

A Principal's Leadership for Implementation and Support of Inclusion

Thelma Gray Smith

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Travis Twiford, Co-chair

Carol Cash, Co-Chair

Penny Blumenthal

William Glenn

March 21, 2011

Blacksburg, Virginia

Key Words: accountability, co-teaching, inclusion, Individual Disabilities Education Act, leadership, principal, research-based strategies, Responsiveness to Instruction, special education, Star Model, student achievement, students with disabilities, strategic programming

A Principal's Leadership for Implementation and Support of Inclusion

Thelma Gray Smith

ABSTRACT

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) 2004 requires schools to provide students with disabilities with all the academic opportunities, services, and extracurricular involvement afforded non-disabled peers and with non-disabled peers.

Accountability measures resulting from the law, No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), place increased emphasis on the performance of students with disabilities who must be included in the state assessment system, and meet the levels of proficiencies identified by the state for Adequate Yearly Progress in reading and math no later than 2013-2014. According to the literature, principals felt unprepared to provide the leadership in special education. The purpose of the case study of the leadership of a principal was to provide descriptions of practices in implementing and supporting inclusion so that instruction for children with disabilities can be delivered in general education classrooms. The data were triangulated from an interview with the principal, a focus group discussion of general and special education teachers, and examinations of physical artifacts. The findings revealed that the principal organized the school to support instruction of children with disabilities in general education classroom, planned intentionally for scheduling and grouping of students, expected general education and special education teachers to share equal responsibilities for instruction, used data to monitor the progress of students, developed visible and written procedures for academic and behavioral expectations, and collaborated with parents. Underlying each of the findings was the expectation that the faculty collaborate in understanding the impact of the disability upon learning, and problem solve interventions to positively affect academic outcomes for children with disabilities.

Dedication

The completion of this dissertation is dedicated to God who carried me through these many years, my husband, Herbert, my son, Damien and his children, my son, Grayson and his wife, Tasha, my mother and sisters, my in-laws, nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends. You stood steadfast as a tree and rooted in your belief that I could make this journey. I shall always be grateful for your prayers, encouragement, patience, support, strength, and visioning to help me to the end. Sincerest appreciations are extended to my sister, Laverne for her personal support of time during these seven years. May the completion of this task serve as an example for others but especially for my granddaughters, Damiya, Nadia, and India, my young nieces and nephews, and the children whose lives I touch each day. May the work I've done encourage you to pursue your dreams.

.

Acknowledgements

Sincere appreciations are extended to my faculty advisors, Dr. Travis Twiford, Chairman, Dr. Carol Cash, Co-Chairman and members of the Committee, Dr. William Glenn and Dr. Penny Blumenthal for facilitating my learning and providing support through time and expertise during this dissertation. Special appreciations are extended to each of you for your leadership as I became a distance learner. Because of you, I have experienced a new 21st Century endeavor. It is my desire to impact the lives of others as you have with me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	x
Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Background of the Problem	5
Rationale for the Study	7
Research Questions	7
Theoretical Framework.....	8
Ethical Practice	10
Individual Consideration.....	10
Equity Under Law.....	10
Effective Programming.....	11
Establishing Productive Partnerships.....	11
Limitations	12
Definition of Terms.....	14
Significance of the Study	17
Organization of the Study	18
Chapter 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	20
Inclusion.....	20

Historical Context	21
Literature Reviews for Ethical Practice	25
Literature Reviews for Individual Considerations	27
Literature Reviews for Equity Under the Law	29
Literature Reviews for Effective Programming.....	32
Co-teaching for Service Delivery	33
Instructional Approaches	39
Literature Reviews for Establishing Productive Partnerships	40
Summary.....	44
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY.....	45
Scope of the Study	45
Problem Statements	45
Purpose of Study.....	46
Review of Framework.....	46
Research Questions	47
Assumption and Rationale for Qualitative Design	47
The Researcher's Role	48
Procedures and Issues of Gaining Entry	48
Data Collection Procedures.....	55
Interview with the Principal.....	57
Focus Group.....	58
Physical Artifacts	60
Assurances of Confidentiality.....	62

Reliability.....	63
Transferability.....	63
Dependability.....	64
Summary.....	64
Chapter 4: RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION	66
School Site Observations	66
Perceptions of School Leadership.....	66
Years of Experience of Teachers	69
Student Data	69
Profile of Participants	72
Results.....	80
Establishing a Collaborative Environment for Inclusion.....	81
Strategic Programming	86
Academic, Social and Behavioral Expectations	94
School as a Community	98
Summary	100
Chapter 5: FINDINGS	104
Research Question One.....	104
Research Question Two	109
Research Question Three	112
Research Question Four.....	114
Research Question Five	116
Summary of Findings.....	117

Implications for Practices	119
Recommendations for Future Research	125
Summary	127
Reflections	127
References	134
Appendix A: Letter Requesting Use of the Star Model	144
Appendix B: Approval to Use the Star Model	146
Appendix C: Internal Review Board Letter of Approval	147
Appendix D: Informed Consent Agreement for the Principal	148
Appendix E: Informed Consent Agreement for the Focus Group	149
Appendix F: Demographic Information for Principal and Focus Group Participants	150
Appendix G: Member Check	152
Appendix H: Examination of Physical Artifacts	153
Appendix I: Teacher Working Conditions Survey 2008	154
Appendix J: Transcriber and Educator Confidentiality Agreement	156
Appendix K: Observation Protocol for Initial Interview with the Principal	157
Appendix L: Focus Group Observation Matrices	158
Appendix M: Perceptions of Roles of Teachers for J. P. Allison Elementary School, District and State (Percentages)	161
Appendix N: Perceptions of School and Educator Leadership (Percentages)	162

List of Tables

Table 1.	Summary Data for Adequate Yearly Progress Southwestern Region of North Carolina 2006-2007.....	4
Table 2.	J. P. Allison Elementary School Designation for ABC Growth.....	53
Table 3.	J. P. Allison Elementary School Student Performance Data for 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09.....	54
Table 4.	Number of Children with Disabilities Served in General Education Classrooms (2009-2010).....	73

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1.</i>	Star model for special education planning	9
<i>Figure 2.</i>	Teacher working conditions survey 2008: teacher perceptions of school leadership	68
<i>Figure 3.</i>	Years of experience of teachers as reported by state school report cards (2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08)	70
<i>Figure 4.</i>	Comparisons of students with disabilities who passed both reading and mathematics tests with school, district and state results (2005-06, 2006-07, 2007 08, 2008-09).....	71
<i>Figure 5.</i>	Percentage of focus group responses coded to principles of the star model	78
<i>Figure 6.</i>	RASE: responding academically, socially and emotionally for instruction of children with disabilities in general education classrooms.....	130
<i>Figure 7.</i>	Strategic programming for instruction of children with disabilities.....	132

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

A requirement that students with disabilities be full participants in schools with students without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate is an expectation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 1997, and the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) which was signed into law on December 3, 2004, by President George W. Bush (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001; Huber, Rosenfeld, & Fiorello, 2001; Huefner, 2000; United States Department of Education, 2004). The law that referred to students with disabilities (SWD) interchangeably as children with disabilities required local education agencies to provide students with disabilities with all academic opportunities, services, and extracurricular involvement afforded non-disabled peers and with non-disabled peers.

The development of a unified system of education was an important leadership issue cited by Sage and Burrello (1994) as the reform of education moved from the separate and thought to be parallel structures that existed in general and special education. The reform required the development of new organizational and instructional leadership skills in order to deliver services in the general education classrooms. Restructuring efforts for inclusive practices increased the importance of sharing expertise in order to meet organizational and student priorities (Sage & Burrello, 1994).

The responsible implementation of inclusion considers the educational benefit for the student with disabilities in the general education settings (Hagan-Burke & Jefferson, 2002). Kauffman (1996) cited the failure to focus on instruction as a criticism of special education

reform movements that sought means to improve education for students with mild disabilities.

Kauffman (1996) noted:

These reforms (e.g., inclusive schools movement) will fail to help children because they do not focus on better instruction. Students with disabilities require more effective instruction in academic and social skills; without a clear focus on instructional improvement, the marginal measures of changing where instruction occurs and emphasizing access to a curriculum in which they have already failed will, very predictably, short-change them again (p. 226).

The principal, as instructional leader, must understand the concept of inclusion and appropriate practices that facilitate program advocacy, staff growth and development, supervision, and staff evaluation (Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000). A principal's understanding of his/her own beliefs about special education must be clear and visible in respect to the ethical and legal requirements, individual considerations, effective programming, and partnerships needed to educate students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Crockett, 2002; Zaretsky, 2004). Reforms must lead to improvements in teaching quality with the ultimate purpose of student achievement (Dillon-Peterson, 1981; Mullens, Leighton, Laguarda & O'Brien, 1996).

Statement of the Problem

According to the literature, principals felt unprepared to provide the leadership in special education (Crockett, 2002; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Friend, M., in interview as cited by Brownell, M.T. & Walther-Thomas, C., 2002). Accountability measures resulting from the law, No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), place increased emphasis on the performance of students with disabilities who must be included in the state assessment system (U. S. Department

of Education, 2002). All public schools and Local Education Agencies (LEA) are held accountable for the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of students with disabilities. The levels of proficiency identified by the states for reading and math must be met no later than 2013-2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Increasing the performance of students with disabilities in reading and mathematics requires understanding of the complexities of instructional methodologies to address the diverse needs of students, behavioral supports in classrooms, use of assessment to improve instruction, and fostering collaboration between teachers and parents for the benefits of children.

The North Carolina State School Report Cards for 2006-07 in the southwestern education service district were reviewed to gather data for the number of schools who reported students with disabilities as a reportable student group for determination of meeting the requirements of Adequate Yearly Progress (Table 1). Data for schools that tested 40 or more students with disabilities in reading and mathematics within grades 3, 4, 5 on the End of Grade tests were considered as having a reportable student group, and performance data were calculated for the schools.

A total number of 212 schools were reported within the education service district in 2006-07; however, four schools had no data reported by the State. Therefore, student performance data existed for only 208 schools. Eighty-one of the 208 schools reported a student group for students with disabilities. Of the 81 schools, 34% (28 schools) attained AYP status while 65% (53 schools) did not attain AYP status. More schools failed to attain AYP status when students with disabilities were reported as a student group.

One hundred twenty-seven (127) of the 208 schools in the education service district, did not report SWD as a reportable student group (<40 students tested). Of the 127 schools, 65% (83

Summary Data for Adequate Yearly Progress

Table 1.

Southwestern Region of North Carolina (2006-2007)

Students with Disabilities	Number of Schools		Total Number of Schools
	Made AYP	Did not Make AYP	
Schools Reporting Student Group (≥ 40 students)	28	53	81
Schools Did not Report Student Group (<40 students)	83	44	127
Total Number of Schools	111	97	208

Source: North Carolina School Report Cards 2006-07. Retrieved November 2007 from www.dpi.state.nc.us

Note: Four schools not included for schools were not built in 2006-2007.

schools) attained AYP status while 34% (44 schools) did not. More schools attained AYP status when students with disabilities were not reported as a student group.

The data for 2006-07 school year revealed that schools were more likely to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) when the student group, students with disabilities, was not reportable (count of students with disabilities less than 40). Under the regulations for NCLB, students are counted in more than one student group, and may be counted in as many as five student groups. Each student group must meet the targets set in order for schools to make AYP.

Students with disabilities require specialized services that adapt content, methods, and delivery of instruction to meet the needs of children identified for services (Mills, 2004). The

instruction lends itself to repetitive practices often in small groups in order to reinforce learning. The services differ in “degree from general education in pacing, intensity, relentlessness, structure, reinforcement, pupil-to-teacher ratio, curriculum and monitoring or assessment” (Kaufman & Hallahan, 2005, p.48). The lack of preparation of principals has been described as lack of coursework in special education, lack of understanding of inclusion, lack of focus on instruction, and lack of understanding the complexities of disabilities. This investigation seeks to answer the overarching question, “What practices does a principal use to implement and support the instruction of students with disabilities taught in general education classrooms?”

Background of the Problem

Schools are required by law (IDEA, 1997) and its reauthorization (IDEIA, 2004) to provide students with disabilities with all academic opportunities, services, and extracurricular events afforded non-disabled peers (U. S. Department of Education, 2004). Special education reform movements were criticized for failing to focus on instruction as a means of improving education for students with disabilities. IDEIA increased the emphasis on helping children with disabilities participate and progress in the general education curriculum. The delivery of services for special needs students in general education classes is a model to address the provision of access to the general curriculum, assessment, and quality instruction and support under the law (McLaughlin, 2002). Plans to include students with disabilities in general education settings must be responsible to the needs of students, and consider educational benefits (Hagan-Burke & Jefferson, 2002; Walther-Thomas & Bryant, 1996).

Attfield and Williams (2003) joined the proliferation of research that stressed the role of leaders as the key to addressing the changes in schools regarding where students were educated. According to Attfield and Williams (2003) “inclusion must be seen as a key component of

school improvement” (p.30). Principals and teachers must be prepared to collaborate for the development of organizational structures that consider students’ learning needs, the design of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and use of resources. Relationships must be built with families for the support of the children (Attfield & Williams, 2003; Bursten, Sears, Wilcoxon, Cabello, & Spagna, 2004; Crockett, 2002).

Attfield and Williams (2003) stated that it is difficult to determine the success of inclusion due to lack of agreement in the definition and purpose of inclusion. Research by Attfield and Williams (2003), Crockett (2002), Klopff (1974), and Rhodes, Stokes and Hampton (2004) showed that principals were not prepared for the unification of special and general education due to a lack of coursework for understanding special education. Crockett (2002) noted that preparation programs in special education for principals may consist of one course, and noted that “neither the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards nor the curriculum guidelines for school administration set by the National Council for Accreditation in Teacher Education (NCATE) provide any specific expectations for administrating special education in increasingly inclusive schools beyond general calls to serve all students” (p. 158). Responsiveness to the diverse needs of all students within the school requires the knowledge to develop practical programs within a school (Crockett, 2002; Klopff, 1974; Rhodes, Stokes & Hampton, 2004).

Mullens, Leighton, Laguarda, and O’Brien (1996), and Joyce and Showers (1988) stated that single opportunities to learn are not enough to effect changes and develop new skills. Demonstrations, feedback, and opportunities for school leaders to learn current practices, policies, and trends in educational reforms from and with practitioners increase connections between theory and practices (Attfield & Williams, 2003).

Rationale for the Study

As performance expectations for all students continue to rise, many educators are not prepared to provide effective academic support for students with disabilities (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). “Administrators sometimes do not understand the complexities of collaboration, and consequently, they are not sure how to nurture it, assess it, and determine the type of professional development needed to make it happen” (Friend, M., in interview as cited by Brownell & Walther-Thomas, 2002, p. 227). Yet, teachers in the studies by Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, and McDuffie (2005), Walther-Thomas, et al., (2000), and Weiss and Lloyd (2002), were finding successes in delivering services to students in general education settings and finding benefits for students. What practices does a principal use to implement and support the instruction of students with disabilities taught in the general education classroom? The case study of a practicing principal will provide descriptions of organizational structures that support inclusion. The examples of a fellow practitioner provide opportunities for other practitioners to construct meanings between theory and practice as school improvement plans are addressed to meet accountability measures.

Research Questions

The case study of a principal’s leadership in implementing and supporting inclusive practices provide descriptive portraits of building-level practices in special education planning for the instruction of children with disabilities in general education classrooms. The overarching question is, “What practices does a principal use to implement and support the instruction of students with disabilities taught in the general education classroom?” The research questions supporting the overarching question are:

1. What practices does a principal use to prepare the school for inclusion?

2. What practices does a principal use to assure the specialization of instruction for students with disabilities?
3. What practices does a principal use to distribute the leadership in schools to ensure compliance with disability law?
4. What practices does a principal use to prepare general and special education teachers for the relationships and responsibilities for co-teaching?
5. What practices does a principal use to involve parents in the decision making for inclusion?

The research will study the practices of a principal chosen from a school that met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for at least 2 years of the study, reported students with disabilities as a student group, and whose student performance results were above district or state results for the student group. Bonds and Lindsay (2001) focused upon the leadership of the principals in developing quality programs in their schools, and were viewed as key determiners in the success of programs. The selection of the principal from school criteria was supported by the literature.

Since qualitative studies are not generalizable, the relevance of the results depends upon the meanings constructed by practitioners. This case study is an opportunity to learn from a practitioner in the field whose achievement results for students with disabilities met Adequate Yearly Progress. The stories of the principal for the case study generated in-depth descriptions of the complex role of the leadership practices for special education.

Theoretical Framework

The Star Model (*Figure 1*) for special education planning by Crockett (2002) is presented as the lens for describing the practical acts of a principal whose leadership unified special and

The Star Model for Special Education Planning (Crockett, J. B., 2002)

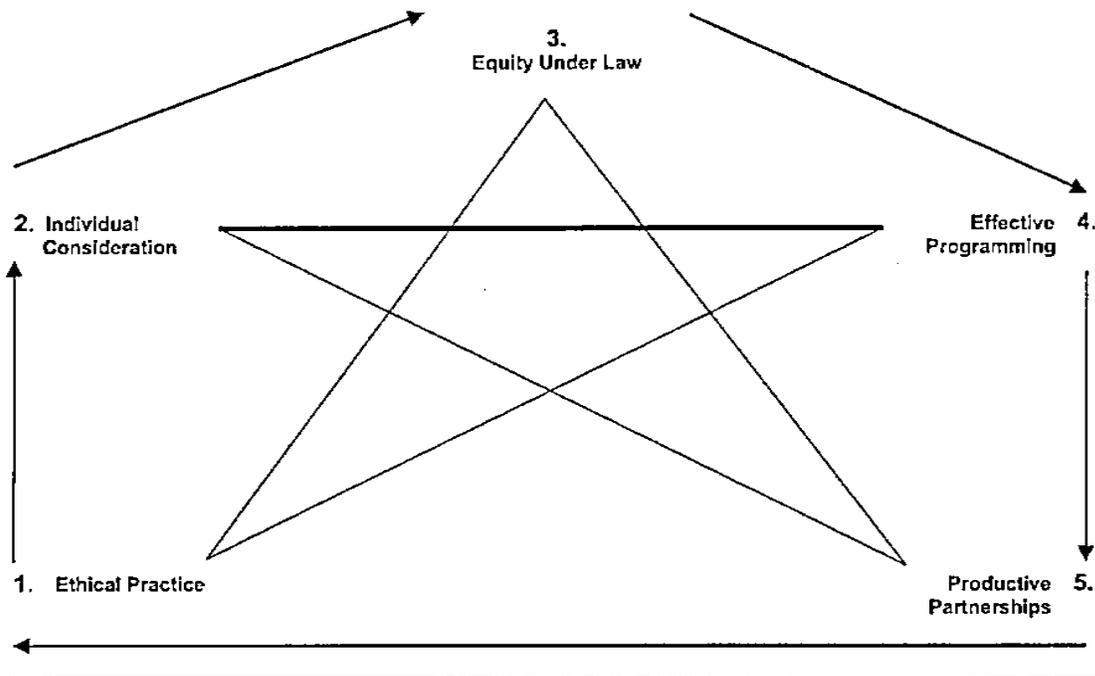


Figure 1: The star model for special education planning

general education in order to serve the students in the general education classroom for reading and mathematics. There are five core principles represented in the Star Model. The principles, ethical practice, individual considerations, equity under the law, effective programming, and productive partnerships, form points of a star and represent the requirements of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), and best practices (Crockett, 2002). The arrows of the model indicate the interrelatedness of the principles, and show the conceptual links to each other (Crockett, 2002). Crockett (2002) cited the limitation of published research using the Star Model. The model is intended to provide guidance for the preparation programs for administrators in “knowledge, skills, and dispositions to ensure legally correct and educationally meaningful instruction in inclusive schools” (Crockett, 2002, p. 165). Crockett

(2002) granted permission to use the Star Model as the conceptual framework. Communications regarding its use can be found in Appendixes A and B.

The first principle, *ethical practice*, describes “moral leaders who advocate for the benefit of children, and seek opportunities for all learners” (Crockett, 2002, p.163). Moral leaders analyze the complexities of providing specialized services to students with disabilities, and establish collaborative settings as students with disabilities are integrated into general education settings (Crockett, 2002). Moral leaders believe in their responsibility for improving the quality of educational services to children, and in the ability of teachers to provide instruction for all children. A principal’s beliefs and attitudes toward special education influence behaviors and establish a nurturing environment for the acceptance of inclusion within schools (Goor & Schween, 1997; Osborne, DiMattia, & Curran, 1993; Sage & Burrello, 1994).

The second principle, *individual consideration*, describes “leaders who are attentive to the relationship between the unique learning and behavioral needs of students with disabilities and the specialized instruction to address their educational progress” (Crockett, 2002, p.163). Research by Burrello, Lashley and Beatty (2001), and Goor and Schween (1997) supported the principle through the belief that schools must be structured to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The effect of the disability upon the academic performance of students must be considered when planning for the inclusion of students with disabilities into general education programs (Goor & Schween, 1997). Responsible leaders seek sources of information when the background knowledge for specialized needs of students is absent or limited, or instructional practices fail to address unique learning needs.

The third principle, *equity under the law*, describes “leaders who are committed to the informed implementation of disability law, financial options, and public policies that support

individual educational benefit” (Crockett, 2002, p. 163). The principal must be knowledgeable of and able to communicate compliance with state and federal laws and regulations, and local policy statements pertaining to students with disabilities (Osborne, et al. 1993).

The fourth principle, *effective programming*, describes “leaders who are skilled at supervising and evaluating educational programs in general, and individualized programming in particular, and who foster high expectations, support research-based strategies, and target positive results for learners with exceptionalities” (Crockett, 2002, p. 163). In the Star Model, the principles, individual considerations and effective programming, form the crossbar of the star, and are considered the centerpieces of special education (Crockett, 2002). In research cited by DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003), the principal’s focus on instructional issues, administrative support for special education, and high-quality professional development for teachers enhanced outcomes for students with disabilities and others at risk for school failure. The collegial culture of a school focuses on the achievement of appropriate outcomes for all learners, and increases the capacity of staff to respond to diverse populations (Sage & Burrello, 1994).

The fifth principle, *establishing productive partnerships*, describes “leaders who are effective in communicating, negotiating, and collaborating with others on behalf of students with disabilities and their families” (Crockett, 2002, p. 163). Havelock and Hamilton (2004) described the principal as a people resource linker who used communication skills to connect parents, school representatives, and agencies. The principal possesses understanding of needs of children with disabilities, ability to recognize appropriate solutions and ideas, and skills in seeking resources (Havelock & Hamilton, 2004).

The in-depth probe of a principal's leadership in planning and supporting the inclusion model for students with disabilities serves to help practitioners re-vision schools that address the diversity in populations (Burrello, et al., 1994). Amid the paucity of research for special education in this age of accountability, the framework presented serves as the lens to gather practical acts of leadership in advocating ethical practices, addressing individual considerations, complying with equity under the law, implementing effective programming, and establishing productive partnerships in the development of inclusive schools.

Limitations

The complexities of special education, inclusive practices, and co-teaching as a service delivery model require the principal to understand self, his/her values, and the motivations for changes (Cook & Downing, 2005). Cook and Downing (2005) held that knowledge of disabilities and needs of students with disabilities aided collaboration. Honest reflections are needed to make the data worthy for implications of future practices. This is a limitation if the principal expresses conflicting views in acceptance of teaching children with disabilities in general education classrooms. It is also a limitation if the principal does not understand the impact a disability has upon the learning of students.

A limitation in the study is the potential for bias of the investigator who presently serves as a principal in North Carolina, was trained as a special educator, and has participated in professional developments for using data to improve instruction. The potential for bias will be controlled through accurate note-taking and digital recording of the interview and focus group discussion. Each participant will complete a member checks form to verify the accuracy of the transcripts for the responses gathered.

Students with disabilities included in general education classes may be identified as having “physical, mental or behavioral handicaps which require the assistance of special educators and specially tailored education programs to achieve their potential” (Retrieved February 23, 2008 from <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/nclb>). The diversity in the identification for students with disabilities adds to the complexities of methodologies. The descriptions of practices used by the principal may be specific to challenges brought about by concomitant needs of students with disabilities which impact the delivery of instruction in general education classroom. The practices of the principal in addressing the multiple needs of students in general education classrooms may not necessarily be generalizable by others.

The experiential base of the participants has implications for the implementation of inclusive practices. The participants in this study will include teachers who may have limited experiences in co-teaching, monitoring student progress, or concerns with behavioral management. The leadership for the complex roles in special education may be distributed to teachers and/or assistant principals, thus expanding the involvement of the principal.

Another limitation to the study is the limited number of principals available for the study. The practices of one principal may not be generalizable to practices of other principals especially when one considers the relationship between the teachers and principal. In addition, the role of the principal is expanded by the availability of personnel such as compliance facilitators for legal issues, parent advocates for partnership considerations, and instructional specialists who may influence the implementation or involvement of inclusive practices.

Review of the research attended to the dates for studies in order to allow for changes in IDEA from the authorization of 1975, and reauthorizations of 1990, 1997, and 2004. All reviews

of the literature that reference prior authorizations of IDEA were reported according to the findings in the said literature.

This study will provide information for practices of a principal for continuous school improvement. The leadership acts will be constantly compared to the principles of the Star Model to provide a body of knowledge for equipping leaders for planning and supporting inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

Definition of Terms

The agreement of a common language aided in understanding content. The definitions for the following terms are listed as they apply to this investigation.

ABC Growth

In North Carolina, ABC growth measures the academic change of students by comparing data over a 2 year period. Students are expected to perform as well or better on the End of Grade tests (EOG) grades 3, 4, 5 in the current year as on the average of past two years. A positive academic change indicates gains in achievement while a negative academic change indicates a loss in academic achievement (Retrieved January 12, 2009 from <http://www.ncdpi>).

Children with Disabilities or Students with Disabilities

“Students with disabilities are identified as having physical, mental or behavioral handicaps which require the assistance of special educators and a specially tailored education program to achieve their potential. The order of prevalence of the types of disabilities in the education service district in North Carolina are: specific learning disabled, speech-language impaired, behaviorally-emotionally disabled, other health impaired, developmentally delayed (ages 3-7), educable mentally disabled, autistic, trainable mentally disabled, hearing impaired, multi-handicapped, orthopedically impaired, visually impaired, severely/profoundly mentally

disabled, traumatic brain injured and deaf/blind” (Retrieved as written on June 17, 2010 from <http://www.dpi.state.nc/nclb>).

