. Knowledge of Special Education

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<tr>
<td>1:1:3(H)</td>
<td>2:1:3.1(H)</td>
<td>2:4:3.5(M)</td>
<td>2:13:3.3(M)</td>
<td>2:20:3.2(M)</td>
<td>2:25:3.3(M)</td>
<td>2:28:2.8(M)</td>
<td>2:12:3.3(M)</td>
<td>2:25:3.3(M)</td>
<td>2:20:3.2(M)</td>
<td>2:25:3.3(M)</td>
<td>2:28:2.8(M)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- "ongoing professional development."
- "Kids with learning disabilities to me is one of the biggest areas that needs the strongest component of professional development for teachers because it’s so diverse."
- "so many facets of it that teachers sometimes are overwhelmed with trying to meet the needs of those students."
- "requires expertise and a lot of intensive training."
- "The special education department provides professional development throughout the year."
- "if they are involved heavily with inclusion students."
- "I think the biggest skill is you’re knowledge…. you need to have a wealth of knowledge when it comes to what the needs are of special ed."
- "I feel I have a pretty good grasp on the law because… I can read that on a regular basis."
- "based on the data"
- "IEP meetings that determines whether, what services we really have."
- "Interview data “whether it’s an aide, whether it’s full inclusion that is really decided based on the data and the team itself, that’s the structure that’s used.”
- "co-teaching models"

Bringing a tape recorder.

Special education teacher keeps principal up-to-date.

Principal send special education teacher for professional development.

The lead special education teacher stated the principal is somewhat knowledgeable in special education.

Principal D spoke specifically to having a knowledge base in special education law because of her training.

Principal stated the following.

Knows not to specify in the IEP which personnel will provide services. Specifies the objective in the meeting and not the person.

Behavior intervention plan was followed, and the student was placed in the conference room in order to be isolated from other students. Followed BIP protocol. Monitored by principal, assistant principal, and secretary.

3. Interventions and Programs

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale 1:1:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:1:1:3</th>
<th>Scale 1:12:3</th>
<th>Scale 2:12:3</th>
<th>Scale 1:15:3</th>
<th>Scale 2:15:3:0(H)</th>
<th>Scale 1:18:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:18:3</th>
<th>Scale 1:30:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:30:4</th>
<th>Scale 1:32:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:32:3:3(M)</th>
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<td>1:1:2.32(M)</td>
<td>2:1:3.2(M)</td>
<td>2:12:3.3(M)</td>
<td>2:12:3.3(M)</td>
<td>2:15:3.0(H)</td>
<td>2:18:3.0(H)</td>
<td>2:20:3.3(M)</td>
<td>2:30:3.3(M)</td>
<td>2:32:3.3(M)</td>
<td>2:32:3.3(M)</td>
<td>2:32:3.3(M)</td>
<td>2:32:3.3(M)</td>
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</table>

- "I would like to continue to learn more and more… about interventions, programs”
- "common assessments that can be used to determine what those gaps are”
- "how do we reach those students who are supposedly unreachable or have those deficits that are so complex”
- "would like to be more equipped and have that kind of knowledge base to support”
- "in those innovative programs that can help them to better do their job in meeting the needs of their students.”
- "that’s perfect. That’s a very strong passion of mine, to help teachers to be able to identify early what it is that may be going on with the child to the point that they can put real interventions in place. That… child may not really need special education services at all. It’s just that they need strong teachers that understand how to implement… highly explicit instruction that’s going to help the child to be more successful in the classroom.”

PD60 PD61 PD62 PD63 PD64 PD66

- "When I became a principal, the first thing I wanted to do was make sure we had a child centered school.”
- The principal's concern is the interventions being used with students who have a specific learning disability or dyslexia. The researcher asked the lead special education teacher why she thinks there is a small special education population at school D. Her response was that pre-service interventions and additional resources (e.g., Voyager math, etc.) that the principal purchases keeps some students out of special education.

Lead special education teacher stated that the principal encourages different strategies before students enter special education.

The lead special education teacher reported that the principal observes special education teachers and recommends to general education some of the...
“understand or they don’t know enough about quality, formal assessments to determine, specifically, what the next step is.”
“ultimate goal with the special education program is to ensure that every child that truly, truly needs special education receives quality services as early as possible to help them be successful citizens in this world.”
“force us to do that.”
“The biggest thing that I have found that helps teachers to meet the needs of special ed students as well as other students is being very strong in their strategies and skills”
“the stronger they are with strategies the better they’ll be at meeting the needs of students”
“teacher has to be well equipped in understanding formative assessments”
“includes those research-based strategies that’s going to meet the needs of those students.”
“That I know for a fact. I have seen that over and over and over.”
“individualized student learning”

### 4. Managerial Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale 1:5:3</th>
<th>Scale 2:5:3</th>
<th>Scale 1:17:3</th>
<th>Scale 2:17:3</th>
<th>Scale 1:34:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:34:4</th>
<th>Scale 2:5:3.0(H)</th>
<th>Scale 2:17:3.0(H)</th>
<th>Scale 2:34:3.3(M)</th>
<th>Scale 3:17:3.3(M)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“where the gaps are”</td>
<td>“formulate a plan for… special ed.”</td>
<td>“support the teachers in their efforts to meet the needs of the students…. To provide them with what they need to do their job well. And to make sure they have adequate time, resources, and all of that. I see that as… my number one role there.”</td>
<td>“reach their highest potential.”</td>
<td>“I feel like I set the tone”</td>
<td>“own outside readings and professional development that I elected to attend on my own.” Interview quote. “Everything that I gain I come back and I share it with my staff. “If I don’t come back and share, why should I ask them to do it?”</td>
<td>“everyone informed of the latest”</td>
<td>“do the same.”</td>
<td>“very hands-on”</td>
<td>“If they have special ed students in their classroom, I do go in to observe the inclusion component. I go to see how… the special ed teacher and the general ed teacher are collaborating.”</td>
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<td>“participate in the planning meetings, as well.”</td>
<td>“put on the back for what they do… on a regular basis.”</td>
<td>“I allocate within my monies through local funds”</td>
<td>“things of that nature that would come under administrative. I’m there to assist from that standpoint.”</td>
<td>“mediator”</td>
<td>“oversee and make sure that all of the… laws, rules, and regulations are being followed and support [teachers] when it comes to bridging any gaps [or] concerns that practices and strategies that the special education teacher uses.</td>
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They stated that she makes a list and tries to get through it. They recommends reading First Things First because you cannot get to everything throughout the day. You need to get to the important things if you can. She is moving some of the teachers to different grade levels to improve the cohesiveness of the group as well as the instruction. Part of her leadership style is that she takes on morning duties with her teachers every Monday. The teachers said that you are the principal, and you don’t have to do this. But the principal said I want to model what I expect of my teachers.