IDEA 2004 refers to students with disabilities also as children with disabilities, and lists the disabilities identified by North Carolina. The need for special education and related services are documented in the statute. The terms students with disabilities and children with disabilities are used interchangeably within this investigation (Retrieved June 17, 2010 from <http://idea.ed.gov/download/statute.html>).

Co-Teaching

Co-teaching is a service delivery model where two highly qualified teachers, a general education teacher and a special education teacher, share instructional responsibilities for a diverse group of students that usually includes several with disabilities or other special needs in the least restrictive environment (Friend, 2007; Idol, 2006). The term, co-teaching is used interchangeably with cooperative teaching (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1991).

Inclusion

Students with disabilities are provided access to the general curriculum in the general education classrooms serving as the least restrictive environment for education with their peers to the greatest extent possible (Gable & Hendrickson, 2004; Walther-Thomas & Bryant, 1996). The study focuses upon the delivery of services for instruction in reading and mathematics in the general education classroom.

Leadership

Leadership is humane and visionary behavior that guides, supports, follows, directs, and participates in creating a community of learners who contribute to the operation of the school,

and whose ultimate aims are student learning, and school improvement (Dillon-Peterson (1981); Klopf, G. J. (1974); Rhodes, C., Stokes, M., & Hampton, G, (2004).

Least Restrictive Environment

“To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and (ii) Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (IDEA 2004, Regulations Part 300/ B/300.114, Sec. 300.114 LRE requirements; Retrieved February 22, 2008 from <http://idea.ed.gov/download/statute.html>).

Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI)

Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI) is a term used by North Carolina Department of Instruction to describe a collaborative problem-solving process for analyzing data related to students’ academic or behavioral difficulties, and providing planned tiered interventions to support the student learning needs. The terms, response to instruction and problem-solving model are used interchangeably by the North Carolina Department of Instruction. The term, Responsiveness to Instruction, is intended to separate the process from special education, and focus upon student achievement (Retrieved June 29, 2010 from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/responsiveness/>).

Special Education

“Special education is specially designed instruction, provided at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in the

classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings, and instruction in physical education” (Retrieved June 17, 2010 from <http://idea.ed.gov/download/statute.html>).

Significance of the Study

Accountability measures require that children with disabilities meet state targets in reading and mathematics in order for a school to meet AYP status. The data show that schools are more likely to make AYP if no student group for children with disabilities is reportable. When there is a reportable student group of 40 or more students, schools are less likely to make AYP. How a principal prepares the school for inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms is significant for providing high quality instruction. Principals can learn to connect the theories and practices of special education from other colleagues. The need for professional development to unify the parallel systems of special and general education is situated in the literature and serves as a significance of the study (Crockett, 2002; Goor & Schween, 1997; Havelock & Hamilton, 2004; Sage & Burrello, 1994). The sharing of a body of knowledge is important in special education planning and implementing instructional programs for the achievement of students with disabilities.

The call for professional development of principals, superintendents, and other administrators is situated in the regulations for IDEA 2004 (IDEA 2004, Part 300, Section 662, 20 USC 1462: Personnel Development to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities (p. 118, statue 2775; Retrieved February 3, 2011 from <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/leg/edpicks.jhtml?s>). The regulation requires training in “instructional leadership, behavioral supports, paperwork reduction, assessment and accountability, improved collaboration between special education and general education teachers, affective learning environments, and fostering positive relationships with parents”

(IDEA 2004, Part 300, Section 662, 20 USC 1762: Personnel Development to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities(p. 118, statue 2775). IDEA 2004 provides regulations to ensure the increased focus on academics for serving children with special needs, and special education personnel preparations.

The collection of data from an interview with a principal, a focus group discussion of teachers, and examinations of physical artifacts form descriptive portraits of information useful in generating program improvements. The implementation of inclusive practices requires the principal to serve as the leader in creating the culture of an organization that values the learning for students with disabilities, and makes it a priority (Havelock & Hamilton, 2004; Sage & Burrello, 1994).

Organization of the Study

The research study, *A Principal's Leadership for Implementation and Support of Inclusion*, is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the problem and the background for the need to explore the topic of leadership practices of a principal in the implementation and support of instruction in inclusive settings. The rationale for the study is given from practical issues in which principals are responsible. The Star Model by Crockett (2002) serves as the theoretical framework, and is the constant comparative in analyzing the data. Limitations of the research serve as possible topics for future studies. The inclusion of definitions with citations supports the use of a common language among practitioners. Chapter 1 also informs the readers of the significance of the study.

Chapter 2 contains reviews of the literature to examine the descriptions of the principles of the Star Model compared to themes related to inclusive practices, co-teaching, and instructional strategies, thus, synthesizing the findings by others. A historical context is provided

to show the background of the problem. The complexities of special education require multiple perspectives to describe the issues of providing instruction for students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Chapter 3 describes the procedures in the case study using a qualitative method. Descriptions of the procedures for collecting and analyzing data through an interview, focus group, and physical artifacts are detailed. Chapter 3 describes the methods followed for seeking permission from the Internal Review Board at Virginia Tech, procedures for seeking for participants in the investigation, and tools used to gather and analyze the data.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the investigation. Profiles of the school and participants are given. Subheadings are used to provide clarity in the descriptions of the data.

Chapter 5 contains the findings, implications for practice, recommendations for further research and reflections of the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Inclusion

Inclusion is a model to provide students with disabilities access to the curriculum in general education classrooms which serve as the least restrictive environment so that students with disabilities are educated with their peers to the greatest extent possible (Gable & Hendrickson, 2004; Walther-Thomas & Bryant, 1996). The implementation of inclusive practices requires a paradigm shift in the structure of schools, and in so doing, requires the principal to explore his/her opinions and beliefs about special education (Sage & Burrello, 1994). He/she must guide, support, follow, direct, and participate in the process to create a community of learners whose ultimate aims are student learning, and school improvement (Dillon-Peterson, 1981; Klopff, 1974; Rhodes, et al., 2004).

The principal and teachers must be co-actively involved in providing quality instruction to students with disabilities regardless of the setting (Coutinho & Repp, 1999). The decision to include a student with disabilities in general education classes should depend on the “goodness-of-fit among the situational demands of the classroom, the demonstrated capabilities of the student, and the nature of the support required to establish and maintain satisfactory pupil progress” (Gable & Hendrickson, 2004 p. 458). The Individual Education Program (IEP) provides the plan for specialized curriculum modifications, adaptations for curriculum content and services that are precise and intensive to meet individual needs (Coutinho & Repp, 1999; Kauffman, & Hallahan, 2005). Objective and descriptive information about the principal’s implementation of inclusive practices serves to inform and do the work necessary to make school a successful place for students and stakeholders (McLeskey, Henry, & Axelrod, 1999).

Using the criteria of objective and descriptive information formed by practices, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and personal reactions, studies were sought using the search terms of principals, leadership, co-teaching, inclusion, learning disabilities, student achievement, differentiated instruction, teaching practices, professional development, and special education. Electronic journals were acquired from the Virginia Tech databases in addition to cataloged journals read in the university and public libraries. Among the sites accessed for journals and/or information were: (a) Ebscohost, (b) InfoTrac OneFile, Thomas Gale, (c) ERIC, (d) United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, and Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; (e) National Center for Education Statistics; (f) National Center for Learning Disabilities; (g) Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE); and (h) The National Association of State Directors of Special Education. Abstracts were read to ascertain whether the research addressed principals' leadership for inclusion according to the themes in the Star Model. The references for studies read also served as resources for further investigations.

The leadership of the principal in structuring the school for inclusion is sparsely situated in the literature. This research will add to the body of knowledge through descriptions of practices by a principal in administering the complex work of special education. As increasing numbers of students with diverse needs are educated in general education classrooms, it is critical that principals receive and provide support for general and special education teachers to meet the needs of students (McLeskey, Henry, & Axelrod, 1999).

Historical Context

Implementation of inclusion requires comprehensive planning and on-going support by administrators at the building and district levels to facilitate the process (Walther-Thomas, et al.,

2000). The history of education for students with disabilities has moved from discourse of a continuum of services that served students separately to inclusive schools meant to eliminate the parallel systems for service delivery (Burrello, et. al., 2001).

In 1954 the United States Supreme Court case of *Brown versus Board of Education*, Topeka, Kansas ruled separate education was not equal education for African American students (Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000). The civil rights act set the precedence for advocacy groups to challenge accepted practices that discriminated against students due to disabilities or differences in gender, language or ethnicity (Huefner, 2000; Walther-Thomas, et al., 2000).

In 1975 Public Law 94-142 Education for all Handicapped Children Act was passed after litigation and legislation resulting from advocacy groups. The requirements of PL 94-142 protected the rights of qualifying students for a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) (Huefner, 2000; Walther-Thomas, et al., 2000). According to Kochhar, West, and Taymans (2002), “before the law was passed, students with disabilities were either not provided an education at all, were educated in their homes, or were provided an inferior education in a separate setting apart from their age-mates and separate from their community schools” (p. 11). The law guaranteed an individualized educational program (IEP) for students with disabilities and ensured support for ongoing personnel preparation (Walther-Thomas, et al., 2000).

The general education classroom was considered the appropriate starting place for the educational program as teams determined the setting for the individualized plan for students (U.S. Department of Education, 2002; Walther-Thomas, et al., 2000). The removal of students was to occur only when general education classrooms were inappropriate learning environments;

however, what resulted was a parallel system of education. Schools and families began to believe that effective special education, referred to as pull-out programs, had to be provided outside general education classrooms (Walther-Thomas, et al., 2000).

The decade of the 1980's brought increased concerns for student outcomes and implementation of special education. The publication of "A Nation at Risk" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) highlighted the failure of students to compete internationally, a significant illiteracy rate among youth, and the need for remedial education in colleges. The report stimulated school reforms in such areas as curriculum content, standards, teacher quality, and educational leadership (U. S. Department of Education, 2008/April; Walther-Thomas, et al., 2000).

The recommendations from the Commission for the report, "A Nation at Risk" called for greater attention to a standards based curriculum with greater accountability. Federal laws changed to support states efforts to increase student achievement. The 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) was amended in 1990 as P. L. 101-476 (Kochhar, West, & Taymans, 2002). The law was later updated and reauthorized as the Individual with Disabilities Education Act of 1997, IDEA, PL 105-17 (Walther-Thomas, et al., 2000). The 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (P. L.105-17) incorporated and extended the definition of 'free and appropriate public education' for all children with disabilities residing in the state between ages 3 – 21, including children with disabilities who had been suspended or expelled from school (Kochhar, et al. 2002).

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Among the provisions of the Act, states were required to meet the accountability levels established under adequate yearly progress for all student groups inclusive of children

with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, Retrieved September 6, 2010 from www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/leg/idea/history30.html). IDEA 1997 was reauthorized and signed into law on December 3, 2004 as The Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, IDEIA, P. L. 108-446 (U. S. Department of Education, 2007). IDEIA 2004 (short- titled IDEA 2004) regulations were aligned with the expectations of NCLB requiring greater focus on higher standards and accountability for students with disabilities. The final regulations of IDEA 2004 required significant changes from the pre-existing regulations regarding specific learning disabilities which is the largest disability within classrooms according to the National Research Center for Learning Disabilities ((NRCLD, 2007). The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) list the changes in: (a) procedures for identifying children with specific learning disabilities which included providing research-based interventions; (b) requirement for additional group members; (c) criteria added for determining the existence of a specific learning disability; (d) description of the required observation; and (d) specification of documentation required for the eligibility determination (U. S. Department of Education, 2007). In addition, the regulations required highly qualified teachers, and established the responsibility for personnel development by local education agencies (LEA).

The data from the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP, 2008), Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) show that in 2007-08 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported 6.8 million youths ages 3-21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) representing 13.4% of the total population served under IDEA. The data reflect the need to provide training to meet the needs of students. The principal is the essential change agent in implementing inclusion of students with disabilities which affects the social and academic culture of the school.

Ethical Practices

The principle of ethical practices describes leaders who advocate for benefits and opportunities for all learners (Crockett, 2002). Principals' beliefs and attitudes toward special education influence their behaviors and set the climate for the school's acceptance of inclusion (Goor & Schween, 1997; Sage & Burrell0, 1994). They seek to improve the quality of educational services to children and believe in the ability of teachers to provide instruction for all children (Goor & Schween, 1997; Osborne, DiMattia, & Curran, 1993).

Literature Reviews for Ethical Practices

Avissar, Reiter, Shunit, and Leyser (2003) conducted an Israeli study of the role of principals in implementing changes by examining the aspects of perceptions about inclusion, behaviors, and practices that promoted change. Questionnaires were mailed to 110 elementary school principals in Israel with a 54% rate of return. The research results showed mixed findings from principals citing the benefits of inclusion to low expectations of success in inclusive environments (Avissar, et al., 2003). Social success was perceived as a major goal over academic success while the traditional services of self-contained and pull-out programs were favored over full inclusion (Avissar, et. al., 2003). The degree of acceptance of students with disabilities differed with the years of teaching experiences - the more years of teaching experiences, the less the acceptance of students with disabilities (Avissar, et. al., 2003). The severity of the disability also affected the acceptance of inclusion. The willingness to include students with disabilities decreased as the level of the disability became more severe (Avissar, et. al., 2003). The study implies a need for training for principals in knowledge and skills needed to promote inclusive settings (Avissar, et al., 2003).

Guzman (1997) conducted multiple case analyses of principals' leadership and behavior management in six elementary schools in Colorado whose inclusion programs were considered successful. Guzman (1997) espoused that pre-service and in-service leadership development curricula can be enhanced by identification of leadership behaviors and skill sets that created successful inclusive school programs. Guzman (1997) found: "(a) Each principal worked with staff to agree collaboratively on a building philosophy of inclusion. (b) Each principal had followed a personal plan of professional development that included issues associated with inclusion. (c) Each principal demonstrated skills in data gathering, listening, observation, and interpretation. (d) Each principal demonstrated skills in problem solving, assessing needs, planning action collaboratively, timely implementation, gathering feedback, and evaluating results" (pp. 446-447). The leadership behaviors of principals model the paradigm shift that must be made to implement the changes from a parallel system to a unified system of education.

Bonds and Lindsey (2001) surveyed 64 elementary and secondary teachers who were graduate students at Georgia Southern College to examine their attitudes/beliefs about what the principal does in special education according to Public Law 94-142. The final 50 participants responded to 10 questions on a Likert Scale ranging from one (1) (always) to five (5) (never). Survey results revealed the beliefs of teachers that principals provided instructional leadership in making suggestions for classroom arrangement, providing help in interpreting tests, and securing funds for materials. Participants also believed that principals must keep abreast of developments in special education through reading professional journals, and keep parents abreast of Public Law 94-142. The surveys revealed the need for principals to address their leadership in areas such as acquainting teachers with PL 94-142 in order for them to understand the law, increasing the number of classroom observations for the development of quality programs, reviewing

scheduling practices to assure instructional time for special needs students, and serve on the placement committees to understand the needs and why students are in special classes.

Bonds and Lindsay (2001) focus upon the leadership of the principal in developing a quality program in the school. He/she is viewed as a key determiner in the success of programs. Though the number of participants in the survey is small, the questions and conclusion address day to day school operations that impact teachers. A limitation of the article is that it addresses the role of the principal briefly according to PL 94-142 which was published in 1975. The copyright date for the study, 2001, would lead one to expect a reference to the reauthorization of the law in 1997; however, the research is pertinent to the attitudes and belief of the role of the principal in special education.

Individual Considerations

The second principle, individual consideration describes “leaders who are attentive to the relationships between the unique learning and behavioral needs of students with disabilities and the specialized instruction to address their educational progress” (Crockett, 2002, p. 163). The Individual Education Program (IEP) provides the plan for specialized curriculum modifications, adaptations for curriculum content, and services that are precise and intensive to meet individual needs (Coutinho & Repp, 1999; Kauffman & Hallahan, 2005). The effect of the disability upon the academic performance of students must be considered when planning for the successful integration of students with disabilities into general education programs (Goor & Schween, 1997). The following literature reviews examine the implementation of individual considerations in the least restrictive environment.

Literature Reviews for Individual Considerations

Planning for inclusion and co-teaching is paramount to success. Idol (2006) evaluated eight (8) schools in the metropolitan Midwest to determine the extent that inclusion was used at the schools. The administrators interviewed in the elementary schools were all found to be supportive of inclusion. Three of the four administrators' first choice was educating students with disabilities in grade-level classes with a special educator or an instructional assistant (Idol, 2006). Each administrator felt that inclusion would be best implemented if extra adults were provided to work with any student needing assistance, not just with the students in need of special education (Idol, 2006). Support is provided to meet needs in diverse classrooms for success for all students.

Four of the eight schools in the study by Idol (2006) were elementary schools noted in the study as Schools A, B, C, D. In three of the four schools, the campus improvement plan did not include planning for inclusion or special education. In elementary school D, the school plan included special education and the students were included in general education 100% of the time; however, it is significant to note that school D had the lowest number of students compared to the other elementary schools. The results by Idol (2006) showed that "across the four elementary schools, the number of students with disabilities seemed to be related to how far along each school was with inclusion" (p. 80). The data support the reviews that emphasize the need to plan for inclusion, and share the beliefs and vision for all students.

In a case study of effective practices in the content area of earth science in upper elementary and middle school earth science classes, Huber, Rosenfeld, and Fiorello (2001) investigated the effect that inclusion and inclusionary school practices have on the achievement scores of low, average, and high academically achieving general education students. Achievement scores for 477 general education students from grades 1 through 5 were sampled.

The study found inclusive school practices (curricular changes and supports) had a differential effect as low achieving general education students appeared to benefit academically, while higher achieving students lost ground (Huber, et al., 2001). There is a need to support teachers in differentiating instruction in inclusive settings as they learn new strategies and practice techniques to benefit all students.

Equity Under the Law

In the historical context of the study by Kochhar, West, and Taymans (1996), the educational services for children with disabilities prior to 1975 were found by Congress to be inappropriate in meeting educational needs. Laws were passed expanding equal access to educational programs and services for students with disabilities. The principle, equity under the law, describes leaders who are “committed to the informed implementation of disability law, financial options, and public policies that support individual educational benefit” (Crockett, 2002).

Literature Review for Equity Under the Law

Leaders who demonstrate informed implementation of disability law comply with state and federal laws and regulations, and local policies pertaining to students with disabilities (Crockett, 2002; Osborne, et al., 1993). One consideration of equity under the law is the principle of least restrictive environment (LRE) (Bartlett, Weisenstein, & Etscheidt, 2002). Under IDEA students with disabilities are educated with children without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate including non-academic and extracurricular services activities (Bartlett, et al. 2002; IDEA, 2004).

Bartlett, et al. (2002) states several responsibilities of principals as equity issues are considered. There should be equitable distribution of school resources, physical space, time for

planning, and nonacademic responsibilities. Principals provide support in the development of relationships of general and exceptional education teachers through acceptance of all students and staff, and structuring the organization of the school to facilitate collaboration (Bartlett, et al. 2002).

Grenot-Scheyer, Fisher, and Staub (2001) view access to the core curriculum from an equity perspective. Each and every learner should have access to approved standards that set expectations of what students should know and be able to do (Grenot-Scheyer, et al., 2001). Grenot-Scheyer, et al. (2001) cited such reforms as the use of thematic units, cooperative group structures, multilevel instruction, service learning, and alternate assessments as providing equitable access to the academics. The diversity in classrooms requires collaboration among administrators, teachers, and other personnel in sharing the ownership of the teaching and learning process for the benefit of all learners.

Kluth, Straut, and Biklen (2003) cite the experiences of a colleague who served as a change agent in providing access to academics. There were conscious plans to use financial sources for purchasing fewer games, and more maps, science equipment, trade books, and seating for a reading corner. Students' works replaced uninspiring posters. The classrooms were located within the inclusive environment and special education teachers were included in meetings with general education. The description provided insights for data gathered through observations specifically where the classroom is located, what's in the room, evidences of content/subject matter, and opportunities for colleagues in non-instructional areas.

Bonds and Lindsey (2001) conducted a survey of 64 elementary and secondary teachers regarding their perceptions of the principal's role in special education. Fifty (50) returned surveys were used in the study which contained 41 females and nine males. The participants

responded to 10 questions each on the Likert Scale from one [(1) (always)] to five [(5) (never)] regarding what the principal does in regards to the law, PL 94-142. The results of the survey found that teachers perceived principals as instructional leaders in offering suggestions for classroom arrangement and test interpretation. Teachers expected principals to seek funds for resources, read professional journals to remain knowledgeable of developments in special education, and familiarize parents with the law. There were perceptions of the need for principals to conduct more classrooms observations and review scheduling practices. Principals were also expected to serve on the placement or advisory committee. The principal must be knowledgeable about the laws governing students with disabilities, and programs which may be instituted for their benefit (Bonds & Lindsey, 2001). Bond and Lindsay (2001) summarized their findings by stating “If the school is to provide more adequate services for special needs students, the principal is the key to success. His leadership will determine the success or failure of such programs” (p. 410).

Paris, Eyman, Morris, and Sutton (2007) conducted a yearlong practitioner’s research of internal and external forces that challenged school policies and practices in a preschool laboratory on a university campus. The collaborative team of three practitioners collected data through document analyses, focused conversations, and critical incident analyses. The sources of data included the electronic journals of students, portfolios, conferences, end of year reports, family surveys, minutes of meetings, and school wide reports. The team examined the match between values and mission of the school, administrative practices, support of teachers in inclusive settings, and family needs and supports. Administrators supported the research through time, recognition, respect, and organization skills. Focused discussions revealed a lack of specificity and clarity in the use of language in special education. The decision-making structure

and avenues for sharing student information were not clear. Teachers identified the need for additional assistance in the classrooms and supplies to meet students' needs. As a result of the findings, waivers for families were generated so that information could be shared among the faculty. The explicit role and responsibilities of adults in the classrooms were clarified. Teacher resources were requested. The research identified areas of need that practicing educational leaders may consider in planning for inclusion.

Effective Programming

Crockett (2002) presented a framework that articulated the goals for special education leadership preparation. The five core principles shown on the Star Model depicted the interrelatedness of issues of ethical practices, individual consideration, equity under the law, effective programming, and productive partnerships (Crockett, 2002).

Leadership responsiveness to effective programming includes the supervision and evaluation of programs for curriculum, instruction and professional development, beneficial individualized programming, support of research-based strategies, and analysis of assessment results (Coutinho & Repp, 1999; Crockett, 2002). Special education requires intensity as the needs of students with disabilities are addressed. Leaders have responded to this intensity through approaches in programming intended to: (a) increase time on task such as block scheduling, after-school tutoring, and summer school; (b) empower teachers through collaboration, teaming, and co-teaching; (c) focus on students through peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and small group instruction; and (d) support research-based strategies of experiential learning, theme-based projects, and computer assisted instruction (Burrello, et al, 2001; Coutinho & Repp, 1999; Crockett, 2002; Kaufman & Hallahan, 2005; Vaughan & Linan-Thompson, 2003). In inclusive schools, all students must receive meaningful and quality instruction from

teachers who are proficient in instructional practices and who monitor students' progress. Effective programs are carefully and explicitly designed to meet instructional needs of students (Coutinho & Repp, 1999; Vaughan & Linan-Thomas, 2003). The following literature reviews focus upon co-teaching practices as a specialized program for service delivery, and instructional approaches.

Literature Reviews for Effective Programming

Co-Teaching for Service Delivery

Co-teaching is a service delivery model where two highly qualified teachers, a general education teacher and an exceptional education teacher, share instructional responsibilities for a diverse group of students that usually includes several with disabilities or other special needs in the least restrictive environment (Friend, 2007; Idol, 2006). Walther-Thomas and Bryant (1996) caution that "co-teaching is not an easy model to implement without adequate teacher preparation and support" (p.4). Co-teaching opportunities lend support to the diverse needs of the classroom for the success of all students. The approach for service delivery offers potential benefits for students with disabilities and other low achieving students (Walther-Thomas & Bryant, 1996).

Bauwen and Hourcade (1991) see a benefit of co-teaching as the avoidance of the labeling. A significant number of students evidence mild to moderate learning or behavior problems which impede their ability to perform successfully; however, they do not all qualify for one of the labels required for special education services (Gable & Hendrickson, 2004; Bauwen & Hourcade, 1991). The students at risk may be characterized as slow learner, reluctant learner, poor achiever, and underachiever, and comprise 20-60% of the general education population (Gable & Hendrickson, 2004).

Gable and Hendrickson (2004) detail eight (8) co-teaching arrangements presented from simplest to the most complicated according to planning time, subject knowledge, and prior experience. The co-teaching models cited by Gable and Hendrickson (2004) are:

“Shadow teaching. The general educator is primarily responsible for teaching specific subject matter, while the special educator works directly with one or two targeted students on academics.

One Teach and One Assist. The general educator is primarily responsible for teaching subject matter while the special educator circulates to offer individual assistance. Variations on this include one teach and one assess; one teach and one demonstrate; one teach and one review; one teach and one observe.

Station Teaching. The general educator and special educator teach different portions of the subject matter to subgroups of students who rotate from one learning station to another while another station may afford students an opportunity to engage in independent learning activities.

Complementary Teaching. The general educator is primarily responsible for teaching specific subject matter while the special educator teaches associated academics or non-academic skills.

Supplementary Teaching. The general education teacher is primarily responsible for teaching specific subject matter while the special educator gives students additional content-related assistance (reinforcing content mastery with small group activities, outside assignments, or enrichment).

Alternative Teaching. The general educator is responsible for teaching the majority of students while the special educator teaches a student or students who require significant curricular modifications (instruction that is “functionally equivalent” to regular class instruction).

Parallel Teaching. The general educator and special educator divide the class into two smaller groups to provide group-individualized instruction; teachers may create similar groups or groups that vary in number or diversity and exchange groups at predetermined intervals.

Team teaching. The general and special education teachers share equal responsibility for planning, carrying out, and evaluating the lessons” (pp. 464-465).

Gable and Hendrickson (2004) specify the roles of the teachers in the initial stages of co-teaching. The general educators are responsible for teaching subject matter content, and special educators for developing adaptations, accommodations, and modifications of materials, practice activities, assignments, and assessments for students with special needs. The special educator takes the lead in designing Individual Education Programs (IEP), behavioral plans, and communications with families of students with special needs. All variations of co-teaching require planning, evaluation, and commitments of time and efforts (Gable & Hendrickson, 2004). The service delivery model used to meet the needs of students must be decided for the benefit of students (Gable & Hendrickson, 2004).

Co-teaching as a service delivery model is comparable to the cooperative teacher model described by Idol (2006). In both terminologies, special and general educators work together in the same classroom using a variety of co-teaching arrangements. Co-teaching is contrasted to

other service models cited by Idol (2006) which included consulting teacher services, supportive resource room, and instructional assistant. Consulting teachers provide indirect special education services for students who are taught by the classroom teacher (Idol, 2006). The supportive resource room program offers specific instruction on a regularly scheduled basis in a separate setting from the general education class where the majority of the instruction is given (Idol, 2006). The special and general educators collaborate in designing the Individual Education Program (IEP) in order to support the general education curriculum and transfer skills. Instructional assistants serve as a model to support the inclusion programs. An instructional assistant is usually funded with special education monies, and provided to accompany special education students attending general education classrooms (Idol, 1996).

Co-teaching has emerged as one model to provide services to special needs students as they access the general curriculum (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Its practice fosters ongoing support of general and special education teachers in the implementation of inclusion. Teachers work collaboratively to solve problems regarding issues that arise, and support each other in professional development for instructional strategies, assessment, and IDEA regulations (Walther-Thomas, 1997). Co-teaching as a service delivery approach brings changes to the traditional roles of special and general education teachers where instruction was delivered in separate classrooms with individual teacher autonomy. This is a major change that must be lead by the actions, attitudes, and beliefs of principals (Avissar, et al., 2003).

A review of the literature shows that co-teaching practices are successful in many programs. Dieker (2001) conducted a study of 15 teams of middle and high school teachers who co-taught classes in a mid-western urban district with the purpose of identifying the variables for successful collaboration. Evidence of the different models for co-teaching were found with an

unexpected role with one team where the special education teacher served as lead teacher and the beginning general educator teacher served as support. Dieker (2001) observed perceptions of co-teaching practices which promoted a positive learning climate. Evidences of a positive learning climate included the acceptance of students with disabilities by the teachers and peers, programming practices of peer tutoring and cooperative learning, nurturing words and actions of teachers, and acceptance of opportunities for professional growth. Instruction focused on active learning, and high expectations for academic performance and discipline. There was a commitment of time for planning by teachers. The findings by Dieker (2001) also showed attention to assessment where multiple and collaborative methods were used to evaluate student progress.

Walther-Thomas (1997) described benefits and problems of co-teaching in a study of 143 participants from elementary and middle schools in eight (8) Virginia school districts. Data were provided through interviews, documents, and observations. Student benefits of inclusion were positive feelings about themselves, enhanced academic performance, improved social skills, and stronger peer relations (Walther-Thomas, 1997). Students who did not qualify for services benefited academically from the setting. The reduced pupil-teacher ratio provided benefits of time allowing opportunities for teachers to monitor student progress, provide individual assistance, conduct conferences, and provide enrichment, re-teaching and guided practice activities (Walther-Thomas, 1997). Co-teachers reported increased professional satisfaction from the sharing of knowledge and skills, and having another adult in the classroom with whom to confer and collaborate (Walther-Thomas, 1997).

The co-teaching model also presented challenges for principals and teachers. Studies by Walther-Thomas (1997) and Idol (2006) identified problems in co-teaching practices that

included time for planning, scheduling of students, concerns with caseloads, support of administration, and opportunities for staff development. Scheduling of students required considerations for placements of students in classes in order to maintain heterogeneous classes and provide support for students. The principal plays a critical role in the assignment and clustering of students in designated classrooms for reducing the number of settings in which specialists must serve (Walther-Thomas, 1997). Caseload concerns generated a desire for more personnel which was impacted by the numbers of students served in the school. The study by Walther-Thomas (1997) evidenced a need for staff development for participants in topics of scheduling, co-planning and co-teaching, developing the IEP, working as a team, and collaborating for conflict resolution, negotiation and problem solving.

Morocco and Aguilar (2002) studied schools who reported using co-teaching models. The schools were selected from applications to the Beacons of Excellence project funded by United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The study by Morocco and Aguilar (2002) investigated school-wide co-teaching models in three low-income, culturally diverse middle schools in the south that used inclusion and co-teaching. The goal of the research was to understand how the interdisciplinary teams and collaborative practices engaged students in rigorous learning for higher level thinking, focus on content, and learning beyond the school. Data were collected by observations of the 11 teachers, and interviews of the administrators (principals and assistant principals). The results of the study showed a commitment of administrators and teachers for inclusion. The special education teachers participated in joint professional development with general education teachers to develop subject matter knowledge. The special education teachers were members of the interdisciplinary team. Co-teaching was a shared responsibility of general and special education teachers. Routines

were firmly established across the school such as greeting students, using agenda for the day's instruction, and regular test preparations. Teachers were involved in the instruction. Morocco and Aguilar (2002) show that "collaborative school structures, equal status rules for teachers, a commitment to student learning, and strong content knowledge" support successful co-teaching practices (p. 315).

Instructional Approaches

The regulations of IDEA 2004 are aligned to the law, No Child Left Behind Act (2002) (U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs). One requirement of the regulations places increased attention on instruction and the performance of children with disabilities.

The study by Rea, McLaughlin, and Walther-Thomas (2002) of two middle schools in a southeast suburban school district that used models of inclusion and pull-outs in the eighth grade, revealed descriptive information about effective practices of the schools with high academic outcomes by students. The researchers gathered data for variables which included student information, teacher certification and years of experience, pupil-to-teacher ratio, collaborative planning and co-teaching, review of IEPs, types of accommodations, and time receiving services. The more inclusive school provided teachers with organizational structures such as common planning time, regularly scheduled team meetings, manageable specialist caseloads that facilitated communication, collaborative problem solving, and the development of appropriate support services (Rea, et al., 2002). Individual Education Programs (IEPs) developed by interdisciplinary teams were focused on student mastery of the standard curriculum, and contained detailed accommodations (Rea, et al., 2002). In addition, Rea, et al. (2002) noted effective variations of the delivery of instruction by co-teachers that included parallel teaching,

station teaching, and alternative teaching. The study suggested that co-teaching and weekly team meetings facilitated shared responsibility for student performance (Rea, et al., 2002). Rea, et al. (2002) concluded the study by reinforcing the continuing need for practicing professionals to participate in professional development opportunities to enhance their skills related to effective classroom instruction, management, communication, and collaboration.

Giangreco and Doyle (2000) provided several curricular and instructional considerations for teaching students with disabilities. The methods pronounced the importance of teachers in (a) modeling and demonstrating instruction using exemplars and non-exemplars for the learning, (b) providing repetition and practices through dialogue, experiments, and field study, (c) using questioning strategies to promote thinking skills and responses, and (d) providing specific feedback for performance (Giangreco & Doyle, 2000). Research further promoted the use of manipulative and sensory materials, games and play, and assistive devices appropriate for meeting the needs of students in support of curricular expectations (Giangreco & Doyle, 2000). Intervention strategies included tutoring, and peer interactions for participatory activities (Burrello, Lashley & Beatty, 2001; Giangreco & Doyle, 2000). Individual instruction and attention to size of the groups affect the benefit of learning as children with disabilities access the general curriculum (Giangreco & Doyle, 2000).

Establishing Productive Partnerships

The principle, establishing productive partnerships, describes “leaders who are effective in communicating, negotiating, and collaborating with others on behalf of students with disabilities and their families” (Crockett, 2002, p. 163). According to Havelock and Hamilton (2004), the principal serves as a ‘people resource linker’ with parents, school representatives, and agencies. As a liaison, he/she must possess understanding of the academic, social and emotional

needs of students and families, ability to search for and recognize appropriate solutions and ideas, and skills in seeking resources.

Literature Reviews for Establishing Productive Partnerships

The educational outcomes of students are shared responsibilities of parents as partners and educators (Kochhar, et al., 1996). The active involvement of parents recognizes the centrality of families in framing values and attitudes toward academic development, and includes collaboration with schools in developing the individual program for students. Kochhar, et al. (1996) hold that communication about inclusive classrooms should address the “benefits and outcomes for students and families” (p. 90). The partnerships with parents can support their understanding of what knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, and facilitate the usage of such skills in the natural environment (Kochhar, et al., 1996).

The education and placement of a child with a disability is of great concern to parents whose productive partnerships with schools increase the chances for successful inclusion (Bartlett, et al., 2002; Garrick-Duhaney & Salend, 2000). The involvement of parents of students with disabilities and school is supported by regulations in IDEA (section 300 part D) that address areas of assessment, discipline, individual education programs (IEP), procedural safeguards, and mediation (Lake & Billingsley, 2000). Lake and Billingsley (2000) hold that differences of opinions between schools and parents are inevitable when deciding upon programs for students with disabilities; however, the researchers also state the positive impact of conflicts. Lake and Billingsley (2000) interviewed 22 parents, 16 school officials, and 6 mediators in Massachusetts for the purpose of “identifying factors that escalate and de-escalate parent-school conflict” (p. 242). Eight interrelated factors were found to increase the chances of conflict

namely, “discrepant views of a child or a child’s needs, knowledge, service delivery, constraints, valuation, reciprocal power, communication, and trust” (p. 244).

The school and parents may express different views of a child as an individual. Schools describe the students’ needs from a deficit model of what the child can’t do while parents’ observations in different situations rely on strengths and abilities (Lake & Billingsley, 2000). Parents desire that schools view the whole child in describing the child’s needs (Lake & Billingsley, 2000).

Another factor contributing to conflict is the knowledge-base of parents and school officials (Lake & Billingsley, 2000). Parents desire knowledge of the disability itself, resources to help understand the rules and regulations, and what to do to help (Lake & Billingsley, 2000)

Lake and Billingsley (2000) describe conflicts that arise from issues of service delivery. Insufficient answers to questions about the “quality of services, inclusion, instructional programs, and case management of integrated services” require the involvement of advocates (Lake & Billingsley, 2000, p. 245). Crockett and Kaufman (1998) state that parent efforts to seek meaningful opportunities for students will cause them to advocate for specialized services in the regular classroom.

Other factors that generate conflict between parents and schools as listed by Lake and Billingsley (2000) involve: (a) constraints of time, money, personnel, and materials; (b) valuation of parents and school officials in building relations and an environment where information is shared; (c) reciprocal power of parents and schools to get what they want; (d) communication that addresses frequency, follow-up, and timing for explaining events; and (e) trust which provides predictability and security for parents.

The sharing of information regarding family dynamics, goals, routines, and support systems form the foundation for productive partnerships (Crockett & Kaufman, 1998; Lake & Billingsley, 2000). Because of discrepant views of the parents and school officials regarding the needs of a child, parents and schools would maximize the benefits of inclusion for students by sharing the observances of children in multiple situations as programs are planned (Crockett & Kaufman, 1998; Garrick & Salend, 2000).

Schools must strive to understand the dynamics of families and the prolonged issues that accompany families where there is a child with a disability (Taylor, 2000). Taylor (2000) recommends that schools collaborate with families in areas of parenting skills, legal rights, and due process, counseling, cultural awareness, and strategies for school involvement.

Paris, et al. (2007) conducted a study of practitioners in a preschool laboratory on a university campus regarding the research question, “What does it take for a teacher to successfully include children with special needs in a school classroom?” (p. 414). Data were gathered from focused discussions, and journals containing information about emerging skills, content, and student portfolios. The practitioners documented the needs of families from sources that included email messages, informal notes, conversations, family communication books, and telephone conversations. These sources helped to understand underlying messages (Paris, et al., 2007). The study cited high expectations, intentionally planning for the behaviors and learning differences of students, and communicating consistently with families as successful strategies for productive partnerships. Communications with families became more focused by providing explicit information regarding curriculum assessment, and student progress. Digital pictures became a source of involving parents in the assessments of growth of the children. The sharing of information, respectfulness and responsiveness of the school, reinforced the collaborative

relationship with parents; thus, empowering parents as child advocates. The practitioner formed support groups to assist parents in seeking information, sharing concerns, and finding resources.

The study by the three practitioners resulted in alignment of practices and legal compliance. A new commitment to families increased expectations of students' capabilities and increased collaboration for the sharing of ideas and resources. The confidence to develop an environment for student success emanated from the study. The research was focused, intentional, and reflective in examining the congruence between practices, beliefs, and policies of the school.

Summary

A common thread among the literature reviews is the impact that principals have upon the successful implementation of inclusionary practices. The role of the principal in implementing and supporting inclusion is complex, and requires the knowledge and actions that consider the child, support teachers, and advocate for parents. Beliefs and attitudes drive the ownership of delivering services for students with disabilities in classes with general education students to the maximum extent possible.

Inclusionary practices must address individual considerations in order to deliver quality instructional programs that are appropriate for the needs of students. Principals who provide support for teachers are proactive in structuring the school with opportunities for planning, collaborating, team teaching, heterogeneous groupings, class sizes, parent support, and identification of instructional practices. General and special education teachers, having equal status in the classrooms, collaborate for rigorous instructional practices for the benefit of students with disabilities.

CHAPTER 3

THE METHODOLOGY

Scope of the Study

The principal's leadership in addressing the accountability of students with disabilities under the law, No Child Left Behind, has been sparsely situated in the literature. This study employed a case study design of a principal's words, actions, and physical artifacts that reflected practices for providing instruction for students with disabilities taught in the general education classrooms. The descriptions of practices used diligent and systematic gathering of data from an interview with the principal, a focus group discussion, and examination of physical artifacts. The investigation generated data that were constantly compared to the descriptions of leadership behaviors in the principles of the Star Model.

Problem Statements

According to the literature, principals feel unprepared to provide the leadership in special education in the advent of accountability (Crockett, 2002; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Friend, M. in an interview cited by Brownell, M. T. & Walther-Thomas, C., 2002, p. 227; IDEIA, 2004). Accountability measures under NCLB place increased emphasis on the performance of students with disabilities who must be included in the state assessment system. The principal, highly regarded as the key in the creation of an inclusive environment, is revealed in the literature as lacking the preparation in leading and managing the complex tasks involved in special education (Crockett, 2002). The complexities of special education and collaboration are sometimes not understood, thus augmenting the difficulties in nurturing the implementation of inclusive practices and meeting accountability measures (Brownell & Walther-Thomas, 2002).

General and special educators feel the need for more preparation in order to provide effective academic support for students with disabilities as performance expectations for all students continue to rise (Bursten, Sears, Wilcoxon, Cabello & Spagna, 2004; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). The inclusion of all students with special learning needs in general education classes requires support from principals as challenges arise in instruction, classroom management, and assessment (Murphy, 1996). Inclusionary practices are supported when leadership preparation includes understanding of the academic, social, and emotional needs of students with disabilities, compliance with regulations, and development of educational programs that benefit the learners (Crockett, 2002). The case study of the practices and support of the principal whose students' achievement evidenced benefits of instruction served as a model for the interpretations of the complex procedures for special education in the age of accountability.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this investigation was to describe the leadership practices of a principal in implementing and supporting inclusion so that instruction in reading and mathematics can be delivered in the general education classrooms for students with disabilities. If the inclusion of students with disabilities is to be implemented, supported and sustained in general education classes, principals must understand and nurture the complexities of special education and collaboration for instructional benefits for children (Brownell & Walther-Thomas, 2002).

Review of the Framework

The five principles of the Star Model (Crockett, 2002), *ethical practices, individual considerations, equity under the law, effective programming, and establishing productive partnerships* provided the lens for the descriptions of leadership of the principal. The data were

gathered from a semi-structured interview with the principal, a discussion of the focus group participants, and examination of physical artifacts. The framework was used to compare the similarities and differences in the triangulation of data. The codes for the data collected from all sources were: EP for ethical practices, IC for individual considerations, EUL for equity under the law, EPr for effective programming and PP for establishing productive partnerships.

Research Questions

The research explored the beliefs and practices of a principal to answer the overarching question: “What practices does a principal use to plan and support the instruction of students with disabilities taught in the general education classroom?” The research questions supporting the overarching question were:

1. What practices does a principal use to prepare the school for inclusion?
2. What practices does a principal use to assure the specialization of instruction for students with disabilities?
3. What practices does a principal use to distribute the leadership in schools to ensure compliance with disability law?
4. What practices does a principal use to prepare general and special education teachers for the relationships and responsibilities for co-teaching?
5. What practices does a principal use to involve parents in the decision making for inclusion?

Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design

Qualitative research employs multiple methods to interpret events in the natural setting and bring meaning to them (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The primary methods of investigating the problem were through triangulation of data from an interview with the principal, a focus group

discussion composed of general and special education teachers who served as co-teachers for instruction of students with disabilities, and examination of physical artifacts. The responses of the focus group participants served as a source of for comparing the data to the responses of the principal. The content analysis of the physical artifacts looked for silent messages for leadership practices of the principal and teacher empowerment. Observations naturally occurred during the interview and focus group discussion. Protocols helped guide the researcher in collecting rich descriptions about the case.

The Researcher's Role

Stake (1995) believed the interpretive role of the researcher was prominent in case study as personal engagements were made. The statements about the role of the researcher provided personal perspectives and reflected understanding of the theoretical framework. As an urban educational practitioner (teacher, curriculum specialist, and principal) and principal in a suburban school, experiences coincided with the parallel and unified systems of education. The experiences provided background knowledge that allowed the researcher and participants to engage in discussions using a shared language about the practices of the principal in implementing inclusionary practices (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

The rigor of the study was supported by the use of multiple methods to gather data, and the constant comparatives of words and actions to the conceptual framework as information was synthesized. Active listening, diligent note-taking, and digital recording of the conversations assured accuracy of data collected.

Procedures and Issues of Gaining Entry

The Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the application for research and gave permission to conduct the investigation (Appendix C). The search for an

elementary school principal in southwestern North Carolina was conducted using information from the North Carolina School Report Cards located on the website for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. In 2007-08, the Southwestern Region contained 216 schools within eight districts.

Advanced data searches were conducted for schools housing grades Prekindergarten/ Kindergarten through grade 5 which resulted in 150 elementary schools. Schools that housed grades Prekindergarten/ Kindergarten through grades 6, 7, 8 or beyond were eliminated from further review for the student performance data for all the tested grade levels were combined for all students with disabilities in such schools. Schools were also eliminated if three years of data were not available.

The advanced search continued for schools within the eight districts in southwestern North Carolina that met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) during the years 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08. Schools that made AYP in 2007-08 were recorded first and resulted in 106 schools from the eight school districts that met the criteria of achieving AYP. The data were cross checked with the years 2005-06 and 2006-07. Of the 106 schools that achieved AYP status in 2007-08, 35 schools achieved AYP for the 3 year period 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08. The data were filed for purposes of confidentiality.

A search was then conducted to determine if the 35 schools reported 40 or more students with disabilities tested in reading and mathematics on the End of Grade tests in grades 3, 4, 5 for the school years, 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08. In North Carolina, a student group is counted for AYP determination if the combined count of students tested on the End of Grade tests is equal to or greater than 40 students. A review of the student performance data for the 35 schools that met AYP for the three years of the study revealed eight schools that reported students with

disabilities as a student group. Four schools were located in District U and four schools were located in District C.

A verbal request for the study was made to the research department in District U who provided the name of the person (PDD) responsible for approval. An email was sent in September 2009 with a request for research. The email request was followed by a telephone call. The responses from PDD indicated that the request would be presented to the principals. After delays in responses, a request was made to PDD to directly contact the principals. The request was not permitted, and PDD responded that he would notify me if there were interests. No further responses were received, and the research request for District U which contained four (4) schools was not given.

A verbal request for the study was made to Dr. TLL in District C who provided verbal approval for research provided principals agreed to participate in the study. The investigator was permitted to contact the principals. Three principals in District C agreed to participate in the study and one principal did not respond. The assistant to Dr. TLL requested the approved IRB from Virginia Tech, the application for the district and the supporting letters from the principals. After submitting the required documents, two principals declined to participate and one was moved to a different school. The written request for the study was approved by District C; however, no participants were available for participation.

With the lack of response from District U which housed four of the eight schools that met the criteria, and withdrawal of participants from District C with four schools, no remaining schools in the eight districts met the criteria for AYP for each school year (2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08) and had reportable student groups of students with disabilities.

The decision was made to review the results for the 106 schools in the database for 2007-08 that made AYP to determine how many schools made AYP for 2 of the 3 years. The state scores as a whole reported a significant decline in achievement results in 2007-08 when the standard course of study in reading was changed and new End of Grade tests were administered. Five schools met AYP for 2 of the 3 years of the study; however, four schools did not have a reportable group (≥ 40) of students with disabilities.

A verbal request for the study was made to District CB. The Human Resources Director, AKK, gave immediate approval for the study. AKK sent the names of three schools in an email, and contacted the principals for permission for the investigator to contact them. One elementary school referred to using the pseudonym, J. P. Allison, was among the list of schools recommended, and was the only elementary school. The school granted approval, but stated the school achieved AYP for only two of the three years within this investigation. AKK contacted the accountability department to verify AYP status. Results showed that the school missed AYP in 2007-08 when the State changed the standard course of study and End of Grade tests for reading.

J. P. Allison Elementary School was the only school that reported students with disabilities as a student group for 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, and made AYP for 2 of the 3 years. The school also met the criteria of exceeding the district and state results for the percentage of students with disabilities who were proficient in both reading and mathematics during each year of the study. The school met expected growth for the State's ABC designation for the 3-year period.

The decision was made to further review the performance data in the North Carolina Report Cards for J. P. Allison School to determine if the purpose of the study would be

compromised by studying the leadership of a principal from a school making AYP for 2 years of the 3- year period.

Rationale for Selection of J. P. Allison Elementary School and Principal

J. P. Allison Elementary School made AYP for five consecutive years prior to the 2007-08 school year. During this investigation the AYP status for 2008-09 was published, and the school again achieved AYP status. The school met and exceeded expected growth according to the State's ABC designation during the 3-year period of the study indicating that students were achieving one year of growth for each year of instruction. Table 2 shows that the school's designations by the State ranged from a School of Progress where 60-79% designations by the state ranged from a School of Progress where 60-79% of the children were at or above grade level and made or exceeded growth to School of Distinction where 80-89% of the children were at or above grade level and made or exceeded growth. The school was also designated a Title One School in 2006-07 when the ABC designation was School of Distinction.

The performance data for students with disabilities at J. P. Allison School are shown in Table 3. In 2005-06, the school tested 44 students with disabilities on the End of Grade tests, and the school scores exceeded the district's scores by 15.5% and state scores by 19.2%. In

Table 2.

J. P. Allison Elementary School Designations for ABC Growth

Designations and Description		2005-	2006-	2007-	2008-
		06	07	08	09
Honor School of Excellence	90% of students at or above achievement level 3, schools makes or exceeds expected growth, and school made AYP.				
School of Excellence	90% of students at or above level 3 and school makes or exceeds growth goal.				
School of Distinction	80-89% of students at or above level 3 and school makes or exceeds growth goal.		√		√
School of Progress	60-79% of students at or above level 3 and school makes or exceeds growth.	√		√	
School Receiving No Recognition	School fails to reach expected growth, but has at least 60% of students at level 3 or above.				
Priority School	School has less than 60% scores at or above achievement level 3 and is not identified low performing.				
Low Performing School	School fails to reach its expected growth and has significantly less than 50% at or above level 3.				

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction School Report Cards. Retrieved March 2010 from www.ncdpi

Table 3.

J. P. Allison Elementary School Student Performance Data (2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09)

County A School District	J. P. Allison Elementary School			
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Number of students with disabilities tested ≥ 40 Students	44	51	48	29
School used a co-teaching model for delivery of services	Y	Y	Y	Y
School houses grades PK-5 or K	Y	Y	Y	Y
School scores of students with disabilities who passed both reading and mathematics (percent proficient)	50.0	51.0	31.3	55.2
District scores for students with disabilities who passed both reading and mathematics	34.5	36.2	20.4	31.4
State scores for students with disabilities who passed both reading and mathematics	30.8	33.7	21.3	32.3
School met ABC expected growth	Y	Y	Y	Y
School met adequate yearly progress	Y	Y	N	Y
Number of targets met	17/17	17/17	17/19	17/17

Note: Data for 2008-09 were included in the chart as the most recent data. The years of the study remained as 2005-2006, 2006-07, 2007-08. The AYP data were coded as 'Y' for "yes, AYP was met" or 'N' for "no, AYP was not met. The same codes apply to expected growth designations.

2006-07, the school tested 51 students with disabilities on the End of Grade tests, and the school scores exceeded the district's scores by 14.8%, and state scores by 17.3%. In 2007-08, the school tested 48 students with disabilities on the End of Grade tests, and the school scores exceeded the district's scores by 10.9% and state scores by 10%.

The decision was made to investigate the practices of the principal in the leadership and implementation of instruction for children with disabilities taught in general education classrooms. The investigation looked for exemplars by which others may construct meanings resulting in increased performance in reading and mathematics by children with disabilities.

Data Collection Procedures

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), case studies “capture the complexity of a particular event, program, individual or place” (p. 278). The data for the study of leadership practices for implementing instruction in inclusive settings were gathered through a case study using categorical strategies (Rossman & Rallis 2003). Categorical strategies were used to analyze data for similarities and differences according to constant comparisons of descriptions to the principles of the Star Model which provided prefigured themes. Within the investigation, comments were coded referencing where the data were found and the code for the principle to which the data were compared. The codes used to indicate verification of the source of comments were: PI/Q for principal's interview and question number; FG/Q for focus group and question number, and PA/document for physical artifact and document analyzed. An example of a completely coded source was PI/Q4/EP/IC which indicated principal's interview, question 4, coded to principles of ethical practices and individual considerations.

Means of Collecting Data

Qualitative data were analyzed and interpreted from information generated from a semi-structured interview with the principal, a focus group discussion with general and exceptional education teachers, and examination of physical artifacts. The inquiry techniques and integration of skills using the triangulated methods generated a collection of rich descriptions to help learn about the academic focus of providing content based services to students in general education classrooms (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Informed Consent Agreements

The Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board approved the informed consent agreement for the principal (Appendix D), and a separate informed consent agreement for the focus group participants (Appendix E). Each agreement was signed by the appropriate participants prior to the investigation. The consent agreements included the purpose of the study, procedures to be used in data collection, procedures for maintaining confidentiality of respondents and the school division, and statement of risk. Neither the principal nor the participants withdrew from the study, and were not paid.

Protocols

Protocols aided in systematic collection and analyses of data. The protocol for the principal and focus group followed that recommended by Krueger (1998) beginning with sequencing the questions, and providing time for participants to become familiar with the topic before providing the key questions. Participants were given written copies of the questions and explanation of each principle of the Star Model. The meaning of inclusive practices in this investigation was given in order for participants to share the same professional language.