**Lead special education stated that the principal provides the special education teacher with time to go to other schools for transition meetings** She stated that she is the LEA representative at IEP meetings that are likely to be difficult meetings. The lead special education teacher stated that the principal will call the central office to get additional resources for the special education program. The principal attempts to get additional staff. Special education lead teacher described the principal as the “liaison”.

**She keeps the parent on-task in the meeting**
might be between what the parents feel and the teachers feel.”
   “I support them for conferences making sure they get professional development just like everybody else.”
   “where the biggest focus needs to be”
   “that adequate training is provided for [special education] teachers, so that they can support [general education] teachers in the classroom.”
   “the biggest struggle.”
   “inadequate”
   “the intensive training needed to do all that they need to do with the different types”
   “collaboration, resources, [and] professional development”

b. Utilization of Faculty

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“make the needs known at the school level to the principal first.”
“the principal should always know what’s going on in their building before it goes above them.”
“share the experience”
“switch the next year.”
“experience at both levels.”
“collaboration meetings”
“We do it as a team. He attends the data meetings right along with me. He’s in every meeting I’m in.”
“I want him to know just as much as I know.”
“a good working relationship”
“a wealth of knowledge”
“as a team working together.”
“administrative”
“go over the caseloads”
“on a regular basis.”
“They develop their schedules based on their caseload. I review the schedules, and I’m the final person to approve it.”
“are given the privilege to develop their own schedule within the master schedule.”
“that it’d make their job a whole lot easier”
“The special ed department presents… an overview to remind the staff of what the guidelines are, what’s expected of them, IEPs, all of that. They do this every single year just… to keep us focused.”
“an overview”
“bring the staff in”
“on what the program is,… who it entails, and how detailed… or involved it is.”
“a chance to have input as far as how we plan to establish that… at the building level.”
“They can give input,… I can give input, and then together we determine… how we’re going to address it.”

Lead special education teacher – the principal trusts special education teachers’ expertise.
Lead special education teacher – the principal asks questions when she does not know or understand.
The principal obviously relies on the special education team that she utilizes.
Conversation with lead special education teacher.
The principal accepts her recommendations, groups special education students so special education teachers can get to more students.
APPENDIX T

FORM: SIGNATURE ASSURANCE SHEET
**Principal Investigator's Assurance Statement (Student investigators may sign as PI):**
I understand The University of Alabama's policies concerning research involving human subjects; and I agree:

1. To comply with all IRB policies, decisions, conditions, and requirements;
2. To accept responsibility for the scientific and ethical conduct of this research study;
3. To obtain prior approval from the Institutional Review Board before amending or altering the research protocol or implementing changes in the approved consent/assent form;
4. To report to the IRB in accordance with federal, sponsor, university, and IRB policies, any adverse event(s) and/or unanticipated problem(s) involving risks to subjects;
5. To complete continuation, modification, and closure forms on time and to collaborate with IRB monitoring of studies for quality improvement or cause;
6. To notify the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) and/or the IRB (when applicable) of the development of any financial interest not already disclosed;
7. To ensure that individuals listed as study personnel have received the mandatory human research protections education;
8. To ensure that individuals listed as study personnel possess the necessary experience for conducting research activities in the role described for this research study.

My signature below also means that I have appropriate facilities and resources for conducting the study.

**PI SIGNATURE** ___________________________________________ **DATE**

**NAME TYPED**: Richard Raymond Templeton

**STUDY TITLE**: An Examination of How Knowledgeable and Skilled Elementary Principals Lead Special Education Programs in Alabama: Four Case Studies

**ALL STUDENT RESEARCH: Supervising Professor’s Assurance Statement:**
I certify that I have reviewed this research protocol. I attest to the scientific merit of this study; to the competency of the investigator(s) to conduct the project; that facilities, equipment, and personnel are adequate to conduct the research; that continued guidance will be provided as appropriate, and the study will be closed before student graduation.

**SIGNATURE** ___________________________________________ **DATE**

**NAME TYPED**: Dr. Mary Beirne-Smith

*Department Chairperson’s/Department Designee’s Assurance Statement:
I certify that I have reviewed this research protocol. I attest to the scientific validity and importance of this study; to the competency of the investigator(s) to conduct the project and their time available for the project; that facilities, equipment, and personnel are adequate to conduct the research; and that continued guidance will be provided as appropriate. When the principal investigator assumes a sponsor function, the investigator is knowledgeable of the additional regulatory requirements of the sponsor and can comply with them.

**SIGNATURE** ___________________________________________ **DATE**

**NAME TYPED**: ___________________________ **TITLE**

*If the PI is also the department chair, dean, associate dean for research, or equivalent, another research-qualified person should sign the Signature Assurance Sheet.*