One educator accompanied the investigator to the focus group session and signed a statement of confidentiality. The educator assisted in assuring the continuous feed of the digital

recording device, arranging seating for the focus group discussion, attention to room temperature, and distributing refreshments. The educator assisting assured completion of the demographic form which provided the names of the chosen pseudonym, educational information, and years of experience in teaching in inclusive settings (Appendix F). All documents (except the form for member check in Appendix G) were collected at the end of the session. The form for member check was submitted by each participant after review of the final transcripts.

Observations

The interview and focus group discussion were conducted at the school. The investigator hand recorded observations in order to capture the impressions and highlights of the discussions. Data were collected from observations of the environment before the interview with the principal. Observations also included activities during dismissal, and speech, reactions and interactions of the participants. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003) good observation skills require that the researcher observe body movements, dress, participant emotions, attention and interest, authenticity, and fatigue.

Data were collected during the focus group session which included energy level, voice level, frequency of responses, and investigator's observations of participants which recorded the spontaneity of responses or the passivity of participants. The frequency or number of times a topic or concept was referenced regardless of whether it was by one person or several was used to gauge data for application to leadership practices. The intensity of comments was communicated by voice volume, speed, and emphasis on certain words which captured the depth of feelings and commitment of teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classrooms.

Interview with the Principal

The pseudonym used for the name of the principal at J. P. Allison Elementary School was Heidi Bettis who was a White female. The beginning of the interview established personal relationships to the topic of inclusion, and beliefs reflecting the principles of ethical practices and individual considerations. The immersion into this information yielded descriptions of background experiences reflecting attitudes, beliefs, professional development, and challenges for strategic planning of inclusion and support of teachers. The principal was informed that side conversations with the investigator would be used in the study. Side conversations were entered as introductory or summary comments in the final transcript.

The interview lasted 2 hours 30 minutes. The constant comparative method was used to compare descriptions of leadership and perceptions of support for inclusion by the principal to the principles of the Star Model.

Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion provided an opportunity for participants to interact with each other regarding the practices of providing instruction in general education classrooms for children with disabilities and principal's support of inclusion. Responses from the focus group participants served as a source for triangulating data to determine meanings of events from different perspectives (Stake, 1995).

Each participant was a White female and chose the pseudonyms, PJ, VA Girl, George and Mary, for use during the discussion. One general education teacher from each grade 3 (PJ), grade 4 (VA Girl), and grade 5 (George) served as participants in the investigation. The special education teacher, Mary, taught students with disabilities in each grade. Participants in the focus group taught students with disabilities and used one or more co-teaching models described by

Gable and Hendrickson (2004) or an alternate model in order to include students in the general education classroom for instruction in reading and mathematics.

The focus group discussion lasted two hours. Respondents were provided opportunities to elaborate upon ideas, and change opinions as teachers became more deeply engaged in thoughtful reflections, and influenced the opinions and attitudes of each other.

Final Transcriptions

The responses of the principal and focus group participants were recorded digitally and by handwritten field notes. The transcribed documents were completed within 20 days. Transcriptions were sent via electronic mailing to the principal and each focus group participant with invitations for comments within five days regarding the accuracy of comments, clarity of statements, additions, corrections, or deletions (Krueger, 1998). No additional comments or corrections were received.

The transmissions served as the final checks prior to using the information in the published research. Each participant signed the form for member checks granting final consent for use of the data in the research. The taped session was maintained until the final member checks were completed. The transcripts and final study will be maintained on USB drive for one year after publication of the dissertation.

Means of Analyzing Data

The data collected were entered into a Microsoft Word document. The 'find' command in the Microsoft Word feature served as an electronic method to search for comments applicable to the framework. Data yielding similar and different descriptions and coding for responses were organized into a chart for comparisons. Trends or patterns of the words of respondents were compared for identical, similar, related, or unrelated comments pertinent to the instruction of

children with disabilities in inclusive settings. These procedures helped organize the descriptions and look for themes.

Physical Artifacts

Physical artifacts or documents supplemented the data gathered from the interview and focus group discussion regarding the leadership and support of inclusion. The principal shared artifacts which included the School Improvement Plan, Staff Handbook (2008-2009), agenda for meetings, and Parent/Student Handbook (2009-10) (Appendix H). The school's use of Wikipedia which was password protected was not available to the investigator. The use of programs from Florida Center for Reading Research and Read Naturally were referenced during the discussion with the principal and focus group participants.

The examination of artifacts used a method of content analysis for patterns of leadership and support of instruction to reveal information not readily apparent. The contents of the physical artifacts compared the textual data to the principles of the Star Model and comments from the principal. Agendas were examined for efforts by the principal to distribute the leadership responsibilities for special education, share information about inclusion, and presentations of professional developments. The School Improvement Plan and Staff Handbook (2008-2009) were analyzed for textual data for topics pertinent to inclusion, student achievement, beliefs and instructional approaches. The analysis also looked for opportunities for professional development and plans for including children with disabilities in general education classrooms.

The Parent/Student Handbook (2009-2010) was analyzed for opportunities for parent involvement, information for curriculum-related issues, and organizational variables for

providing access to the general curriculum. Analysis of the content looked for methods the school used to involve parents.

Other physical artifacts included the Teaching Working Conditions Survey 2008 which was available to the public online from www.ncdpi (Appendix I), and the records of the number of children with disabilities taught in general education classes.

In efforts to reform education, Governor Mark Easley from North Carolina developed the Teacher Working Conditions Survey designed to elicit responses to themes and issues that addressed strengths and weaknesses of several school components. The themes used in this investigation included factors of educator leadership and school leadership. J. P. Allison Elementary School had a 100% response rate from faculty members. The Teacher Working Conditions Survey 2008 was analyzed for indicators of support as perceived by teachers and their opinions of the principal as instructional leader. Data from the Teacher Working Conditions Survey were used in multiple opportunities to compare comments of the principal and focus group participants.

The categories of disabilities of children with disabilities taught in the general education classrooms (November 2009) provided indications of the school's support in helping local education agencies (districts) meet or exceed the state target for indicator 5a (percent of children with IEPs removed from regular class less than 21% of the day) of the Annual Public Report for Students with Disabilities *Indicator 5: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Placements for School-age Children Ages 6-21*. The Annual Public Report for Students with Disabilities is a requirement for states by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) to report the performance of local education agencies in its efforts to improve results for students with disabilities.

The critical analysis of the raw materials revealed portraits representing the principles of the Star Model. The data from physical artifacts were compared to the information gathered in the principal's interview and focus group discussion, thus providing a rich in-depth study to enrich the understanding of leadership acts required for inclusionary practices. Approximately five hours were needed to review and analyze the data from the artifacts.

Assurance of Confidentiality

Trust and genuine concern were established throughout the research as data were gathered about the practices for implementation and support of inclusion for instruction of children with disabilities in the general education classrooms. Participants were told of the use of a digital voice recorder to tape the discussions, and that hand-written field notes were taken. Specific comments or questions of teachers were not shared in order to assure confidentiality of responses of participants.

Confidentiality of the data was ensured through the use of pseudonyms to protect the participants, digital recording for accuracy, member check of the transcriptions, and securing of the data in the home of the investigator. Participants signed consent agreements stating assurances of anonymity and freedom to withdraw from the study. No participants withdrew from the study.

A script of the responses using the pseudonyms was submitted electronically to participants for member checks. Each participant was given the opportunity to verify quotes and other information about herself before publication of the research. Additional comments, deletions, or corrections were solicited. All information was kept confidential.

Participants were not provided a gratuity for participation in the study. Refreshments were served prior to the interview and focus group discussion.

All data gathered were owned by the researcher. The primary investigators for the study were Dr. Travis Twiford and Dr. Carol Cash, advisors to Thelma G. Smith, doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech. The transcriber of the notes from the digital recorder and handwritten field notes, and educator assisting during the investigation each signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix J). The transcriber received fair pay for services.

Reliability

Triangulation from multiple sources of data (principal's interview, focus group discussion, and examination of artifacts) and participants' validation provided reliability to the study in verifying accuracy of notes collected. This rigor provided thick, rich descriptions from the field regarding the practices of the principal in providing leadership for the implementation and support of instruction for children with disabilities taught in general education classrooms.

Member checks added to the credibility and rigor of the research. The questions for the member check used for verification of data from the participants were quoted directly from Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, and Schattman (1993), and were:

1. "Are you satisfied that your anonymity was maintained so you are not personally identifiable?"
2. "Based on your interview, do you find the content of the report accurate?"
3. "Were quotes you gave in your review, if used, used accurately and appropriately?"
4. Do the themes presented in this report include the information you gave us in your interview?" (p. 363).

Transferability

The study was important in generating a knowledge base to help principals identify practices in implementing and supporting instruction of students with disabilities who are

included in the general education classroom. Silverman (2004) approached the question of generalizability of results from a perspective of relevance. He cited the possibility of practices being generalized in different settings as meanings were constructed from the details. The data served to benefit the development of research-based practices for principals as they provide leadership for quality instruction in school improvement programs for students with disabilities.

Dependability

The study of the practical acts of leadership for inclusion was conducted with sufficient involvement at the site to discern the construction of the research questions. The interview with the principal lasted 2 hours 30 minutes while the interview with the focus group participants lasted two hours. A digital recorder and handwritten field notes were used to capture the interview and focus group session. Debriefing with the participants provided a summary of the data, and added to the accountability of the process.

Summary

The need to explore the practices of a principal in the implementation and support of inclusion so that instruction in reading and mathematics for children with disabilities taught in general education classrooms is magnified as accountability measures under the law, No Child Left Behind, continue to increase. The framework of the Star Model whose principles were ethical practices, individual considerations, equity under the law, effective programming, and establishing productive partnerships provided the lens for comparing the data.

Data were gathered through semi-structured interview with the principal using prefigured and open ended questions, focus group discussion of special and general education teachers, and examinations of physical artifacts. Observations naturally occurred during the interviews, and protocols were used to guide the collection of descriptions. The triangulation was intended to

reveal rich imagery of leadership practices whose ultimate aims were to assure instructional programs beneficial to the achievements of children with disabilities taught in the general education classrooms. The roles of the principal and teachers were critical to the case in their possession of the understanding of common language and providers of services for students.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

School Site Observations

J. P. Allison Elementary School, a quaint one level school housing 525 students (PI/Introduction), is located in a county of southwestern North Carolina. As the investigator entered the building, there were smells and looks of an aging facility filled with warmth and vibrancy. The narrow halls brought feelings of closeness - not to the building, but to the people. The close proximity to others created the inclination to speak, to wave, and to address each other by name. Such were the impressions upon entering the school to meet with the principal, Heidi Bettis, for the interview, and the teachers who had agreed to participate in the focus group. The warm welcome was combined with a sense of pride and eagerness to tell stories of success with children.

J. P. Allison Elementary School is a Title I School with 66% of the students participating in the free and reduced lunch program, but as Heidi said, “They won’t present as at risk here. They are set up for success”. Examination of the Staff Handbook showed that these impressions didn’t happen by chance for the expectations were written communications to the staff. The written expectations were specific that teachers and staff smile, say hello, show positive attitudes and interact with students and teachers Staff Handbook (2008-2009, p. 215).

Perceptions of School Leadership

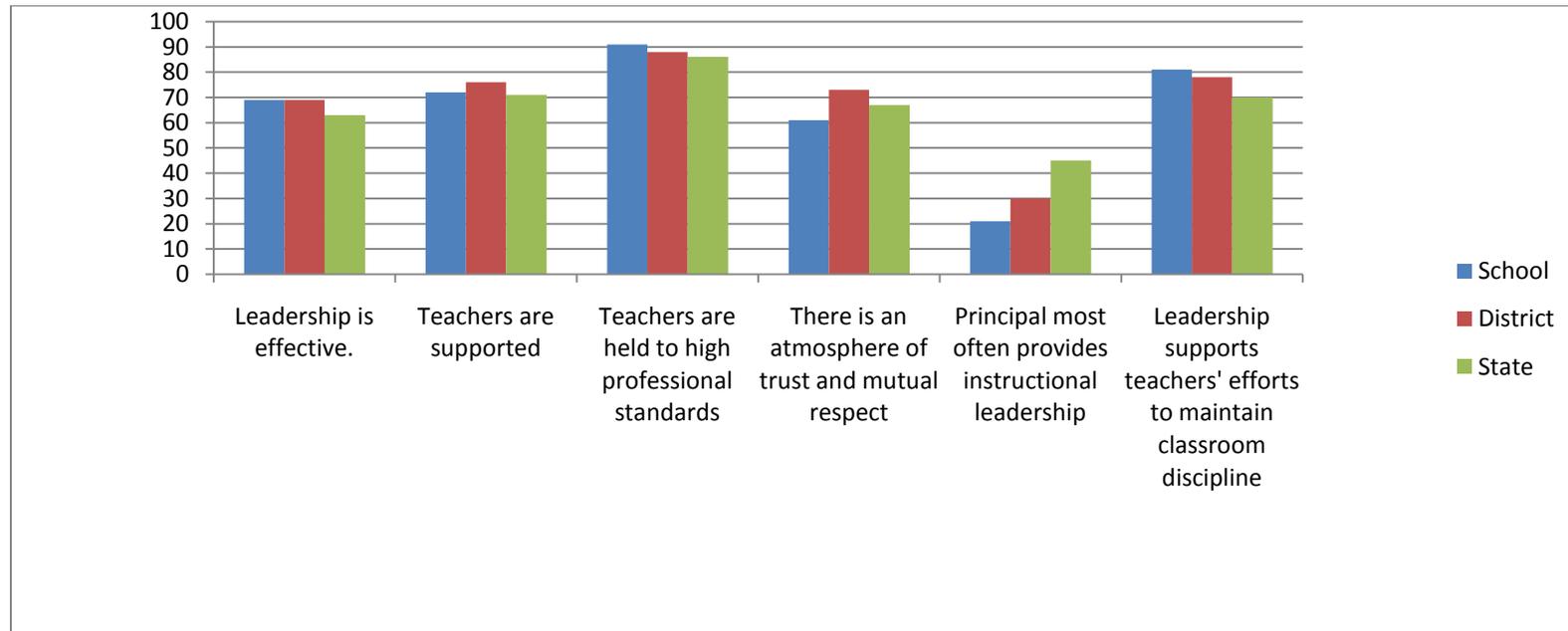
The data from the Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2008) asked teachers to determine whether they strongly or somewhat agreed, neither disagree nor agreed, or strongly or somewhat disagreed to factors of perceptions of school leadership. This investigation included teacher perceptions that strongly agreed combined with agreed for factors of leadership

effectiveness, teacher supports, expectations for high professional standards, atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, principal's instructional leadership, and supports for teacher efforts to maintain classroom discipline. The data in *Figure 2, Teachers' Perceptions of School Leadership*, showed that the perception of teachers being held to high professional standards for delivering instruction was 91% at J. P. Allison Elementary School, 88% at the district level, and 86% at the state level. The data also show that 72% of the teachers perceived they were supported by school leadership as compared to the district's perception of support which was 76% and state perception of support was 71%. Slightly fewer teachers at the school level perceived they were supported than at the district level while the level of support was higher at the school than at the state level. More than three-quarters of the teachers perceived support in their efforts to maintain classroom discipline (81%) which exceeded district (78%) and state results (70%).

The data show 21% of the teachers at the school level perceived the principal as the person who most often provided instructional leadership while the district reported that 30% of the teachers held this perception. The state results showed that 45% of the teachers who participated in the survey perceived that the principal was the person who most often provided instructional leadership. The survey showed that 69% of the staff strongly agreed or agreed that the school leadership was effective as compared to the district's percentage of 69% and the state's percentage of 63%. An equal percentage of teachers perceived school and district leadership to be effective. The data also showed that 72% of the teachers felt they were empowered to do their jobs as compared with 67% at the district and 76% at the state.

Figure 2. Teacher working conditions survey 2008: teachers' perceptions of school leadership

(Responses that strongly agree/agree in percentages) at J. P. Allison Elementary School



Source: North Carolina Teaching Working Conditions Survey 2008. Retrieved February 15, 2010 from

<http://www.ncteachingconditions.org/reports08>

Note. For an individual school report, the school must have at least a 40% response rate and a minimum of 5 faculty members responding. Scale is 1 to 5 with 1 -strongly disagree, 2 - somewhat disagree, 3 - neither disagree nor agree, 4 - somewhat agree, 5 - strongly agree

Years of Experience of Teachers

The State School Report Cards provided snapshots of information about J. P. Allison Elementary School. The data in *Figure 3*, quality teachers, provided information for the years of experience as reported by the State School Report Cards (2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08). The data indicate on average 66% of the teachers had four or more years of experience as compared with an average of 34% with 0-3 years experience over the years 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08. As required by the state, teachers must have demonstrated subject knowledge in reading/language arts, writing, mathematics, and basic elementary curriculum (Retrieved February 2010 from <http://www.ncreportcards.org>).

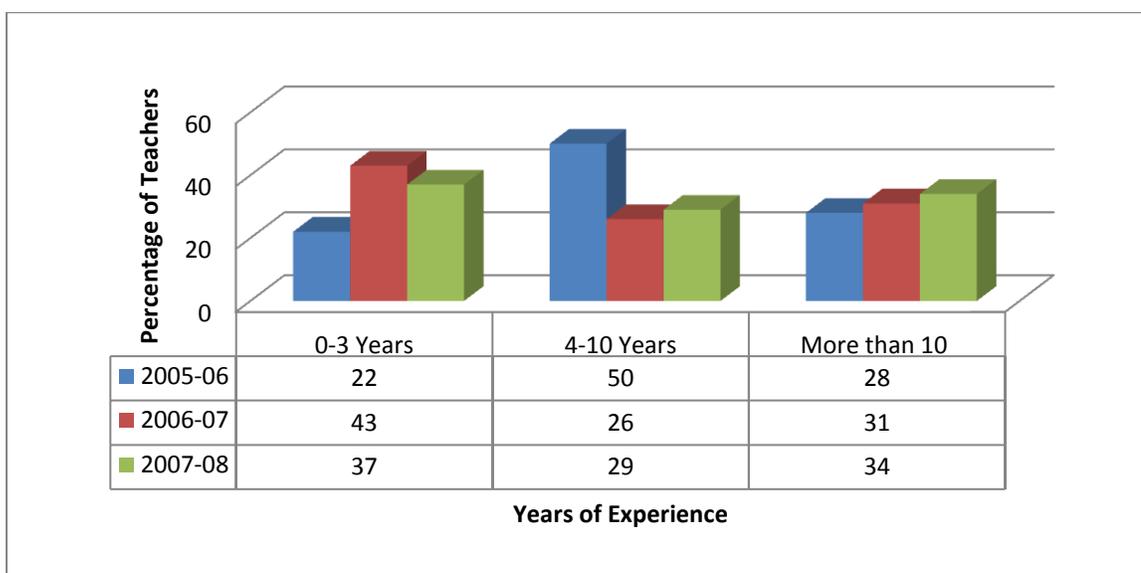
Three of the four teachers in the focus group began teaching in an inclusive model within the past four years. Within the four years, compliance with the regulations of IDEIA 2004 placed greater emphasis upon instruction for children with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Student Data

Throughout the telephone calls and interview, there were references to the successes of the children including the expectations in the Staff Handbook (2008-09, p. 209) that staff evidence that children were cared about. Principal Heidi Bettis proudly commented that “[the children] will be successful at this school. General education teachers are expected to be special educators – know about a child’s disability and what that child needs” (*PI/Q1/Q7/IC*).

J. P. Allison met the target for adequate yearly progress for 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2008-09. In 2007-08, the school missed the targets for meeting AYP but exceeded the district and state’s performance scores for students with disabilities during that year when the State changed the End of Grade tests in mathematics. The school met expected to high growth during the three

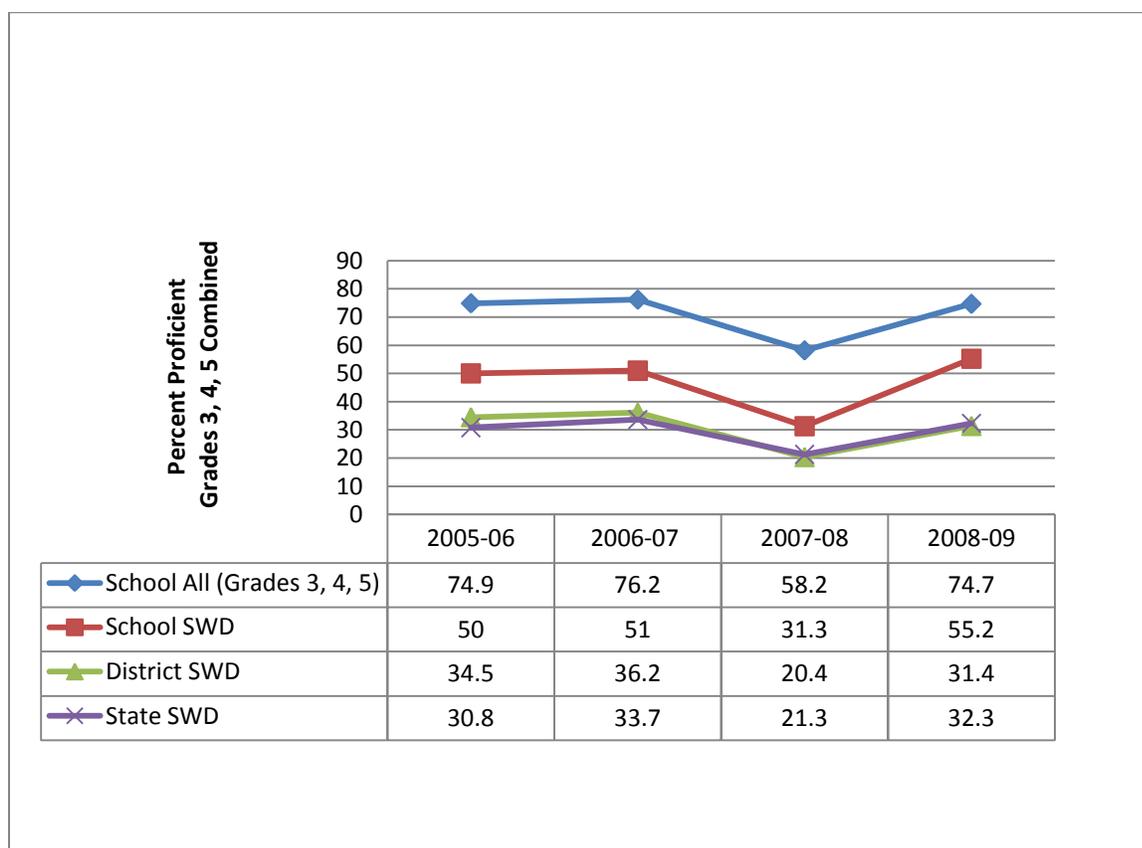
Figure 3. Years of experience of teachers as reported by state school report cards (2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08)



years of data. The school's designation ranged from "School of Progress" to "School of Distinction" indicating expected or high growth for the "percentage of students performing at grade level and learned as much as they were expected to learn in one year" (Retrieved February 7, 2010 from NC School Report Cards 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09).

The data in *Figure 4* compared the percentage of students with disabilities who passed both reading and math tests with school, district and state results (2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09). The percent of students proficient in both reading and mathematics for students with disabilities was below the school total for all students in grades 3, 4, 5; however, the students with disabilities scored well above the district and state percent proficient level. Students with disabilities were educated in the in general education classes, and were removed only when more intensive interventions were required.

Figure 4. Comparison of students with disabilities who passed both reading and mathematics tests with school, district and state results (2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09)



Source: North Carolina School Report Cards 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08. The data for 2008-09 became available during this investigation

The study of the leadership of the principal in implementing inclusion sought practices that resulted in increased achievement of children with disabilities, and how they were served in the general education classroom. Data were available for 2009-2010 for the categories of disabilities identified, the number of students in each category, and the percentages served in general education classrooms. Sixty-nine percent of the 42 children with disabilities spent 80% of the day in instruction in the general education classrooms.

As shown in Table 4, the largest category of students with disabilities included in the general education classroom was specific learning disabilities (16 children) followed by 15 children with speech and language impairments. Twenty-three of the 31 students spent 80% or more of their instructional time in the general education classroom. The teachers at J. P. Allison Elementary School also provided instruction for children who were identified for services as developmentally delayed (4), other health impaired (3), serious emotional disabilities (3) and traumatic brain injury (1). Thirty-one percent of the students were taught in general education classrooms less than 80%. The categories for autism, deafness, hearing impaired, intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, and visual impairment/blindness did not include any children, and were omitted from the chart.

Profile of Participants

Demographic information was collected from the principal, Heidi Bettis, and four participants (Mary, PJ, VA Girl, and George) in the focus group through the demographic form provided. The focus group consisted of three general educators, and one special educator who taught students with disabilities in grades 3, 4, 5. All five participants in the study were White females. Each provided information about her educational experiences inclusive of degrees earned and training in special education.

Data were gathered from observations upon entering the building in the initial interview with the principal and during the interview (Appendix K). Observation protocols in Appendix L were used to gather data for the energy levels, voice levels, frequency of comments of the focus group participants, and observations during the focus group discussion.

Table 4.

Number of Children with Disabilities Served in General Education Classrooms (2009-2010)

<i>Disability Category and Number. of Students</i>	<i>Percentage of Time in General Education Classrooms</i>	
	<i>49%-79%</i>	<i>80%-100%</i>
Developmentally Delayed	4	3
Other Health Impairment	3	1
Serious Emotional Disabilities	3	2
Specific Learning Disabilities	16	8
Speech and Language Impairment	15	15
Traumatic Brain Injury	1	--
Total of Students	42	29
	or	or
	31%	69%

Source: J. P. Allison Elementary School Data, November 2009

The Principal

Heidi Bettis. Spirit, pride, and exuberance characterized the Principal, Heidi Bettis, of J. P. Allison Elementary School. Her warmth and excitement were evident during telephone conversations and during the interview.

At the time of the interview, Heidi was in her sixth year as principal beginning in 2004-05. After earning an undergraduate degree in English, Heidi earned a Masters Degree in

Counseling, and a Masters Degree in Administration, and Curriculum and Instruction. She was not National Board Certified.

Heidi had voluntarily participated in inclusive practices for more than 10 years. Within the past 5 years, she had not taken any college courses in special education. Her training to work with students with disabilities was gained through observations of other teachers or principals, reading literature or viewing videos to increase the knowledge level, and attending conferences, workshops or other training. The length of participation in the professional development spanned 3-5 days.

Throughout the interview, Heidi answered spontaneously and with a willingness to share the successes of the school. Her beliefs in creating an environment for children and supporting the teachers were frequent references, and were reflected in the data.

Focus Group Participants

Mary

Mary, the special educator, was the least experienced teacher of the four focus group participants with 4-7 years of experience in teaching. Her participation in inclusive practices fell in the range of 0-3 years. Mary earned a masters degree in Special education in December 2009, and was the only participant with college courses within the past 3-5 years. She was not National Board Certified.

Mary most often gave single responses without elaboration as answers to any questions or during the discussion. She spoke in a low voice throughout the session. Her most frequent responses were related to questions of effective programs; however, during the discussion the general education teachers physically looked at her to elicit responses regarding accommodation

and modifications of instruction and issues of compliance (equity under the law). Mary tended to listen and wait her turn to comment.

PJ

PJ, a general educator, had more than 13 years of experiences in teaching. Her years of participation in inclusive practices fell in the range for 0-3 years. PJ had not taken any college courses in the last 3-5 years. She earned an advanced degree in elementary education, and was not National Board Certified.

P.J. was highly engaged in the discussion. Her voice level was high and confident in discussions related to ethical practices, individual considerations, and effective programming. When responding to questions related to the principle of equity under the law, she, like the others, responded in a low voice. The voice level was medium when responding to questions related to productive partnerships.

PJ responded to questions in each principle of the Star Model. The principles in which PJ most frequently responded were individual considerations and effective programming followed by ethical practices. PJ listened, and used wait time to consider questions. She waited her turn to talk and did not participate in side conversation.

VA Girl

VA Girl, a general educator had between 8-12 years of experience as a teacher. The years of participation in inclusive practices fell in the range for 0-3 years. VA Girl had not taken any college courses in special education in the past 3-5 years. She did not have an advanced degree, and was not National Board Certified.

VA Girl was highly engaged in the discussion with only a single gap of silence. She used a medium voice level when discussing questions coded to the principle of ethical practices. Her

voice levels were high when discussing questions related to individual considerations and effective programming. She, like the other participants, used a low voice in responding to questions of equity under the law.

VA Girl did not respond to questions of productive partnerships. Through observation, the energy level was lower at the end of the focus group discussion, and might account for the lack of response to questions of productive partnerships. VA Girl most frequently responded to questions related to principles of individual considerations and effective programming followed by ethical practices. She listened and used wait time to consider questions. She waited her turn to talk and did not participate in side conversations.

George

George, a general educator, had more than 13 years of teaching experiences. She had worked in inclusive practices for more than 10 years. While George had not taken any college courses in special education in the past 3-5 years, she held undergraduate and graduate degrees in Special Education as well as four other graduate level endorsements.

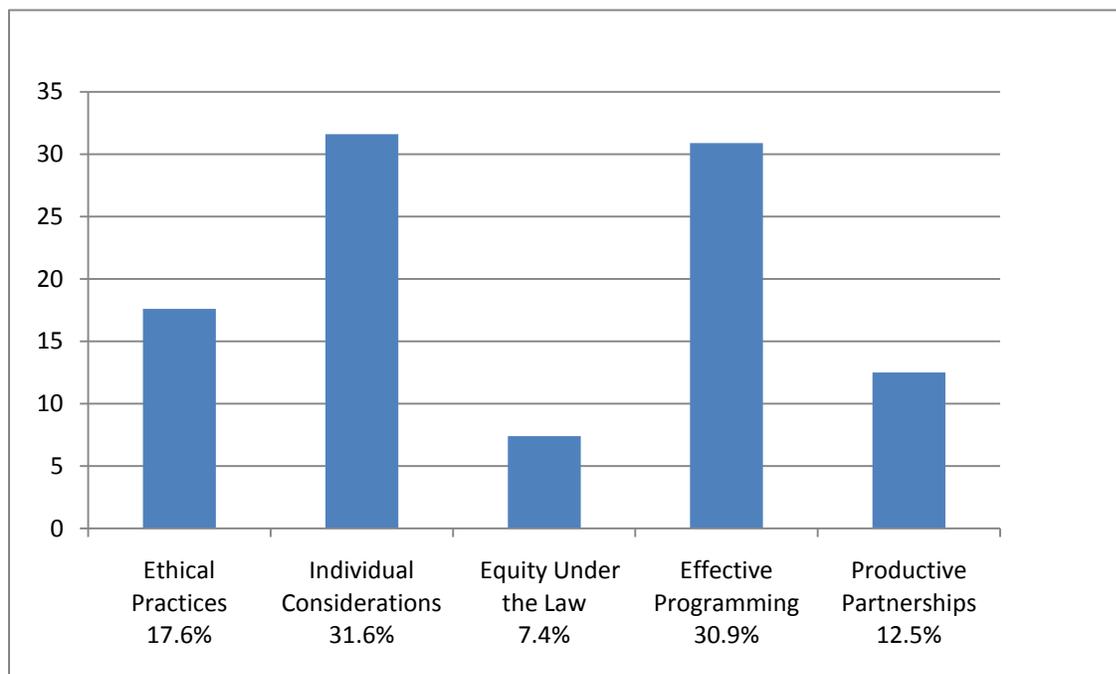
George was highly engaged in the discussion. She used high voice levels on questions related to ethical practices, individual considerations, and effective programming. Like the other participants, she used a low voice level on questions related to equity under the law. A medium voice level was used when discussing productive partnerships.

George frequently responded to questions of individual considerations and effective programming followed by ethical practices. George listened and used wait time to consider questions. There were instances when she did not wait her turn and responded while others were talking. She did not participate in side conversations.

Over the past 3-5 years, only Mary, the Special Educator, had taken five or more college courses in special education. George earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in special education over five years ago. Principal Heidi Bettis and focus group members participated in professional development opportunities within the last 12 months (as of November 5, 2009) by observing other teachers or principals, reading literature or viewing videos to increase knowledge, or attending conferences or workshops as other training. The data gathered during the interview with the principal and during the focus group discussion showed all participants receiving training in Response to Instruction, and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). The data indicate that conferences and workshops served as the most used means of increasing the knowledge-base of special education in a short amount of time.

An analysis of the areas of undergraduate and graduate degrees indicated two of the focus groups participants (Mary and George) earned graduate degrees in special education while PJ and George had graduate degrees in K-6 elementary education. VA Girl possessed an undergraduate degree in K-6 elementary education. The educational experiences of the principal and focus group participants indicated teachers with specialized training which would benefit the collaborative efforts for understanding the impact of disabilities upon student learning. The frequency in which each participant responded to a question coded to the principles of the Star Model was tallied. The data in *Figure 5*, percentage of focus group responses coded to principles of the star model, indicated the participants were highly vested in the behaviors described in the principles of individual considerations and effective programming followed by ethical practices. The behaviors described in these principles directly impacted the primary roles of teachers who hold the responsibility for nurturing children and instruction of them. The empowerment of teachers in effective programming was apparent from the percentage of

Figure 5. Percentage of focus group responses coded to principles of the star model



comments (30.9%) coded to this principle from responses of the focus group participants.

This observation was supported by the data for the factors of perceptions of roles of teachers contained in the physical artifact, Teacher Working Conditions Survey 2008 (Appendix M). The data were combined for the perceptions of primary to large roles and moderate to small roles in educational issues. The responses for “no role at all” were listed in the data as an individual category and were considered insignificant in the areas. The data revealed 60% of the teachers perceived they played primary to large roles in devising teaching techniques. These perceptions were less than the district by 6% and less than the state by 5% for the factor of devising teaching techniques. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of the teachers at the school perceived they played moderate to small roles in devising teaching techniques which was 4% above the score for the district and 6% above the state. Ninety-one percent (91%) of the teachers felt they were held to high professional standards for delivering instruction compared to 88% for

the district and 86% for the state. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the teachers felt they were committed to helping every child learn. The school results compared equally with the district results of 88% and differed by one percent with state results of 87% (Appendix M, PA/TWCS 2008/EPr/IC).

Productive partnerships ranked as the fourth principle with the most responses. The principal, Heidi, saw her role in IEP meetings as asking questions on behalf of parents in order to help them with the educational jargon (PI/Q9/PP). Data were reviewed in meetings with parents to discuss student performance (PI/Q9/PP). Heidi stated that though there is an open campus atmosphere, parameters are set. She does not encourage parents to go into classes and disturb learning (PI/Q9/PP). Comments by the teachers in the focus group verified the attendance of the principal at IEP meetings (FG/Q12/PP). Teachers saw the principal as having a different relationship with parents where she had insights regarding the child or family or could calm parents (FG/Q12/PP). The principal and members of the focus group responded to the development of productive partnerships with parents in relationship to the IEP meetings or behavioral issues (FG/Q12/PP).

Through observations, the principle, “equity under the law” received the least responses by the focus group participants. It was the principle where the lowest voice levels were used. It was difficult to determine if the use of low voices regarding issues of equity under the law were due to any hesitations to address legal issues or whether the compliance was regarded as a responsibility of the Exceptional Children’s Assistance Team. Teachers spoke of their responsibility to know the contents of the IEP and testing modifications (FG/Q3/EUL/EPR). The principal spoke of general education teachers being responsible for the IEP; however, her comments also stated that the Exceptional Children’s Assistance Team and EC teachers know

compliance. Heidi stated that as principal she was responsible [for ensuring compliance] (PI/Q3/EUL).

The frequency of responses and engagement in the discussions were higher with PJ and George who were the most experienced teachers in the focus group followed by VA Girl. Mary, the special educator, possessed the least number of years of experience, and answered in a low voice with fewer responses in the discussion. There appeared to be mutual respect and trust among the members of the focus groups.

Results

What practices did a principal use to plan and support the instruction of students with disabilities in the general education classroom?

The principles of the Star Model (Crockett, 2002) served as the framework for gathering and analyzing the data. The interrelatedness of the principles created descriptions of practices that conceptually supported each other. The coding of the responses supported the organization of the data into themes that included: (a) establishing a collaborative environment for inclusion; (b) strategic programming (c) academic, social and behavioral supports for children with disabilities; and (d) school as a community. Subheadings were used as appropriate to provide descriptions of each theme.

The theme, establishing a collaborative environment for inclusion, combined descriptions of the principles of ethical practices and individual considerations. Leaders who advocate for students with disabilities are attentive to the learning and behavioral needs of students. The leader creates conditions to establish a nurturing environment through collaboration and support of staff and community.

The theme, strategic programming, included practices for the school that were attentive to the individual needs of students and focused upon instructional concentrations that were researched based. The focus demonstrated the interrelationship of the principles of the Star Model for individual considerations and effective programming which were the principles that formed the crossbar of the model for special education planning.

The theme, academic, social and behavioral supports, was developed from the words and actions of the participants which reflected the principle of individual considerations, effective programming, and establishing productive partnerships. The theme showed the understanding that children with disabilities benefitted from clear expectations and partnership with parents in reinforcing the expectations of the school.

The theme, school as a community, was indicative of the principle of establishing productive partnerships. It showed the school's efforts to build relationships with parents and helped them with understanding the procedures and jargon used in developing programs for their children. The leadership actions communicated with parents in understanding home supports that impact student improvements.

Establishing a Collaborative Environment for Inclusion

Leaders who demonstrate ethical practices believe in advocating for children with disabilities and work to make the opportunities happen. Principal Heidi Bettis' beliefs and attitude set the climate for the acceptance of children with disabilities in the general education classroom. The School Improvement Plan 2009-10 opened with the words, "to ensure success for all children" (p. 2). Throughout the interview were references to children and successes. Heidi stated, "It's hard for me to think about inclusion because they are all included. We set them up for success" (PI/Introductory Comments/EP/IC).

Analysis of the content found in the Staff Handbook (2008-2009) evidenced the creation of a positive environment for students. The Staff Handbook (2008-2009, p. 215) contained written expectations that visitors see smiles, student progress, and evidences that children were cared about. It further elaborated how to have conversations with students and provided examples. The focus group participants spoke several times about modeling for children and letting them know you care. As George stated, “*Teachers care and kids care. It’s the secret ingredient*” [italics added] (FG/Q/IC/EP).

VA Girl supported the statement about caring for children for she offered that all teachers built relationships with students with disabilities. There was general agreement that this provided students with a support system. She saw the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes as “the ultimate delivery” for there were more people to work with children, and children were not out of classrooms all day (FG/Q Summary).

Heidi’s leadership in ethical practices was further captured when she stated

We develop an environment that is enriching - reaching every child, the teacher and the parents. It’s hard to say that we are doing something special for AIG or EC or ESL. We try to do it for every child. We make sure EC teachers, regular education teachers, and parents are responsible as one (PI/Q1/Q3/EP/PP).

Bonding with students with disabilities and building relationships with them were key references under the principle for individual considerations. The relationships were often forged from instances of behavioral needs and seeing the ‘whole child’ (FG/Q2/IC). VA Girl recalled that teachers in art, music, and media may make special relationships with the students giving them the feeling there is someone on their side.

Heidi stated that she began preparing the school for inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom in the interview process for hiring teachers (PI/Q1/EC/IC/EPr). She selected teachers who were willing and skilled to serve the population (PI/Q1/EC/IC/EPr). Heidi shared the belief that staff is expected to bring new people into the fold and help them understand the mission and expectations (PI/Q1/EC/IC/EPr). There was a dependence on people to make connections (PI/Q1/EC/IC/EPr).

The climate for success for all children was created with Heidi's support of teachers. The support of teachers was reflected in the comments made by VA Girl during the focus group session when she stated, "*Whoever the principal has been, they put the teachers first. They support us*" [italics added] (FG/Q.12/PP).

The Teacher Working Conditions Survey 2008 (Appendix I) results showed that seventy-two percent (72%) of the faculty members strongly agreed or agreed that the school leadership consistently supported teachers. Ninety-one percent of the faculty strongly agreed or agreed that teachers were held to high professional standards for delivering instruction compared to 88% for the district and 86% for the state. Almost three quarters (70%) of the faculty strongly to somewhat agreed that teachers were centrally involved in decision making about educational issues compared to the district and state results which were 63% and 61% respectively. The perceptions of school and educator leadership indicated that 88% of the faculty was committed to helping every student learn. The perception of school and educator leadership compared equally with the district results of 88% and differed by one percent with state results of 87% (PA/TWCS 2008/EPr/IC/Appendix N).

Heidi's leadership practices for assuring specialization of instruction for students with disabilities were based on her beliefs of the collaborative process. The process included the

expectation that the general education teachers be special educators which required knowledge about a child's disability. It was expected that teachers know what a child needed and do what was in the best interest of the child (PI/Q2/EP/IC).

All teachers were expected to be part of a Professional Learning Community (PLC), and learn from one another (PI/Q4/EP/PP). Morning meetings were scheduled one time each week for each grade level, coaches, interventionists, and staff from other areas such as administration, Title One, technology, art, music, physical education, and media. Morning meetings served several purposes. The meetings provided opportunities for staff development for specific needs of grade levels. Morning meetings also provided time for implementation of Responsiveness to Instruction where the progress of students and appropriate interventions were discussed. The meetings were time for members of Professional Learning Communities to review data for specific students. Teachers may receive support in interpreting the data during the meetings or data may be entered into the AimsWeb data-base system (PI/Additional Comments/EPr/PP). George and PJ supported the expectations of a collaborative process through statements that a coach was assigned to each grade level. In addition to morning meetings, the coach served as a person for providing help to teachers (FG/Q11/EPr).

The meetings for J. P. Allison School occurred before the start of school for children, and lasted for 45 minutes (PI/Additional Comments/FG/Q11/EPr). The Staff Handbook (2008-2009) contained a monthly schedule for class coverage by other staff members while teachers were in the morning meetings (PA/Staff Handbook (2008-2009, pp. 10, 11, 16, 18, 20) EPr).

George's comments supported the principal's practice in developing a collaborative process. George perceived a "lot of coordination" between teachers. Her perceptions of collaboration were reinforced by other participants as references were made to receiving insights

from the exceptional education teacher for the needs of students, knowing the needs cited in the Individual Education Program (IEP) within the first week of school and knowing the testing modifications (FG/Q3/IC/EPr). The coordination between the exceptional education and general education teacher included information for what a student could and could not do. Specific work in a content area may be provided to the general education teacher to provide supports for children with learning disabilities. The information was also used in modifying assignments during instructional times. PJ felt that better planning occurred in the morning meetings because the special education teacher and the general education teacher were in the meetings together (FG/Q11/IC/EPr). Responses of the focus group participants supported the expectation that teachers were to understand the disabilities of children and meet with the exceptional education teacher (FG/Q1/EPr/PP).

The expectation to learn from each other included preparing general and exceptional education teachers for co-teaching. PJ, George and VA Girl's comments reflected the principal's expectation that general educators and exceptional education teachers collaborate in order to understand one another's instructional expectations and how students were served (FG/Q1, Q3, Q5/EPr). In planning for formal observations in the co-teacher setting, PJ stated that the teachers sat together to discuss the roles for which each would be responsible (FG/Q9/EPr). Ninety-one percent of the faculty believed they were held to high standards for delivering instruction (PA/TWCS 2008/Appendix I).

The process of collaboration was revealed in areas of responsibilities involving compliance of disability law. Principal Heidi Bettis described the formation of teams to ensure compliance with disability laws. There was an Exceptional Children's Assistance Team (ECAT) which participated in regular training for compliance (PI/Q3/PP/EUL). Audits beyond the

school teams assured compliance with special education regulations and procedures. There were teams for school improvements, positive behavioral supports (PBS), and teams for Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI) PI/Q7/EPr/EP/PP/IC; FG/Q7, Q10/EPr/EP/PP/IC). Representatives from all areas of the school served on the teams, and it was an expectation that all teachers be as responsible for compliance of the Individual Education Programs (IEP) for students with disabilities as well as the exceptional education teacher (PI/Q3/PP/EUL). In order to comply, teachers who taught children with disabilities received copies of IEP's and had access to information found in cumulative folders. A school checklist guided the review of the cumulative folders, and was submitted to the principal upon completion (PA/Staff Handbook (2008-2009, p. 134) during the first month of school. All teachers were responsible for testing modifications at all times (PI/Q3/IC/EUL/EPr/PP). The principal provided the leadership for the development and oversight of procedures which teachers were to follow.

Strategic Programming

There was the expectation that general education teachers be special educators which required knowing about a child's disability and what the child needed (PI/Q7/IC/EPr; FG/Q1/IC/EPr). Responses of the focus group participants supported the expectation that teachers were to understand the disabilities of children and meet with the exceptional education teacher (FG/Q1/IC/EPr). Focus group participants shared the expectation that teachers know the testing modifications for students served within the first week of school (FG/Q3/IC/EPr).

Other results of the investigation supported the theme of strategic programming which included instructional concentrations, data regarding sub-topics of responsiveness to instruction, supervision of teachers, professional development, compliance with IDEA, scheduling for

instruction, and grouping practices. The sub-topics showed practices intended to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in the general education classrooms.

Responsiveness to Instruction

Heidi described deliberate steps in insuring the school was trying to meet the needs of every child through Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI) (PI/Q2/EPr). The term, Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI) was used by the North Carolina to denote the problem solving approach used in monitoring the progress of students which included a broader use of data (Retrieved July 2010 from www.ncdpi). There were efforts by the state to make RtI less focused on special education, but focused on instruction (Retrieved July 2010 from www.ncdpi).

Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI) was the process of monitoring student progress and providing interventions proven to effect the achievement of students (PI/Q2; FG/Q6/Q11/IC/EPr). The process included gathering and using data from specific probes during progress monitoring, benchmark assessments, quarterly data as formative assessments, and summative assessments at the end of grades 3, 4, and 5 (PI/Q2, Q8/IC/EPr; FG/Q6/EPr). Benchmark assessments were conducted three times a year for math, fluency, and comprehension (PI/Q2/EPr). The principal, and exceptional and general education teachers analyzed the data from discreet probes to monitor the responses of students to the instruction. Students with like needs were grouped together in one of three tiers for additional supports of learning (PI/Q2/IC/EPr; FG/Q6/EPr). The interventions increased in intensity as the tiers moved from level one to two to three. Regular progress monitoring was conducted to determine effectiveness of the intervention (PI/Q2/IC/EPr; FG/Q6/EPr).

The child's response to the instruction in the general education classroom determined the delivery of services in different tiers, the interventions planned to address the area(s) of need,

and the model of co-teaching used (FG/Q6/EPr). VA Girl described students as starting in Tier 1 and receiving interventions two times a week using research-based materials that were gathered and stored for accessibility to everyone (FG/Q6/EPr). Exceptional education teachers had times blocked to go into classrooms to provide interventions for exceptional children. If students were not responding successfully to the strategy, the intervention was changed or time was increased (Tier 2), but the students were still in the classroom (FG/Q6/EPr). George described Tier 3 as a ‘pull-out’ that occurred 4-5 days a week and started direct instruction and a program called Read Naturally (PI/Q2/IC/EPr; FG/Q6/EPr). The focus group participants agreed that more was happening in the classroom with more data (FG/Q6/EPr). The interventions occurred in small group settings using the same objective, content and language or one-to-one instruction (FG/Q4/EPr; PI/Q7/EPr).

The co-teaching model used was totally student-based and dependent upon the intervention (FG/Q6/IC/EPr). Services for students with disabilities may be given in small groups or one-to-one instruction (PI/Q2/IC/EPr; FG/Q4/IC/EPr). According to PJ, services for students with disabilities in small groups in the classroom provided support in pacing instruction, and a smaller pupil-to-teacher ratio (FG/Q4/IC/EPr). The exceptional education and general education teachers taught the same objectives and content, and used the same language (FG/Q4/IC/EPr). The exceptional education teacher was able to clarify instruction, teach at a higher level or reiterate the instruction according to PJ (FG/Q4/IC/EPr). Assignments may be modified for the same content taught for general education students. Both exceptional and general education teachers monitored the progress of students with disabilities (FG/Q4/IC/EPr). Interventionists, grade level coaches, and tutors provided assistance in choosing and delivering

research-based strategies that were aligned with the data collected during progress monitoring (PI/Q2, Q7/IC/EPr; FG/Q6/EPr).

The implementation of procedures for Responsiveness to Instruction was established for identifying specific content-laden needs of students through the use of data. Morning meetings were established as specific grade level times to monitor the progress of students, determine the interventions needed and select materials to support the interventions (PI/Additional Comments/Q2/IC/EPr; FG/Q6/IC/EPr). At morning meetings scheduled for each grade level, each student's progress was analyzed and interventions were discussed. Changes in groupings and strategies used were made as needed (PI/Q2/EPr). There were people in the morning meetings to coach and provide assistance to the grade levels in using research-based strategies (FG/Q11/EPr). The focus again was upon the success of children.

Eighty-eight percent of the teachers felt they were committed to helping every child learn. The perception of school and educator leadership compared equally with the district results of 88% and differed by 1% with state results of 87% in perceptions of commitment to helping every child learn (Appendix V; PA/TWCS 2008/EPr/IC).

PJ felt that RTI helped with planning with the exceptional education teacher. Schedules were created and plans made for the work of EC teachers in the classrooms (FG/Q11/EPr). Technology using the WIKI and Plus Delta supported communication of planning between teachers and reporting of student progress (PI/Introductory/EPr; FG/Q3/EPr).

George verified coordination between teachers even when the co-teachers were not in the room (FG/Q3/EPr). The EC teacher provided work and grades for students with disabilities in the content areas (FG/Q3/IC/EPr). Summer packets prepared for students by the EC teacher prevented lapses in learning time and helped transition to the next grade level (FG/Q3/IC/EPr).

There were research-based intervention materials that were specific to needs from the analyzed data such as thinking maps and Read Naturally. The school housed a bank of assessments from Florida Center for Reading Research which provided specific probes in the content areas (PI/Introductory Comments, Q7/EPr; FG/Q6/EPr). The assessment data were entered into AimsWeb as the progress of students was monitored (PI/Q2/EPr).

There were identified practices listed in the physical artifact, Staff Handbook (2008-2009, p. 120) that were expected to be taught such as guided reading, lexile leveling, math strategies, D'Nealian writing, and thinking maps. The identification of research-based practices supported the school-wide use of common expectations (PI/Q2/IC/EPr).

Supervision of Teachers

Leadership in effective programming included the supervision of teachers with the Assistant Principal sharing the responsibility (PI/Q4.3/EPr). According to the Teacher Working Conditions Survey 2008, 75% of the faculty agreed that performance evaluations were handled in an appropriate manner while 65% of the faculty agreed that the procedures for teachers' evaluations were consistent. Evaluations were focused on how teachers were trying to meet the different needs of students (PI/Q2/EPr). Pre-conferences were held with teachers to discuss the needs of students during the observations, and ideas for improvements were given (PI/Q2/EPr). In addition to formal observations, informal observations were conducted and announced as classroom walk-throughs (PA/faculty agenda, October 2009/EPr).

Professional Development

Professional development opportunities were helpful in preparing to teach in inclusive settings and such opportunities were built into the school's schedule (PA/Staff Handbook (2008-2009, p.45/EPr). Teachers, regardless of the subject area taught, were expected to participate in

staff development in the content areas (PI/Q1/EP/IC/EPr). There was the expectation that everyone would find a way to integrate the information learned in staff development and support each other (PI/Q1/EP/IC/EPr).

There was more staff development for less experienced teachers; however, experienced staff members were expected to continue to build their knowledge respective of the changes in education (PI/Q1/EPr). Heidi expected the teachers to let her know specifically what trainings were needed for them (PI/Q1/EPr). As noted by the perceptions of roles of teachers, 91% of the teachers played a role in determining the content of professional development (PA/TWCS 2008/EPr/Appendix I). The TWCS 2008 showed that 74% of the faculty perceived that the school leadership made sustained efforts to address teacher concerns about professional development (PA/TWCS 2008/EPr/Appendix I).

The demographic information showed that learning how to work with students with disabilities was gathered from observing other principals or teachers, reading literature or viewing videos to increase knowledge, and attending conferences, workshops or other training. The data for quality teachers at J. P. Allison Elementary School revealed an experienced staff with 74% of the staff having four or more years of experience in teaching in 2008-09; therefore, opportunities for learning to teach content areas would be requirements of continuous licensure, thus increasing the probability of teachers participating in frequent professional development.

The School Improvement Plan (2009) listed staff development for Partners in Mathematics, Professional Learning Communities, Classroom Strategies That Work by Robert Marzano, Teacher Evaluation Model, Positive Behavior Support, and Technology for 21st Century (PA/School Improvement Plan/EUL/EPR, p. 3). These opportunities were added to recent trainings in Responsiveness to Instruction and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

(SIOP) [FG/ Q11/EPr]. PJ noted that the SIOP strategies were not only for learners of English as Second Language, but benefited all children.

Compliance with the Law

Under the principle, equity under the law, leaders considered financial options for children. Heidi stated that exceptional children got the same considerations as everyone else (PI/Q 3/EUL). As an example, she referenced the technology, manipulatives, and space which were available to the teachers of exceptional children as well as general education (PI/Q5-6/EUL/EPr; (FG/Q 7/EUL/EPr). Focus groups participants supported the comments that exceptional children received technology such as smart boards, and other manipulatives. PJ noted the School Improvement Teams worked to spend the money for students (FG/Q 7/EUL/EPr).

The physical artifact, Teacher Working Condition Survey 2008 contained data showing teachers' perceptions of the roles they play in the school. The data from the survey showed 83% of the faculty perceived they have moderate to small roles in deciding how the school budget would be spent compared to 18% of the faculty who felt they played a large to primary role. Fifty-nine percent of the faculty believed they played primary to small roles in selecting instructional materials and resources.

The focus group participants were aware of the individualized education programs for children with disabilities and testing modifications were known for students within the first week of school (FG/Q3/IC/EPr/EUL). A beginning school checklist required teachers to review the cumulative folder and any IEP (PI/Q3/EUL/EPr).

The principal and the Exceptional Children's Assistance Team were the persons primarily responsible for assuring compliance with the law (PI/Q3/EUL/EPr). Central Office

provided supports to the school in training, direct instruction materials, and audits to ensure compliance (PI/Q 3/EUL).

Scheduling for Instruction

Heidi involved teachers in scheduling in order to meet the needs of students (PI/Q4/EPr). The master schedule was created with input from every grade level, and teachers for art, music, physical education, exceptional children, English as a Second Language, and Title I (PI/Q4/EPr). During the focus group session, George indicated the support of scheduling by referencing that teachers of exceptional children (EC) have times blocked to go into rooms. George noted that the schedule had a reading block and math block. The school worked for several years to have EC services during reading and math blocks for students so that they would receive instruction when the general education teachers were teaching reading and writing (FG Summary/IC/EPr). The Staff Handbook (2008-2009, p. 29) contained a schedule with blocked times for instruction, services for exceptional children, and interventions.

Grouping Practices

The collaboration of the principal and teachers continued during the grouping of students in general education classrooms. The planning process respected the opinions of teachers, experiences of teachers, and grouping of students according to the needs of students (PI/Q2/IC/EPr). Classroom styles, teacher personalities, and classroom management were all considerations in planning (FG/Q8/EP/IC). VA Girl reported that classroom teachers grouped students for the next year, and administration made adjustments. She felt teachers and administration knew the teachers and with which students teachers would do best. Data gathered from statements of PJ, George, and VA Girl supported the involvement of teachers in planning. P J followed by George stated:

“Our Principal comes and talks to me about getting the child. This is what we’re considering. Administration wants it to be as good a match as possible” (FG/Q8/PP). [They] want it to work for the kid, the parent, and the teacher” (FG/Q8/PP).

The development of a positive environment for success was continued in the classroom with the use of “buddies” for all subjects (FG/Q10/IC/EPr). “A key strategy for teaching students with disabilities is to place them with assistance,” commented George. The teachers took the lead in setting up the partners, but with the understanding that each student was expected to play a role in his/her own learning (FG/Q10/IC/EPr). PJ observed that kids embraced kids who were more handicapped, and stated:

“It (the School) is a big family. “Everyone has something they can give. Kids have learned everybody’s important. We teach and definitely model. Teachers care and kids care. It’s the secret ingredient.”

Children with disabilities were grouped in the classrooms with considerations of preventing the feelings of isolation (PI/Q2, Q4/IC/EPr). The groupings addressed similar academic needs of students such as comprehension or fluency, thus helping children with disabilities to feel the community of the class (PI/Q2, Q4/IC/EPr). Every staff member, teacher, teacher assistant, and tutor was trained to work in small groups with students (PI/Q2, Q4/EPr; FG/Q4/EPr). PJ, a focus group participant, saw the small group instruction as a level of support for pacing of instruction and providing a lower pupil-teacher ratio. The small group instruction also reinforced the opportunity to adjust instruction either for higher level or modifications of content for the same objectives (FG/Q4/EPr).

Academic, Social and Behavioral Expectations

Leaders who are attentive to the needs of children with disabilities provide organizational structures for supporting students academically, socially and behaviorally. Data were used to group students in classes with like need. Students who needed help with fluency or comprehension were grouped with other students who needed experiences specific to their needs. There were attentions to the individual academic needs of students as well as social needs for Heidi stated that in clustering the students, she did not want a child to feel isolated in a classroom (PI/Q2/EP/IC/EPr/PP)

The textual data in the Staff Handbook (2008-2009) stated the expectation of teaching skills to students. It was stated that in grade level planning teachers were to develop procedures and processes to teach students such as organizing notebooks and other materials, specifying morning and closing school day routines, turning in homework, heading papers, and marking responsibility cards (PA/Staff Handbook 2008-2009, p.50/IC/EPr).

Specific expectations of the use of class meetings, responsibility cards and cardinal compliments were practices that supported services for students with disabilities in the general education classroom. (PA/Staff Handbook 2008-2009, pp. 76, 115/IC/PP). Class meetings were expected to be held 2-3 times per week for 15 minutes to discuss topics related to issues such as students' or teachers' concerns, field trips, conflict resolution, event planning, or review of behavior expectations (PA/Staff Handbook , 2008-2009, p. 76/IC).

Heidi expected teachers to reinforce good behavior. The Staff Handbook (2008-2009) contained textual data that stated positive behaviors were to be taught and practiced. There were examples of how to talk to students such as "Andrew, will you feel comfortable if I am in the room when you speak to Heidi?" (PA/Staff Handbook 2008-2009, p. 71/IC/PP) Teachers were responsible for following behavior modifications for exceptional children or 504 Plans. Parents

were to be notified if there were changes in the plans (PA/Staff Handbook 2008-2009, p. 76/IC/PP).

A committee for Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) developed behavioral expectations for students in different settings of the school (restroom, classroom, playground, cafeteria, hall way, assembly) PA/Staff Handbook, 2008-2009, p. 123/IC/PP). The committee produced ideas in print and videos to model the behaviors of being respectful, responsible and safe. The three character traits were described so that students knew when they were performing the behaviors (PA/Staff Handbook, 2008-2009, p. 123/IC/PP). There was a school pledge that set the expectation for each student to be responsible for himself or herself, and use self-control (PA/Staff Handbook, 2008-2009, p. 227/IC/PP).

Each student had a responsibility card that went home every day as a communication with parents. The responsibility cards were visible supports of positive behaviors. Data were collected for each student's performance each hour in different locations in the school. A student could earn seven points a day with five points being acceptable. Parents were required to sign the responsibility card each day and return it to school (PA/Parent/Student Handbook (2009-2010, p. 5/IC/PP). The responsibility cards were kept and analyzed for frequency and severity of occurrences of behaviors (PA/Staff Handbook, 2008-2009, p. 77/IC/PP). Responsibility cards that were blank and several signed by parents for the previous week were viewed during the visit for this investigation. A plan had to be developed by teachers and communicated to parents if a student was having difficulty (PI/Q7/IC/PP/EPr; PA/Staff Handbook 2008-2009, p. 76/IC/PP).

In conjunction with the responsibility cards, daily compliments slips called "cardinal compliments" were given to students and posted in the school as a way to visibly recognize

positive behaviors. During the visit to the school for the investigation, cardinal compliments were posted on classroom doors.

The Parent/Student Handbook (2009-2010) provided parents with the discipline rules and expectations. School-wide expectations were developed for behavior and voice levels in the classroom, cafeteria, hall, multipurpose room, and playground (PA/Parent/Student Handbook, 2009-2010, p. 6/IC/PP). Voice level cues were cited in the handbook as well as specific school standards in different locations of the school. The voice levels cues were:

Level 0	No talking
Level 1	Whisper
Level 2	Normal voice
Level 3	Over-talking
Level 4	Outside voice (PA/Parent/Student Handbook, 2009-2010, p. 6/PP)

Each location in the building was given a voice level that students were to use while in the area. One example included the hall/walkways. Students were to use voice level 0 (no talking) in the halls/walkways. Students were to walk on the right side and in single file. There were established stopping points for students. Each student was to keep an appropriate distance between himself and the person in front of him (PA/Parent/Student Handbook, 2009-2010, p. 6/IC/PP).

The focus group described practices of other children that benefited the social and academic needs of students with disabilities (FG/Q10/EPr/IC/PP). George commented that general education children who were buddies to children with disabilities for each subject area tended to “build them [the students] up” during this academic time. PJ supported the comment as she described kids embracing kids who were more handicapped. The stories of the focus

group described other children helping children with disabilities on the playground, and even just saying hello as they went to buses. The focus group believed that their modeling helped students develop these intrinsic behaviors. The small school allowed them to be a ‘big family’ (FG/Q10/EP/EP/IC/PP). The joint efforts helped establish a supportive environment.

School as a Community

Leaders whose practices establish productive partnerships communicate and advocate for children with disabilities and their families. Heidi began positive contacts with families when students entered school and continued from Kindergarten through fifth grade (FG/Q12/PP). Heidi met with the parents and the children who were entering school for orientations during which she provided broad views of the school including expectations for behaviors in different school settings (PI/Introductory Comments/PP). According to the focus group participants, the principal had the child read to her, introduced the behavioral plan, and debriefed with expectations (FG/Q12/PP). The positive contact with parents established relationships with families and provided Heidi with information if other resources were needed (PI/Introductory Comments/PP; FG/Q12/PP). The explanations of common expectations “set the students up for success” for it acquainted them with school procedures (PI/Introductory Comments/EP/IC/PP).

The focus group participants valued the principal’s orientation with parents and children (FG/Q12/PP). PJ noted that the orientation garnered extra information and felt this session was a help especially for a child with a disability. George noted that this conversation often found students who had been self-contained in exceptional classes, and now they were going into an inclusive regular program (FG/Q12/IC/PP).

The shared accountability contract found at the back of the Parent/Student Handbook (2009-2010) was signed at the orientation by the student, parent and principal (PI/Introductory

Comments/EP/IC/PP; FG/Q12/EP/IC/PP). The teacher also signed the contract after classroom expectations were given FG/Q12/EP/IC/PP). PJ expressed the perception that the accountability contract helped each child feel “I play a role in my learning.”

The principal served as a liaison between staff who provided academic, social, and emotional supports for the child with disabilities and parents. Heidi’s leadership in involving parents in the decision making for inclusion started with their understanding at the orientation that students with disabilities were taught in general education classrooms (PI/Introductory Comments/PP). There were assistance and communication at parent meetings where data were shared, the performance of the child discussed, and interventions selected. She emphasized the importance of parents believing in their equal access to whatever was occurring in the school (PI/Summary/PP/EP).

In parent meetings for discussing the Individualized Education Program, Heidi asked questions on behalf of parents to help them understand the process and educational jargon (PI/Q9/PP). Staff was prepared before the meeting so they understood the role the principal played (PI/Q9/PP). Focus group participants viewed the principal’s attendance at IEP meetings as support of teachers. The principal had often built relationships with families, and was able to de-escalate parents if needed (FG/Q12/PP).

The Parent/Student Handbook (2009-2010) provided brief information for parents regarding the instructional program, and directed them to the Department of Public Instruction for accessing the state standards (PA/Parent/Student Handbook, 2009-2010, p. 9/PP). It also contained practical tips for support of learning at home such as “provide suitable study conditions, reserve time for homework, show interest in the work, and set a good example” (PA/Parent/Student Handbook, 2009-2010, p. 9/PP). Parents were invited to submit concerns

verbally or by completing a 'Parent Concern/Suggestion Form'. (PA/ Parent/Student Handbook, 2009-2010, p. 14/PP). Heidi stressed the importance for parents to feel a sense of belonging in the school in order to move students forward academically, socially and behaviorally (PI/Summary/PP).

Throughout the principal interview, focus group discussion and analysis of physical artifacts were references to being here [school] for kids to learn. The leadership of the principal in establishing productive partnerships, the fifth principle of the Star Model, was generalized to all children and families noting that children with disabilities have equal access to whatever the school was doing (PI/Summary/PP). The belief that all children with disabilities were to be included in every aspect of the school increased the emphasis of parents' participation in the total school program (PI/Summary/PP).

The community focus on the whole child gave perceptions of teachers caring, kids caring, and a feeling of family (FG/Q10/IC/PP). An added dimension to productive partnerships was the support of other children for students with disabilities. PJ and George expressed their observations that other children embraced children who experienced difficulties in learning by serving as buddies in the different subjects, and friends in social settings such as the playground. PJ felt students were taught to accept responsibilities for their own learning and that of others. The efforts of teachers to teach and model [expectations] were an intrinsic part of being in a small school as viewed by George (FG/Q10/PP). The perceptions from this researcher were the supports of student learning were more than just partnerships, but a sense of community and a sense of family focused upon benefits for the whole child.

Summary

The data gathered in the investigation of practices of a principal in implementing and supporting inclusion so that instruction in reading and mathematics can be delivered in general education classrooms for children with disabilities were clustered into five themes which were: (1) establishing an inclusive environment, (2) collaboration for inclusion, (3) strategic programming, (4) academic, social and behavioral supports, and (5) school as a community. The successes of children in the school were the focus and responsibility of all teachers and parents, and were intentionally planned. The data gathered described the interrelationship of the themes.

Staff and general education students built relationships with children with disabilities which the school regarded a key strategy in supporting the success of students. Specific written communications supported the establishment of a positive environment by citing the expectations that students see smiles, evidences of student progress, and indicators that students were cared about. There were expectations that behaviors and class performance be taught and reinforced frequently.

Multiple groups of people worked collaboratively to plan programs and interventions for students in order to maximize learning in the general education classrooms. Connect education teachers (art, music, PE, media, technology), grade level coaches, interventionist, classroom teachers, exceptional education teachers, administrators, and Title I tutors were collectively involved in the successes of students. The roles and responsibilities of different groups were specific and articulated in written form.

General education teachers were as responsible for children with IEP's as exceptional education teachers. Professional development opportunities were planned and implemented for the continuous learning of teachers. Teachers evidenced feelings of empowerment in devising

teaching techniques and decision-making regarding educational issues. All teachers were expected to support the success of students; therefore, all staff members, teachers, teacher assistants, and tutors were trained to work in small groups with students. Materials and strategies proven by research to positively impact student outcomes were used such as the assessment probes from Florida Center for Reading Research, Read Naturally, Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, and thinking maps.

Strategic programming included a broader use of data to monitor the progress of students and provide interventions when students were not responding positively to instruction. The data were collected from specific probes during progress monitoring, benchmark assessments, quarterly assessments used as formative data, and summative data such as the End of Grade Tests given to students in grades 3, 4, 5. The implementations of procedures for Responsiveness to Instructions were established for identifying specific content-laden needs of students through the use of data. The data were used to group students in classrooms and schedule interventions to address specific learning needs of students. Extensive collaboration among staff and considerations of children's needs and teachers' styles, personalities, and management played significant roles in developing scheduling and grouping practices.

The principal's practices demonstrated informed implementation of disability law established by State and federal laws pertaining to students with disabilities. School teams were developed to monitor compliance with the law through the Exceptional Children's Assistance Team (ECAT), and School Improvement Team that shared the responsibility of assuring that special education teachers received the same resources as general education. Though there were perceptions of teachers that they played small roles related to the budget and selection of materials, there were efforts by the principal to involve staff in this responsibility.

The leadership of the principal, Heidi Bettis, valued the centrality of families in establishing productive partnerships, and provided parents with information regarding the expectations for academic and social performance of students. Orientation meetings were held with parents when students were enrolled in the school. The orientation helped build relationships with families, and shared the accountability of parents, teachers, principals, and students in ensuring success. A Positive Behavioral Support team developed responsibility cards, cardinal compliment slips and videos that served as visible reminders of behavioral expectations for students, and a means for parents to reinforce expectations. The Parent/Student Handbook (2009-2010) identified structures for home supports such as providing suitable study conditions, reserving time for homework, showing interest in the work, and setting a good example.

The principal understood the dynamics of specialized services for the academic, social, and emotional needs of children with disabilities, and recognized the development of educational programs that benefited the learners.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

A qualitative study of a principal's leadership in implementing and supporting inclusion was conducted to investigate the problem cited in the literature of principals feeling unprepared to provide leadership in special education in the advent of accountability (Crockett, 2002; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Friend, M. in an interview cited by Brownell, M. T. & Walther-Thomas, C., 2002, p. 227). The data from the words and actions of the principal and teachers at J. P. Allison Elementary School (pseudonym), and contextual data in physical artifacts revealed descriptions of practices that resulted in achievement of students with disabilities that exceeded district and state performance levels on the state ABC assessments. What practices did the principal use to implement and support the instruction of students with disabilities who are taught in the general education classroom?

Research Question One

What practices does a principal use to prepare the school for inclusion?

Leaders who demonstrate ethical practices believe in advocating for children with disabilities and work to make the opportunities happen. In the investigation of practices of the principal, Heidi Bettis, beliefs and attitude set the climate for the school's philosophy that the successes of children in the school were the responsibility of everyone. Her beliefs and attitude toward special education influenced her behaviors in organizing the school for including children with disabilities in the instruction in general education classrooms. To establish an environment for inclusion, the principal began by selecting and assigning teachers, structuring the school for collaboration, scheduling and grouping practices, and development of visible and written procedures to teach academic and behavioral expectations.

Selecting and assigning teachers. The selection of teachers to serve in an inclusive environment began in the hiring process and continued with the assignment of students. Heidi shared that teachers were selected based on their willingness and skills to serve the population at the school. When students were assigned to classrooms, PJ shared that the principal consulted with the teachers. VA Girl stated there was a philosophy of wanting the assignments to work for the children. She also felt other teachers and administration knew which teachers children with disabilities would do best.

Classroom styles, teacher personalities, and classroom management were cited by PJ as considerations in the grouping practices at J. P. Allison School. The planning process for assigning children with disabilities in the general education classrooms respected the opinions of teachers for PJ reported that the principal talked to the teachers first. The focus group participants saw this as an effort to be as good a match as possible for the child, the parents and the students. The planning process considered the experiences of teachers. Heidi, the principal, stated that experienced teachers got students with greater needs because they had more experience.

Scheduling practices. A practice of the principal in this investigation was to involve teachers in scheduling in order to meet the needs of students. The master schedule was created with input from every grade level, and teachers for art, music, physical education, exceptional children, English as a Second Language, and Title I. During the focus group session, George indicated the support of scheduling by referencing that teachers of exceptional children have times blocked to go into classrooms. George further stated the faculty at J. P. Allison Elementary School worked for years for special and general education teachers to be able to teach reading and mathematics during the same time blocks for instruction.

Collaboration of teachers. Schedules were intentionally created for collaboration of teachers and support staff. Morning meetings were described by Heidi, PJ, and George. Morning meetings composed of grade level teachers, interventionists, coaches, Title I tutors, administrators, and technology associates were scheduled to monitor student progress in meeting grade level expectations, interpret data to analyze student needs, determine necessary interventions or enter data into the software program, AimsWeb. The morning meetings were opportunities for teams to problem-solve ways to prevent student failures and choose strategies for instruction that were aligned with the data collected during progress monitoring. Teachers felt more meaningful planning occurred at the morning meetings.

Grouping practices. Bonding with students with disabilities and building relationships with them provided academic, social, and behavioral supports. Children with disabilities were grouped in the classrooms with considerations of preventing the feelings of isolation. According to the principal, the groupings addressed similar academic needs of students such as comprehension or fluency thus helping children with disabilities to feel the community of the class. Focus group participants reported that teachers intentionally assigned peer buddies for each content area as a key strategy for teaching children with disabilities. The teachers took the lead in setting up the peer buddies and set the expectation that each student was expected to play a role in his/her own learning.

The words and actions of the principal and teachers in this investigation showed they understood the complexities of academic and behavioral needs of children with disabilities and developed visible reminders of expectations in school settings and classrooms. For examples, George felt it was important for a child with a disability to work with a partner who builds them up while VA Girl viewed the same expectations from kindergarten to fifth grade as supportive of

students' needs. Teachers modeled behavioral expectations. It was written in the Staff Handbook (2008-2009) that teachers were expected to hold class meetings two to three times a week to provide opportunities to re-teach the expectations and discuss classroom issues.

Visible and written procedures. A school-wide Positive Behavior Support team produced printed materials such as responsibility cards and cardinal compliment slips, and videos that gave examples of behavioral expectations such as voice level cues and procedures for walking in the halls. Parents received responsibility cards that communicated the daily behaviors of children and served as means for parents to reinforce expectations. Responsibility cards that were blank and several signed by parents for the previous week were viewed during the visit for this investigation.

The expectations for academic performance were supported by specifications in the use of common language and clarity of procedures. A content analysis of the Staff Handbook (2008-2009) showed that teachers were expected to develop procedures for organizing notebooks and other materials, specifying morning and closing school day routines, turning in homework, heading papers, and marking responsibility cards.

The establishment of beliefs and vision in structuring an organization was supported in the studies by Goor and Schween (1997) and Sage and Burrello (1994). Principals provided support in the development of relationships of general and exceptional education teachers through acceptance of all students and staff, and structuring the organization of the school to facilitate collaboration (Bartlett, et al. 2002). They sought to improve the quality of educational services to children and believed in the ability of teachers to provide instruction for all children (Goor & Schween, 1997; Osborne, DiMattia, & Curran, 1993).

Rea, McLaughlin and Walther-Thomas (2002) studied models of inclusion and pull-outs and found the more inclusive schools provided teachers with organizational structures such as common planning time, regularly scheduled team meetings, manageable specialist caseloads that facilitated communication, collaborative problem-solving, and the development of appropriate support services. The practices of regularly scheduling meetings for collaboration and planning for instruction were evident in this investigation.

The findings in the study by Avissar, Reiter, Shunit, and Leyser (2003) showed mixed results of principals' perceptions of inclusive environments. Social success was perceived as a major goal over academic success. This perception differed from the principal and teachers in this investigation. The words of the principal and teachers in this investigation showed an acceptance of children with disabilities and their responsibilities in meeting the needs of students academically. This investigation revealed structures that were established for monitoring the academic progress of students in meeting grade level expectations and plans for intervention when the data indicated needs.

One of the findings in the study by Walther-Thomas (1997) evidenced a need for staff development for participants on the topic of scheduling. Scheduling of students required considerations for placements of students in classes in order to maintain heterogeneous classes and provide support for students. Walther-Thomas (1997) found that the principal played a critical role in the assignment and clustering of students in designated classrooms for reducing the number of settings in which specialists must serve.

The study by Dieker (2001) listed practices which promoted a positive learning climate such as the acceptance of students with disabilities by the teachers and peers, programming practices of peer tutoring and cooperative learning, nurturing words and actions of teachers, and

acceptance of opportunities for professional growth. In this investigation, the teachers' use of peer buddies for content area support and building relationships were supported in multiple studies (Bartlett, et al. (2002); Burrello, et al. (2001), Coutinho & Repp (1999), Crockett (2002), Dieker (2001), Kaufman & Hallahan (2005), Vaughan & Linan-Thompson (2003), Walther-Thomas, (1997).

The investigation revealed practices of providing visible and written procedures to reinforce behavioral and academic expectations. The practices were supported in the literature by Kaufman and Hallahan (2005) who cited reinforcement as a dimension of difference in general and special education. Teacher modeling, parent reinforcement, use of printed materials, videos, and teaching academic procedures reinforced appropriate behaviors for children. Giangreco and Doyle (2000) wrote that it was important that teachers modeled instruction using exemplars and non-exemplars, and provided repetitions and practices. The investigation revealed procedures defined by Crockett (2002) for supporting individual needs of children. The practices used in this investigation were supportive of the learning and behavioral needs of students and specialized instruction for academic progress.

Research Question Two

What practices does a principal use to assure the specialization of instruction for students with disabilities?

Strategic programming. The descriptions of specialization of instruction for children with disabilities related to effective programming in the Star Model. The principal strategically planned school wide research-based programs that supported the reinforcement of instructional procedures from Kindergarten through grade five. Strategic programming in the investigation

included instructional concentrations, grouping for instruction, scheduling instruction, co-teaching model, and use of data.

Instructional concentrations. There were programs identified for school-wide instruction for all grades such as thinking maps, lexile leveling, guided reading, Read Naturally, math and writing strategies, and homework expectations. Research based materials from the Florida Center for Reading Research were used. These practices provided the repetition of common language and procedures.

Grouping for instruction. Students with disabilities were provided direct services in small groups or one-to-one instruction. At J. P. Allison Elementary School, all staff members, teachers, teacher assistants, and tutors were trained to work in small groups with students. PJ described the small group instruction as a level of support for children with disabilities through providing a lower pupil teacher ratio and monitoring the pacing of instruction. Further, she shared that small group instruction was an opportunity to adjust instruction either for higher levels or modifications of content for the same objective.

Scheduling for instruction. During the focus group session, George indicated the support of scheduling by referencing that teachers of exceptional children have times blocked to go into classrooms. George further stated the faculty at J. P. Allison Elementary School worked for years for special and general education teachers to be able to teach reading and mathematics during the same time blocks for instruction.

Co-teaching model. The participants in the investigation stated that the co-teaching model used during instruction was dependent upon the needs of the students. The principal and PJ stated that instruction was provided for students with disabilities in small group or one to one instruction. PJ shared that the special and general education teachers taught the same objectives

and content and used the same language during teaching. PJ further described the role of the special education teacher as clarifying instruction, teaching at a higher level or reiterating the instruction. Assignments may be modified for the same content taught for general education students. Both special and general education teachers monitored the progress of students. In addition, George relayed that special education teachers provided grades in the content area of reading.

Use of data. Data were used to monitor the progress of children with disabilities. The content-laden needs of students were identified through the use of data gathered from procedures for Responsiveness to Instruction. Heidi and participants in the focus group described the process which included gathering and analyzing data from specific probes during progress monitoring, benchmark assessments, quarterly data as formative assessments, and summative assessments at the end of grades 3, 4, and 5. Benchmark assessments were conducted three times a year for math, fluency, and comprehension. The data were analyzed and teams problem-solved possible interventions to address the deficits. Data were used to monitor the rate of progress of students, change interventions, change levels of intensity, and re-structure the delivery of instruction.

In this investigation, the grouping practices were supported in several studies. Kaufman and Hallahan (2005) wrote that services in special education differed in “degree from general education in pacing, intensity, relentlessness, structure, reinforcement, pupil-to-teacher ratio, curriculum and monitoring or assessment” (p. 48). Individual instruction and attention to size of groups affected the benefit of learning as children with disabilities accessed the general curriculum (Giangreco & Doyle, 2000). Gable and Hendrickson (2004) stated that the decision to include a student with a disability in general education classes depended on the goodness of fit

among the demands of the classroom, the capabilities of the student, and the supports needed for student progress. The reduced pupil-teacher ratio provided benefits of time allowing opportunities for teachers to monitor student progress, provide individual assistance, conduct conferences, and provide enrichment, re-teaching and guided practice activities (Walther-Thomas, 1997). The effect of the disability upon the academic performance of students was considered when planning for the successful integration of children with disabilities in classrooms (Goor & Schween, 1997).

Leadership responsiveness for strategic programming included the analysis of assessment results (Coutinho & Repp, 1999; Crockett, 2002, Dieker, 2001). This investigation provided descriptions of using formative and summative data to formulate groupings for students for interventions that impacted the academic achievement of children with disabilities. The extensive use of data described in this investigation was not described in the literature reviews, and adds to the knowledge for instructional programs for implementing instruction in inclusive practices.

Research Question Three

What practices does a principal use to distribute the leadership in schools to ensure compliance with disability law?

The school was structured for collaboration in professional learning communities. The process of collaboration was revealed in responsibilities involving compliance of disability law. There was an Exceptional Children's Assistance Team (ECAT) which received training in assuring compliance with special education regulations and procedures. The principal and ECAT took responsibilities for assuring equity under the law.

The structure of the school assured compliance with a requirement of IDEA that children with disabilities receive instruction with their non-disabled peers. Heidi stated that children with disabilities were included in general education classrooms, and all teachers were expected to understand the impact of the child's disability upon learning. The expectation was set that teachers collaborate to plan and execute programs beneficial to students. Principal Heidi Bettis expected all teachers to be responsible for compliance of the Individual Education Programs (IEP) and testing modifications. A school checklist guided the review of the information in cumulative folders.

In meetings for the Individual Education Program plan, Heidi stated that she asked questions on behalf of parents to help them understand the process and educational jargon. Teachers viewed this as a supportive role for relationships had often been built that allowed de-escalation of conflicts if any should arise.

Bartlett, Weisenstein and Etscheidt (2002) cited the principle of least restrictive environment (LRE) as one consideration of equity under the law. Under IDEA (2004) students with disabilities are educated with children without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate including non-academic and extracurricular activities. A practice of the principal in this investigation was to structure the school for inclusion of children in classrooms with non-disabled peers.

Grenot-Scheyer, Fisher and Staub (2001) viewed access to the core curriculum from an equity perspective and stated that each learner should have access to approved standards. These standards set expectations of what students should know and be able to do. A practice of the principal in this investigation was to expect teachers to understand a child's disability and its impact upon learning. PJ, a focus group participant, stated that special and general education

teachers taught the same objectives and used the same language in teaching which Grenot-Scheyer, et al. (2001) viewed as equity.

The study by Bonds and Lindsey (2001) cited the requirement that a principal be knowledgeable about the laws governing students with disabilities, and programs which may be instituted for their benefits. Principals were expected to serve on the placement or advisory committee. The principal in this investigation participated in meetings for the development of Individual Education Programs. This participation was seen as supportive of teachers and parents.

Research Question Four

What practices does a principal use to prepare general and special education teachers for the relationships and responsibilities for co-teaching?

Shared responsibilities. The principal expected general education and special education teachers to share equal responsibilities for instruction. PJ, George and VA Girl commented that the principal expected general and exceptional education teachers to collaborate in order to understand one another's instructional expectations and how students are served. Morning meetings were scheduled by the principal for general and exceptional education teachers to plan together. PJ felt better planning occurred in the morning meetings because the teachers were in the meetings together.

According to George there was coordination between teachers even when co-teachers were outside the classrooms. Specific work may be provided to general education teachers by the special education teacher in support of children with disabilities in the classrooms. VA Girl valued the support of the special education teacher who provided insights into the needs of

students while PJ further described the value of knowing what was written in the IEP and testing modifications.

Professional development. Professional development opportunities were planned in response to the needs of teachers. Heidi stated that all teachers were expected to participate in professional development and integrate the learning within the subject matter. Less experienced teachers received more professional development than experienced teachers according to Heidi.

Gable and Hendrickson described parallel teaching where the general educator and special educator provided instruction in smaller groups for students with similar needs. The number of students or the diversity of the groups may vary and co-teachers may switch groups at a given time. In team teaching the general and special education teachers shared equal responsibility for planning, delivering, and evaluating the lessons. The findings in the investigation were aligned with the description by Gable and Hendrickson for parallel teaching and team teaching.

The focus group participants described procedures consistent with the consultation model for services described by Idol (2006). Consulting teachers provided indirect special education services for students who were taught by the classroom teacher (Idol, 2006).

The equal responsibilities for instruction at J. P. Allison Elementary School differed from descriptions by Gable and Hendrickson (2004). Gable and Hendrickson (2004) identified the general education teacher as responsible for subject matter content while special education teachers developed adaptations, accommodations, and modifications in the initial stages. The participants in the focus group revealed the expectation that each teacher was equally responsible for instruction of the same objectives.

The study by Morocco and Aguilar (2002) noted several supports for successful co-teaching practices. The study cited the establishment of collaborative school structures and commitments to student learning as positive supports for co-teaching. In addition, equal status rules for teachers, and strong knowledge of content supported successful co-teaching practices.

Research Question Five

What practices does a principal use to involve parents in the decision making for inclusion?

The principal collaborated with parents to build relationships that supported instruction for children with disabilities. Heidi's leadership in involving parents in the decision making for inclusion started with their understanding at the orientation that students with disabilities were taught in general education classrooms. There were assistance and communication at parent meetings where data were shared, the performance of the child discussed, and interventions selected.

Parents were included in the accountability for the success of a child as well as the child himself. Parent orientation meetings were opportunities to explain academic and behavioral expectations of the school. Accountability contracts were signed by parents, principal, students and teachers as evidence of agreements of the roles that school and home played in learning. A content analysis of the Parent Communication and Handbook 2009 showed that parents were provided strategies for home support such as providing suitable study conditions, reserving time for homework, showing interest in the work, and setting good examples.

The study by Kochhar et al. (1996) supported the practice of meeting with parents. Meetings helped parents understand the knowledge and skills students were expected to learn and use those skills in the natural environment (Kochhar, et al., 1996). Parents desire knowledge of the disability itself, resources to help understand the rules and regulations, and what to do to

help (Lake & Billingsley, 2000). Paris, et al. (2007) found that sharing of explicit information, respectfulness, and responsiveness of the school reinforced the collaborative relationship with parents for the benefit of children. The educational placement of a child with a disability is of great concern to parents whose productive partnerships with schools increase the chances for successful inclusion (Bartlett, et al., 2002; Garrick-Duhaney & Salend, 2000).

Summary of Findings

The principal in this investigation used the following practices to implement and support instruction of children with disabilities in general education classrooms:

1. The school was organized to support instruction for children with disabilities. The finding was related to the principle of ethical practices and individual considerations where the leader demonstrated advocacy for students, and lead co-active involvement of others for quality educational programs.
2. The grouping practices for children with disabilities in general education classrooms supported instruction. The practice of the principal demonstrated the principle of individual considerations for there was attentiveness to the learning needs of students and educational progress. The assignment of students to general education classrooms demonstrated compliance with the law regarding access to instruction in the least restrictive environment. Leaders who demonstrate the principle of equity under the law know and implement regulations of laws for the disabled.
3. Scheduling practices impacted the instruction of children with disabilities in general education classrooms by providing supports for parallel instruction in reading and mathematics and intentionally scheduling meetings of teachers. The

practice related to the principle of effective programming in the Star Model for programs to benefit children with disabilities.

4. The principal expected general education and special education teachers to share equal responsibilities for instruction using a co-teaching model that benefited students and research-based strategies. The practice related to the principle of effective programming in the Star Model.
5. Data were used to monitor the progress of children with disabilities. The practice demonstrated the use of assessments in improving the instruction of children with disabilities and supporting strategic programming. The practices of the principal supported the interrelationship of the principles of individual considerations and effective programming which formed the crossbar of the Star Model.
6. Visible and written procedures to teach academic and behavioral expectations were used to support instruction in the general education classroom for children with disabilities. The practices of the principal considered the learning and behavioral needs of students, and set procedures to address the impact of the disability upon learning thus demonstrating the principles of the Star Model for individual considerations and effective programming.
7. The principal collaborated with parents to build relationships that supported instruction for children with disabilities. These actions demonstrated the principle of establishing productive partnerships where leaders communicated and collaborated on behalf of children with disabilities.

Strategic programming and academic, social and behavioral supports reinforced practices for quality instruction, and individual needs of children with disabilities.

Implications for Practices

Implication One

Administrators in similar settings should consider forming teams for collaboration to assist in providing leadership in the organization of the school.

The investigation revealed an expansion of the roles of the principal through formation of teams that supported the collaboration of professionals and helped to address the complexities of special education. Professional Learning Communities composed of teams of trained personnel such as grade level teachers, coaches, interventionists, Title I teacher, administrators, technology, art, music, physical education and media met weekly. The teams shared their strengths or specializations to help each other understand the impact of a disability upon learning.

Members of the team discussed the urgent needs of learners whose performance failed to meet expectations for grade level standards, assisted in interpreting data, and chose research-proven materials and methodologies to address academic weaknesses identified during progress monitoring of students. Specific statements of school-wide practices were taught and monitored. These expectations gave a common language to participants and served as a framework for programs in the school such as guided reading, Read Naturally, thinking maps, lexile leveling, math strategies, writing strategies, and homework expectations.

The practice of multiple people collaborating to meet the needs of students was consistent with the results of the study by Morocco and Aguilar (2002). The special education teachers were members of an interdisciplinary team. There was a commitment of administrators and teachers for the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms. The collective efforts of many stakeholders were a finding by Guzman (1997) in order to implement the many complexities of special education. Teachers worked collaboratively to solve problems

regarding issues that arose, and supported each other in professional development for instructional strategies, assessment, and IDEA regulations (Walther-Thomas, 1997).

Implication Two

Administrators in similar settings should consider grouping students in general education classrooms with considerations of academic and social needs.

Grouping practices in this investigation considered similar academic needs of students to assign students in general education classrooms. Refer to the Individual Education Program for information in identifying similar academic needs as well as formative and summative data. These practices provided opportunities for small group instruction and supported the scheduling of special education teachers in general education classrooms.

Assign students to general education classrooms considering individual needs, classroom styles, teacher personalities, and classroom management. Consideration of these areas affected the management of social and behavioral needs of students. Consulting with teachers and respecting their opinions supported the acceptance of children with disabilities in general education classrooms.

The study by Idol (2006) supported referencing the Individual Education Program to support the general education curriculum and transfer of skills. Rea, et al. (2002) noted that the development of the IEP by interdisciplinary teams focused on student mastery of the standard curriculum and detailed accommodations.

Walther-Thomas (1997) saw a benefit of inclusion as enhancing academic performance, improving social skills, stronger peer relationships and development of positive feelings by children with disabilities. Further, the study supported small groups for the reduced pupil-teacher ratio provided opportunities to monitor the progress of students, provide individual

assistance, conduct conferences, and provide enrichment, re-teaching and guided practice activities.

Implication Three

Administrators in similar settings should consider requiring equal responsibilities in teaching the required standards using research proven strategies regardless of the co-teaching model used to benefit the students.

In this investigation, general and special educators were required to teach the state standards and school-wide research-based strategies such as guided reading, thinking maps, math strategies, handwriting, and study skills. The commonality in instructional concentrations supported co-teachers in planning for the academic emphasis required for accountability measures, and created an environment of expectations from kindergarten through grade 5.

General and special education teachers were required to attend all professional developments. Teacher evaluations, teacher recommendations, and data analysis were used to determine professional development needs of staff for including children with disabilities in general education classrooms. It was an expectation that all teachers integrate the learning from the professional development in the areas taught. Teachers were trusted to devise teaching techniques for success in accountability measures for reading and mathematics.

The study by Rea, et al. (2002) supported weekly meetings of teams which facilitated shared responsibilities for student performance. In addition, the study saw professional development as a continuing need to enhance the skills of teachers in classroom instruction, management, communication, and collaboration.

Implication Four

Administrators in similar settings should consider developing schedules that provide parallel instruction in content areas.

Principals may consider forming scheduling teams to address the instructional needs of the school. Include teachers from general education, special education, English as a Second Language, Title I and others on the team. The investigation indicated benefits to students and teachers in teaching reading and mathematics at established times for the grades involved. Empower teachers to manage changes in classroom schedules which support the reorganizations that result from responsiveness to instruction.

The development of a schedule for instruction at J. P. Allison Elementary School involved an interdisciplinary team with representatives from all areas of the school. Members of the team developed schedules that supported instruction of reading and mathematics at the same time for general and special education teachers. Special education teachers had times blocked to teach in general education classrooms. The schedule also included time for support of intervening services for students in the different tiers.

The use of parallel scheduling for reading and mathematics at J. P. Allison School was supported by other studies. Leaders have responded to the intensity of special education through increased time on task such as block scheduling, and empowering teachers through collaboration and teams (Burrello, et al. 2001; Coutinho & Repp, 1999; Crockett, 2002; Kaufman & Hallahan, 2005; Vaughan & Linan-Thompson, 2003). The training required in developing schedules was consistent in studies by Walther-Thomas (1997) who found that staff development was a need in scheduling of students for instruction and managing caseload concerns impacted by the number of students served in the school.

Implication Five

Administrators in similar settings should consider monitoring the progress of students through the frequent use of data.

Monitor the progress of students during instruction using data. Review the student performance data to determine whether or not students are meeting grade level expectations. Analyze the data from specific assessment probes to determine content areas that need intervening strategies to help improve student performance. The data will assist in forming small groups of students who need instruction in similar areas. Principals may begin the process of using data by determining what assessments are available at the school and what the assessments measure. Identify specific research-based strategies that may become school-wide programs that address specific academic needs.

Data were gathered throughout the school year at J. P. Allison Elementary School from sources that included Florida assessment probes for specific content areas, quarterly tests as formative assessments, and summative assessments given at the end of grades 3, 4 and 5. The programs used to impact learning were based on the results of specific probes and aligned with interventions that were proven to increase achievement.

Studies in the principal's practices for leadership in inclusion were sparse during the initial review of the literature. The use of data in providing interventions for children with disabilities became a greater emphasis with the reauthorization of IDEIA (2004). However, beyond calls to use data, studies were not readily available to describe how to use data or to measure its impact.

Boudett, City, and Murnane (2005) provided a framework for preparing the development of school leaders in using assessment results to improve teaching and learning. The data-wise cyclical process included eight steps focused in three categories of "prepare, inquire, and act"

(Boudett, et al. 2005, p. 4). Key tasks were described in each category. Further research in the use of this data wise process would be recommended.

Implication Six

Administrators in similar settings should consider developing and teaching specific procedures for academic and behavioral expectations in the school environment.

In this investigation, the school developed school-wide procedures for behaviors in the school such as voice levels, walking in the halls, and expectations in assemblies. Written procedures such as the responsibility cards and visuals to model academic and behavioral expectations supported the inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms. Positive behaviors were rewarded using cardinal complement cards. These procedures, developed by a Positive Behavioral Support Team, were consistent from kindergarten to grade 5 for all settings.

Classroom teachers at J. P. Allison developed grade level expectations for study skills such as heading the papers and morning and afternoon routines. Teachers used specific research-based strategies school-wide such as thinking maps and guided reading which benefited children with disabilities through consistency of instruction and repetition. Children with disabilities benefited from instruction when expectations were taught and modeled.

The teaching of academic and behavioral expectations was supported in the literature. Studies by Giangreco and Doyle (2000) pronounced the importance of teachers modeling and demonstrating instruction using exemplars and non-exemplars for learning. The study further supported the use of repetition and practices through dialogue and specific feedback for performance in teaching children with disabilities. Effective programs were carefully and explicitly designed to meet instructional needs of students (Coutinho & Repp, 1999; Vaughan &

Linan-Thomas, 2003). Leadership responsiveness to effective programming included the supervision and evaluation of programs for curriculum and instruction, beneficial individualized programming, and support of research-based strategies (Coutinho & Repp; Crockett, 2002).

Implication Seven

Administrators in similar settings should consider providing information for parents regarding the disability of the child and its effects upon academic progress and behavioral concerns.

The principal at J. P. Allison Elementary School participated in meetings for the Individual Education Programs for students. She served as an advocate for the parent(s) by clarifying language and procedures related to the law and expectations of instruction.

The leadership practice of the principal in this investigation was consistent with findings by Lake and Billingsley (2000). Parents desire knowledge of the disability itself, resources to help understand the rules and regulations, and what to do to help. Crockett and Kaufman (1998) and Lake and Billingsley (2000) found that the sharing of information regarding family dynamics, goals, routines, and support systems formed the foundation for productive partnerships.

Recommendations for Future Research

The case study of the leadership of the principal and stories told by the teachers in the focus group portrayed a school that had unified instruction for children with disabilities. This unification of beliefs and practices resulted in the achievement of students with disabilities that exceeded the district and state results when comparing the percentage of students proficient in reading and mathematics. The following are recommendations for future research.

Recommendation One

Replicate this study using more than one school to identify common effective program characteristics distinct from personal characteristics of the leader of the school.

The principal in this investigation evidenced positive beliefs and attitudes for what schools should be doing for all children. The vision was communicated to the teachers in the focus group for there were similar descriptions of programs and stories. Conducting this research in several schools would add to the body of knowledge of practices that support instruction for children with disabilities.

Recommendation Two

Conduct comparative studies of the achievement of students with disabilities at schools that are similar in demographics, and have not begun to use Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI).

What other practices by principals make a difference in the achievement of children with disabilities? As the leadership role of the principal expands to include teachers and support staff, there are imperatives for knowledge and skills within the staff to offer the specializations required to connect data to instruction, use research-proven interventions, maintain social-emotional considerations of learners, and identify the unique needs of children with disabilities.

Recommendation Three

Conduct research of teachers in special education and general education in schools of 700 or more to articulate more fully the expansion in the roles of teachers in meeting the needs of children with disabilities who are taught in the general education classrooms.

Schools housing 700 or more students may have large numbers of students served under IDEA. The allocation for the number of special education teachers may impact the provision of instruction in general education classrooms for there may be eligible children in several grade levels or several classrooms on the same grade level that receive services. How are

responsibilities shared by teachers in interpreting data, sharing knowledge and materials of research-based strategies, and providing interventions? What additional professional development do general education and special education teachers need to address the concomitant needs of children?

Recommendation Four

Conduct investigations to determine what changes are necessary in the plans for Individual Education Programs as instruction is driven by frequent use of data and response to instruction.

RTI requires frequent probes to address identified needs and prompt interventions. How have these factors changed the wording and frequency of meetings for Individual Education Programs?

Summary

The leadership of the principal in this investigation for the implementation and support of inclusion led, directed, and participated in structuring the school for the benefit of children. The school community valued the successes of children, and responded by sharing: (a) the belief that children with disabilities be taught in the general education classroom, (b) the knowledge and competence to deliver instruction using methodologies based on research, (c) skills in monitoring the progress of children using assessment data, (d) knowledge in analyzing data to determine instructional interventions, (e) tools for class management, and (f) partnerships with parents. The plans for effective programming responded to the needs of children and answered the concerns of feeling unprepared for including children with disabilities in general education classrooms. When leadership and the school believed and prepared to do what was right for children, inclusion for children with disabilities was no longer a separate issue.

Reflections

The initial proposal for the research was to study the leadership practices of principals in three schools that reported 40 or more students with disabilities as a subgroup for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) over a three year period. After reviewing 212 schools, the criteria for meeting AYP for three years in schools with Kindergarten through grade 5 enrollments were too narrow for it produced an extremely small sampling within the southwestern education district. The narrow sampling left no opportunities for selections for the research; however, this was indicative of the need to research practices that were beneficial to children with disabilities.

The reviews of school performance looked for trends in the data for increased achievement of students with disabilities, and raised questions for consideration. What other accountability measures could be used to select principals from random samplings other than data for student performance?

Children with disabilities may require repetition of instruction and practices before they are able to retain and apply concepts. A school's early response to a student's lack of progress may lessen the overwhelming tasks of providing interventions for a child's lack of response to instruction, meeting the pacing requirements in order to demonstrate growth in the expected grade level curriculum, and addressing the deficits that are detailed in individual education programs within a school day or year. There are silent messages that data alone cannot tell such as the severity of disabilities within a school or experience levels of teachers. These factors are critical in meeting accountability measures for adequate yearly progress under the law, No Child Left Behind.

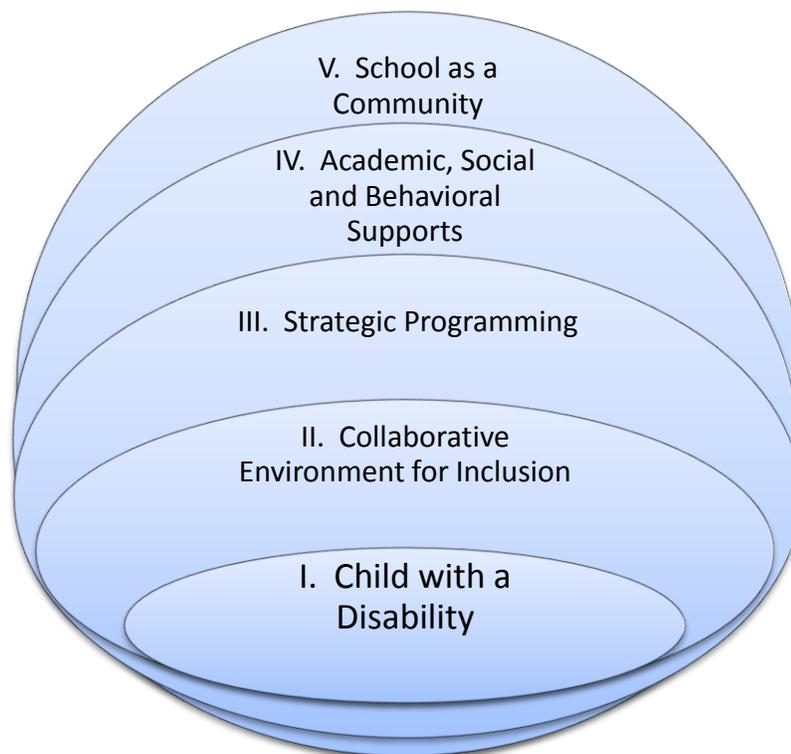
The Star Model by Crockett (2006) was an applicable framework for gathering data for this investigation; however, the multiple sections in each principle required more data than is

feasible within one given document. Selecting one section from each principle created a more manageable framework.

The portrait from this investigation revealed a circular framework to show the-ongoing and overlapping actions related to the principles. The circular framework shown in *Figure 6*, RASE: respond academically, socially and emotionally for achievement of children with disabilities, has been synthesized by this investigator. Circle one in the RASE model shows the child with a disability at the center of program planning and implementation. The theme addresses the individual considerations as described in the Star Model. It considers the unique needs of children as learners and captures qualitative and quantitative measures to describe student performance. The theme requires teachers to understand the disability and its impact upon the how a student learns. The child with the disability is also expected to be responsible for his own learning.

Circle two of the RASE model shows the establishment of a collaborative environment for inclusion which combines the principles of ethical practices and individual considerations. The theme addresses the establishment of beliefs of leaders and values acceptance of children with disabilities in the general education classrooms. A leader structures the environment for collaboration of general and special education teachers, and other specialists who contribute to knowledge of methodologies that increase the achievement of students. The leaders and teachers in a collaborative environment view children with disabilities in general education classrooms as a matter of entitlement and not a point of law. There is automatic compliance with the law which is written to include children with disabilities in general education to the greatest extent possible. The professionals in a collaborative environment problem solve interventions to help students meet the standards set by the state.

Figure 6. RASE: responding academically, socially and emotionally for instruction of children with disabilities in general education classrooms



Source: Thelma Gray Smith, Investigator (April 2011)

Circle three of the RASE model surrounds the child with a disability with strategic programming to address individual and academic needs. It includes the descriptors of the principles of effective programming and individual considerations which formed the cross bar of the Star Model. Strategic programming focuses upon instructional concentrations which have been proven by research to positively impact instruction. The theme includes the use of data to monitor the progress of students and drive changes in programs when data analyses indicate the need for interventions. It includes grouping children in classrooms with similar needs and working in small groups to deliver instruction. Co-teachers share equal responsibility for instruction of children. Strategic programming includes scheduling practices that provide

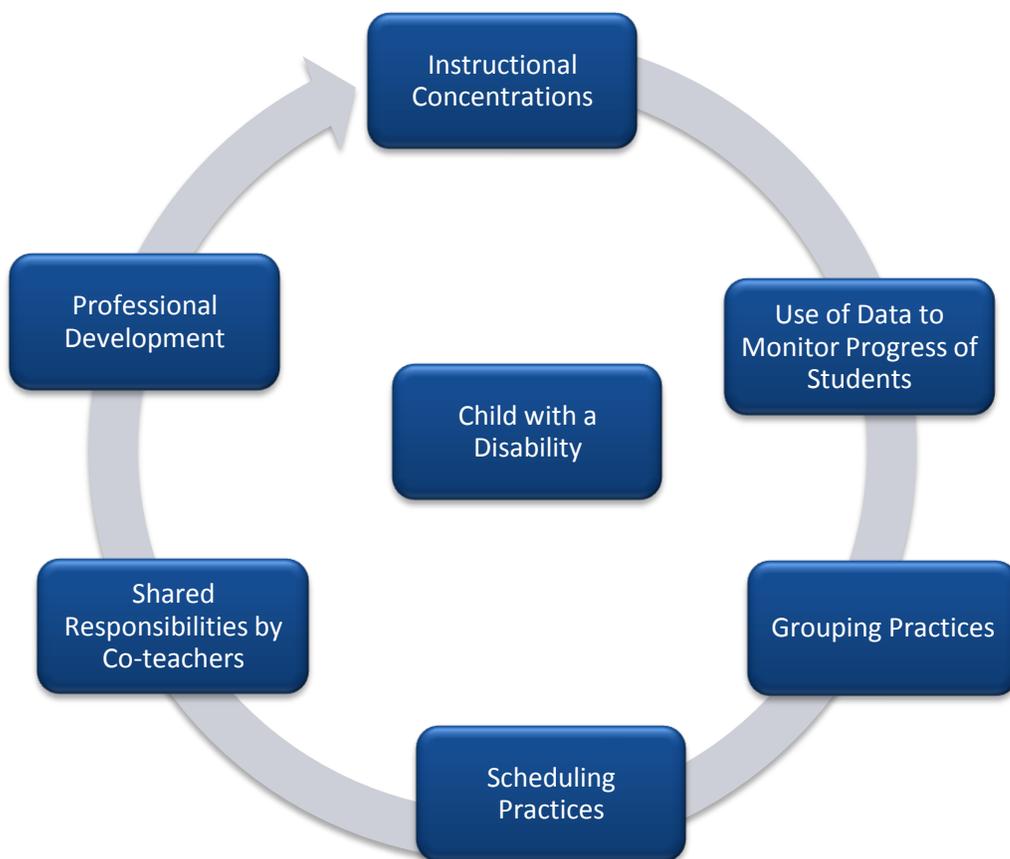
parallel instruction for reading and mathematics. Strategic programming also includes professional development to address continued improvements.

Circle four of the RASE model, the establishment of academic, social, and behavioral supports, includes the principles of individual considerations and school as a community of support. The interrelatedness of the themes shows building relationships with children with disabilities. Specific expectations for the school and classroom procedures are taught to students. Visible and written procedures are used to reinforce the expectations. Peer buddies are planned as a key strategy in helping students succeed.

Circle five of the RASE model, the school as a community, relates to the principle of establishing productive partnerships where parents, the school's staff, and other children surround the child with a disability with academic and social supports. The principal as leader establishes relationships with parents in helping them to understand academic expectations and home supports. Information is shared with parents regarding how the disability may be a barrier to learning. The theme also includes the relationships built by other teachers in the school to support children with disabilities.

The findings in this investigation showed a focus on the development of quality instruction. The strategic programming practices of the principal provided a body of knowledge by which principals may construct meaning as they address the feeling of being unprepared to provide leadership for special education so that children with disabilities may meet accountability measures under the law, No Child Left Behind. The model in *Figure 7*, strategic programming for instruction of children with disabilities, shows a conceptualization of areas of focus that helped one school meet and exceed state performance standards for children with disabilities.

Figure 7. Strategic programming for instruction of children with disabilities



Source: *Thelma Gray Smith, Investigator (April 2011)*

The practices show how a principal addressed the complexities of instructional methodologies, provided behavioral supports for students, used assessment data to improve instruction, worked with parents, and fostered a collaborative environment. Expectations were established that all teachers know the impact of a disability upon learning and work together to devise teaching techniques that benefitted the students.

When a school family can share positive beliefs and attitudes of serving children with disabilities, a positive environment develops and lessens the need to focus upon where

instruction is delivered. Compliance with the law becomes a matter of practicality. The inclusion of children with disabilities in general education classrooms is no longer an idealistic view but rather a reality of the nature of schools. The practices of the principal, structure of the school, instructional concentrations and school as a community of support are all interwoven themes in responding academically, socially, and emotionally to raise the achievement of children with disabilities.

References

- Adequate Yearly Progress. Retrieved February 23, 2008 from
<http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/nclb/abcayp/overview/ayp>.
- Annual Disability Status Report (2006). Retrieved November 18, 2007 from
www.DisabilityStatistics.org.
- Attfield, R. & Williams, C. (2003). Leadership and Inclusion: A special school perspective.
British Journal of Special Education, 30(2).
- Avissar, G., Reiter, Shunit, & Leyser, Y. (2003). Principals views and practices regarding
inclusion: The case of Israeli elementary school principals. *European Journal of Special
Needs Education*, 18(3), 355-369.
- Bartlett, L. D., Weisenstein, G. R., Etscheidt, S. (2002). Successful inclusion for educational
leaders. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Incorporated.
- Bauwens, J. & Hourcade, J. J. (1991). Making co-teaching a mainstreaming strategy.
Preventing School Failure, 35(4), 19.
- Bonds, C. W. & Lindsay, J. (2001). The principal in special education: The teachers'
perspective. *Education*, 102 (4).
- Boudett, K. P., City, E. A., & Murnane, R. J. (2005). Data wise: A step-by-step guide to using
assessment results to improve teaching and learning. Harvard Education Press.
Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Brownell, M. T. & Walther-Thomas, C. (2002, March). An interview with Dr. Marilyn Friend.
Intervention in School and Clinic, 37(4), 223-228.

- Bryant, D. P. & Barrera, M. C. (2009, September). Changing roles for educators within the framework of response-to-intervention. *Intervention in School and Clinic* 2009, Volume 45, Number 1, pp. 72-79.
- Buffum, A., Mattos, M. & Weber, C. (2009). Pyramid response to intervention: RTI, professional learning communities, and how to respond when kids don't learn. Solutions Tree; Bloomington, Indiana.
- Burrello, L. C., Lashley, C., & Beatty, E. E. (2001). *Educating all students together: How school leaders create unified systems*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press, Incorporated, A Sage Publication Company.
- Bursten, N., Sears, S., Wilcoxon, A., Cabello, B. & Spagna, M. (2004, March/April). Moving toward inclusive practices. *Remedial and Special Education*, 25(2), 104-115.
- Cook, L. & Downing, J. (2005). The practicalities of collaboration in special education service delivery: An interview by Sally A. Spencer. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 40(5), 296-300.
- Council for Exceptional Children (2004). Definition of well-prepared special education teacher. CEC Board of Directors. Retrieved March 2007 from <http://www.ideapractices.org/>
- Council for Exceptional Children (2001). *Implementing IDEA: A guide for principals*. Reston, VA: Author.
- Coutinho, M. J. & Repp, A. C. (1999). *Inclusion: The integration of students with Disabilities*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Incorporated.

- Crockett, J. B. (2002). Special Education's role in preparing responsive leaders for inclusive schools. *Remedial and Special Education, 23*(3), 157-168.
- Crockett, J. B. & Kauffman, J. M. (1998). Taking inclusion back to its roots. *Education Leadership, 56*(2),
- Department of Public Instruction Annual Public Report for Students with Disabilities (2006-07). Retrieved November 2007 from www.nccas.org/apr2006-2007/apr900sy200607.html#indicator5.
- Dillon-Peterson. (1981). *Staff development/organization development*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, Virginia.
- Dieker, L. A. (2001). What are the characteristics of "effective" middle and high school co-taught teams for students with disabilities? *Preventing School Failure, 46.2*(10), 14.
- DiPaola, M. F., & Walther-Thomas, C. (2003). Principals and special education: The critical role of school leaders. Prepared for the Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education and the National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education. U. S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research & Improvement Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC).
- Friend, M. (2007, February). The co-teaching partnership. *Educational Leadership, 64*(5), 48-52.
- Gable, R. A. & Hendrickson, J. M. (2004). Teaching all the students: A mandate for educators. In J. Choate (Ed.), *Successful inclusive teaching: Proven ways to correct special needs*. (4th Ed.), Pearson Education, Incorporated, 412-417.
- Garrick-Duhaney, L. M. & Salend, S. J. (2000). Parental perceptions of inclusive educational placements. *Remedial and Special Education, 21*(2), 121-128.

- Gerber, S. (1991). Supporting the collaborative process. *Preventing School Failure*, 35(4).
- Giangreco, M., Dennis, R., Cloninger, C., Edleman, S., & Schattman, R. (1993). "I've counted Jon": Transformational experiences of teachers educating students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 59(4) 359-372.
- Giangreco, M. F., & Doyle, M. B. (2000). Curricular and instructional considerations for teaching students with disabilities in general education classrooms. In S. Wade, *Inclusive education: A casebook and readings for prospective and practicing teachers*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Incorporated.
- Gomm, R., Hammersley, M., & Foster, P. (2000). *Case study method*. London ECZA4PU: Sage Publications.
- Goor, M. K. & Schwenn, J. O. (1997). Preparing principals for leadership in special education. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 32(3), 133.
- Governor Easley's Teacher Working Conditions Initiative: Teacher Working Conditions Survey (2008). Retrieved October 2008 from <http://ncteachingconditions.org/reports>
- Grenot-Scheyer, M., Fisher, M., & Staub, D. (2001). *Lessons learned in inclusive education*. Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company.
- Guzman, N. (1997). Leadership for successful inclusive schools: A study of principal behaviors. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 35(5), 439-450.
- Hagan-Burke, S., & Jefferson, G. L. (2002, Spring). Using data to promote academic benefit for included students with mild disabilities. *Preventing School Failure* 46.3(7), 112.
- Havelock, R. G. & Hamilton, J. L. (2004). *Guiding change in special education: How to help schools with new ideas and practices*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press, A Sage Publication Company.

- Huber, K. D., Rosenfeld, J. G., & Fiorello, C. A. (2001). The differential impact of inclusion and inclusive practices on high, average, and low achieving general education students. *Psychology in the Schools*, 38(6).
- Huefner, D. S. (2000). Getting comfortable with special education law: A framework for working with children with disabilities. Norwood, Massachusetts: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Incorporated.
- Idol, L. (2006). Toward inclusion of special education students in general education: A program evaluation of eight schools. *Remedial and Special Education*, 27(2), 77-94.
- Implementing RTI Using Title I, Title III and CEIS Funds: Key Issues for decision Makers. U. S. Department of Education Presentation. Retrieved January 2010 from www.ed.gov
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). Retrieved August 28, 2010 from <http://IDEA.ed.gov>.
- Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004, Part 300, Section 662, 20 USC 1462: Personnel Development to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities (p. 118, Statue 2775). Retrieved February 3, 2011 from <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/leg/edpicks.jhtml?s>
- Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (1988). *Student achievement through staff development*. White Plains, New York: Longman.
- Kauffman, J. M. (1996). Think about these things: Gentleness, truth, justice, excellence. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 19, 218 -232.
- Kauffman, J. & Hallahan, D. P. (2005). *Special education: What it is and why we need it*. Boston: Pearson.

- Klopf, G. J. (1974). *The principal and staff development in the elementary school*. Bank Street College of Education, Second Printing. Occasional paper No. 4 of the Princess Series.
- Kluth, P., Straut, D. M., & Biklen, D. P. (2003). *Access to academics for all students: Critical approaches to inclusive curriculum, instruction, and policy*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Incorporated.
- Kochhar, C. A., West, L. L. & Taymans, J. M. (1996). *Handbook for successful inclusion*. Gaithersburg, Maryland: Aspen Publishers, Incorporated.
- Kochhar, C.A., West, L. L.& Taymans, J. M. (2002). *Successful inclusion: Practical strategies for a shared responsibility*. Upper Saddle River, New York: Prentice Hall, Incorporated.
- Krueger, R. A. (1998). *Analyzing and reporting focus group results*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Incorporated.
- Lake, J. F. & Billingsley, B. (2000). An analysis of factors that contribute to parent-school conflict in special education. *Remedial and Special Education*, 21(4), 240-251.
- Mastropieri, M. A., Scruggs, T. E., Graetz, J., Norland, J., Gardizi, W. & McDuffie, K. (2005, May). Case studies in co-teaching in the content areas: Successes, failures, and challenges. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 40(5), 260-270.
- North Carolina School Report Cards (2004-05, 2005-06, 2006-07). Retrieved November 2008 from <http://www.ncreportcards.org>.
- National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics (Table 50: Children 3 to 21 years old served under idea, types of disability, selected years 1976-77 through 2007-08. Retrieved September 4, 2010 from <http://nces.ed.gov/>

- McLeskey, J., Henry, D. & Axelrod, M. I. (1999, Fall). Inclusion of students with learning disabilities: An examination of data from reports to congress. *Exceptional Children*, 66, 55.
- McLaughlin, M. J. (2002). Examining special and general education collaborative practices in exemplary schools. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 13(4), 279-283.
- Mills, W. D. (June 2004, Presentation). Access to the general curriculum: what it really means. Retrieved August 27, 2010 from ncdpi.org.
- Moore, L. V. & Young, R. B. (1987). *Expanding opportunities for professional education*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Incorporated.
- Morocco, C. C. & Aguilar, C. M., (2002). Co-teaching understanding: A school-wide model. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 13(4), 315-347;
- Mullens, J. E., Leighton, M. S. Laguarda, K. G., O'Brien, E. (1996). Student learning, teaching quality, and professional development: Theoretical linkages, current measurement, and recommendations for future data collection. Working Paper No. 96-28. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.
- Murphy, D. M. (1996, May). Implications of inclusion for general and special education. *The Elementary School Journal*, 96(5), 469-493.
- National Research Center on Learning Disabilities. Finding common ground: consensus statements. *NRCLD Information Digest #2*. Retrieved July 12, 2007 from www.nrclld.org,
- National Research Center on Learning Disabilities. *Prevalence of learning disabilities*. Retrieved April 7, 2007 from www.nrclld.org/publications/digests/digest3.shtml.

- Odden, A. R. & Picus, L. O. (2004). *School Finance: A Policy Perspective*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Osborne, A. G., Dimattia, P., & Curran, F. X. (1993). *Effective management of special education programs*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Paris, C., Eyman, A. Morris, L., & Sutton, T. (2007, Summer). Facing the storm, turning the tide: Using practitioner research to meet children's and families' need in an inclusive setting. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education International*, 21(4).
- Rea, P. J., McLaughlin, V. L., Walther-Thomas, C. (2002). Outcomes for students with learning disabilities in inclusive and pullout programs. *Exceptional Children*, 68(2), 203-222.
- Rhodes, C., Stokes M. & Hampton, G. (2004). *A practical guide to mentoring, coaching and peer-networking: teacher professional development in schools & colleges*. New York, New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Rossmann, G. B. & Rallis, S. F. (2003). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Incorporated.
- Sage, D. D. & Burrello, L. C. (1994). *Leadership in educational reform: An administrator's guide to changes in special education*. Baltimore, Maryland: Paul H. Brooks Publishing Company.
- Silverman, D. (2004). *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice*. Sage Publications. London.
- Stake, R. E.(1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Incorporated.
- Taylor, G. (2000). *Parental involvement: A practical guide for collaboration and teamwork for students with disabilities*. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas Publishing, LTD.

United States Department of Education, *A nation accountable: Twenty-five years after a nation at risk*, Washington, D. C. 2008. Retrieved September 6, 2010 from

<http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/accountable/>

U. S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, *A New Era: Revitalizing Special Education for Children and Their Families*, Washington, D. C. 2002. Retrieved September 6, 2010 from

www2.ed.gov/inits/commissionsboards/whspecialeducation/reports/images/Pres_Rep.pdf

United States Department of Education. *Thirty years of progress in educating children with disabilities through IDEA* (Archived Information 2007). Retrieved September 6,

2010 from www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/leg/idea/history30.html. United States

Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs, (2005). *Elementary/Secondary Education: Children with Disabilities in Public Schools. Data Analysis.*

Vaughn, S. & Linan-Thompson, S. (2003, Fall). What is special about special education for students with learning disabilities? *Journal of Special Education* 37.3: 140(8).

Walther-Thomas, C., & Bryant, M. (1996). Planning for effective co-teaching: The key to successful inclusion. *Remedial & Special Education*. 17(4).

Walther-Thomas, C. S., (1997, July/August). Co-teaching experiences: The benefits and problems that teachers and principals report over time. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 30(4).

Walther-Thomas, C., Korinek, L., McLaughlin, V. L., & Williams, B. T. (2000). *Collaboration for inclusive education: Developing successful programs*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Weiss, M. P. & Lloyd, J. W. (2002). Congruence between roles and actions of secondary special educators in co-taught and special education settings. *The Journal of Special Education*, 36(2), 58-68.

Zaretsky, L. (2004). Responding ethically to complex school-based issues in special education. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 32(2), 63-77

Appendix A

Letter Requesting Use of the Star Model

8428 Brookings Drive

Charlotte, North Carolina 28269

February 14, 2008

Dr. Jean Crockett, Associate Professor

University of Florida

College of Education

Norman Hall G315M

Gainesville, Florida 32611

Dear Dr. Crockett:

My name is Thelma G. Smith, doctoral student from the Virginia Tech Richmond Cohort 2004. I was a member of the spring 2005 class which you taught for advanced special education. This communication is sent to request your approval to use your "Star Model" for the roles of administrators as the conceptual framework for my research. I am presently preparing the prospectus whose title is "Leadership for Practical Implementation of Inclusion". The research will be a case study of an urban school in the Central Piedmont area of North Carolina.

The in-depth study will provide descriptions of the leadership acts of administrators in a school who have implemented inclusionary practices for three (3) or more years. During the last three years, the school must have met the annual measurable objectives for Adequate Yearly Progress under the act, *No Child Left Behind* for students with disabilities at least 2 of the last 3 years. I believe this criterion provides time for ethical practices to permeate the culture of the school. Another criterion for selection of a school is that it uses a co-teaching model as a service

delivery. This criterion will address the principle of effective programming. All five principles will be addressed in the research; however, the selection of the school is driven by evidence of effective programming as measured by state and local assessments.

The principles of the “Star Model” shall serve as the framework for gathering data for practical leadership acts that impacted student achievement. It is hoped that this description will provide you with the information needed in order to obtain your approval. If further clarity is needed, please do not hesitate to contact me at the information below. Your comments are also appreciated.

Sincerely,

Thelma G. Smith

Virginia Tech Doctoral Student 2004

(Home) 704-274-5530

(Cellular) 704-560-3586

Tgsmith3@vt.edu

tgsmith3@aol.com

Appendix B

Approval to Use the Star Model

From: Crockett, Jean B [jcrockett@coe.ufl.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2008 9:03 PM
To: Thelma G Smith
Subject: RE: Star Model Approval Received

Dear Thelma,

You are so welcome! I'm sorry you didn't get the first note I'd sent in response to your original email. (I hope you get this note). I'm always happy to grant permission for the use of the Star Model, and I'm so glad that you find it useful. When I got into the office today to find your messages, I wanted to be sure to call you ASAP. I'll check your earlier email to see if there's a form you'd sent for me to fill out.

If there isn't, this email documents my approval for you to use the Star Model (Crockett, 2002) for your dissertation research. I'll be interested to hear the outcome!

I wish you all the very best,

Jean

Jean B. Crockett, Ph.D.

University of Florida

College of Education, Department of Special Education

PO Box 117050, Norman Hall G315

Gainesville, FL 32611

352-392-0701, ext 25

Appendix C

IRB Letter of Approval



Office of Research Compliance
 Institutional Review Board
 2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)
 Blacksburg, Virginia 24060
 540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0959
 e-mail irb@vt.edu
 Website: www.irb.vt.edu

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 3, 2010

TO: Travis W. Twiford, Thelma Smith, Carol Cash

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires June 13, 2011)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Principals' Leadership for Implementation and Support of Inclusion

IRB NUMBER: 09-171

Effective September 2, 2010, the Virginia Tech IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore, approved the continuation request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at <http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm> (please review before the commencement of your research).

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved as: **Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 6, 7**

Protocol Approval Date: **9/2/2010** (protocol's initial approval date: 9/2/2009)

Protocol Expiration Date: **9/1/2011**

Continuing Review Due Date*: **8/18/2011**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals / work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

Appendix D

Thelma G. Smith, Doctoral Candidate
Richmond Cohort 2004

Informed Consent Agreement
4.1 IRB Application
INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT

Principals' Leadership for Implementation and Support of Inclusion

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As the basis of her dissertation, Mrs. Thelma G. Smith is initiating a research study of principals' leadership in implementing and supporting inclusive practices for students with disabilities who are served in general education classrooms for instruction in reading and mathematics. Mrs. Smith would like to interview the principal individually in order to gather data regarding practices that have lead to the school's successful attainment of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The Star Model by Crockett (2002) will be explained to the participants for it serves as the framework for comparing the data.

Physical artifacts will be examined that reflect the textual and silent messages of the beliefs and practices followed in delivering services for children with disabilities in inclusive settings.

The principal was chosen because of the criteria for purposeful sampling which included the schools' attainment of AYP while reporting 40 or more students in the subgroup, students with disabilities, indicating that the student group met the accountability measures for performance of students on the End of Grade Tests for the education service district in the southeastern United States. The participant was chosen for this study based on the ability to provide the information necessary to complete the study.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the case study of the principal is to provide research-based leadership practices in implementing and supporting inclusion so that services for students with disabilities

Appendix E

Thelma G. Smith, Doctoral Candidate
Richmond Cohort 2004

Informed Consent Agreement
4.1 IRB Application
INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT FOR THE FOCUS GROUP

Principals' Leadership for Implementation and Support of Inclusion

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As the basis of her dissertation, Mrs. Thelma G. Smith is initiating a research study of principals' leadership in implementing and supporting inclusive practices for students with disabilities who are served in general education classrooms for instruction in reading and mathematics. Mrs. Smith would like to request your participation in a focus group discussion to be held at the school. The focus group will be composed of teachers in general and special education who serve as co-teachers or who use an alternate model to deliver services for students with disabilities. The discussions of participants in the focus groups serve to triangulate the data regarding leadership practices and instructional strategies that have lead to the school's successful attainment of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

The teachers will be chosen because of the criteria for purposeful sampling which included the delivery of services for students with disabilities using a model of co-teaching, and the school's attainment of AYP while reporting 40 or more students in the subgroup, students with disabilities, indicating that the student group met the accountability measures for performance of students on the End of Grade Tests for the education service district in the southeastern United States. Participants were chosen for this study based on their ability to provide the information necessary to complete the study.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the focus group is to provide descriptions of support that have been beneficial in delivering services for students with disabilities in the general education classrooms

Appendix F

Demographic Information for Principal and Focus Group Participants

Please complete the demographic information by checking the box in front of all applicable choices. This information will be summarized in describing the participants in the study, “How do principals describe their leadership in the implementation and support of instruction for students with disabilities?”

Pseudonym (Member Chosen) _____ Gender: Male Female

Email _____

Race: White Black American Indian Asian Multiracial

What is your present position?

Principal General Education Teacher Exceptional Education Teacher

How many years have you served in this capacity?

0 – 3 4 -7 8 – 12 More than 13

What was your undergraduate degree? Check all that apply.

General Education Elementary (PK – 5) Other _____

Middle (6-8) Secondary (9-12) Special Education

If applicable, in what area(s) is/are your graduate degree(s)? _____

Are you Nationally Board Certified? Yes No

In the past 3 – 5 years, how many college courses in special education have you taken?

0 1 2 3 4 5 or more

In the last 12 months, indicate the professional developments in which you participated for working with students with disabilities, and the length of training. Check all that apply.

- Observed other teachers or principals
- 1 day 2 days 3- 4 days 5 or more
- Read literature or viewed videos to increase my knowledge
- 1 day 2 days 3- 4 days 5 or more
- Attended conferences, workshop or other training
- 1 day 2 days 3- 4 days 5 or more days

What reason did you attend the training?

- Training required Personal selection

How many years have you participated in inclusive practices?

- 0 – 3 4 – 7 8 – 10 More than 10

Did you volunteer to participate in inclusion or were you designated?

- Yes No No, but I'd considered it before

Appendix G

Member Check

Pseudonym _____

Date _____

Please read the final electronic transmission of the transcript for the focus group interview. After reading, please check the box for yes or no if you agree with the statements regarding the description you provided in the interview.

Are you satisfied that your anonymity was maintained so you are not personally identifiable?	Yes	No
--	-----	----

Based on your interview, do you find the content of the report accurate?	Yes	No
--	-----	----

Were quotes you gave in your review, if used, used accurately and appropriately?	Yes	No
--	-----	----

Do the themes presented in this report include the information you gave in your interview?	Yes	No
--	-----	----

Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, and Schattman (1993), p. 363

My signature indicates my agreement with the information contained in the transcript of the final focus group interviews.

Pseudonym _____

Date _____

School Identified as _____ (Pseudonym)

Appendix H

Examination of Physical Artifacts

Principal _____ Date _____

School _____ Interviewer _____

Start Time _____ Ending Time _____ Location _____

The listing includes requested artifacts (if available) which will be analyzed according to the framework of the Star Model. The principal proposed for the study shall be asked for these and additional artifacts that may be available for review.

Physical Artifacts	Date Reviewed	Comparisons to the Star Model	Comments/Page Number (May include if evident: Audience, Antecedents, Expected Effect, Distributed Leadership)
School Improvement Plans			
Staff Handbook 2008-09			
Agenda of Meetings and Minutes			
School Leadership Team Minutes			
Parent Communications and Handbook			
Teacher Working Conditions Survey 2008			
Other (Types of Disabilities, other)			

Appendix I

Teacher Working Conditions Survey 2008

Factors	J. P. Allison	District	North
	Elementary		Carolina
(Percentage of Teachers Responding to Survey)	School		

TWCS Q5.1 School Leadership: Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with statements about leadership in your school.

Combined response for strongly agree and agree in percentages

- a. There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within the school. (EP)
- d. The school leadership shields teachers from disruptions, allowing teachers to focus on educating students (PP).
- e. The school leadership consistently enforces rules for student conduct (PP).
- f. The school leadership support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom (PP).
- g. Opportunities are available for members of the community to actively contribute to this school's success (PP).
- h. The school leadership consistently supports teachers (PP, EP).
-

k. Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction (EPR).

l. Teacher performance evaluations are handled in an appropriate manner ((EPR).

m. The procedures for teacher performance evaluations are consistent (EPR).

Q5.4 Overall, the school leadership in my school is effective (PP).

Q5.5 Percentage of teachers who feel the principal is the person who most often provides instructional leadership at your school (EPR)?

Source: North Carolina Teaching Working Conditions Survey 2008. Retrieved February 15, 2010 from <http://www.ncteachingconditions.org/reports08>

Note. For an individual school report, the school must have at least a 40% response rate and a minimum of 5 faculty members responding. Scale is 1 to 5 with 1 -strongly disagree, 2 - somewhat disagree, 3 - neither disagree nor agree, 4 - somewhat agree, 5 - strongly agree.

Appendix J

Transcriber and Educator Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Transcriber or Educator _____ Position _____

Address _____ Telephone Number _____

Date of Agreement _____ Expected Dates of Service _____ Affiliation _____

Relationship (if any) to Researcher _____ Referred by _____

CONFIDENTIALITY

As transcriber or educator assisting in this investigation, I understand that all data will be kept in confidence to the maximum extent possible. I understand that I am not to divulge the names of participants or location of the investigation. I understand that my legal, given name will be provided to participants and advisors upon requests.

I have read the confidentiality statement and understand the statements apply to me in the role of transcriber for the handwritten field notes and the data from the digital recorder or educator assisting in the investigation. I will confirm that at the end of the investigation, all data will be removed from the computer memory in which I use, and that only the primary researchers will store the final document until one year after publication.

I did not accept a gratuity for my services.

Printed Name of Transcriber _____ Date _____

Signature of Transcriber/Educator _____ Signature of Researcher _____

Appendix K

Observation Protocol for Initial Interview with the Principal

Field Notes

Principal _____ Date _____

School _____ Interviewer _____

Start Time _____ Ending Time _____ Location _____

Observations will be made upon the initial entry for the first interview with the principal. The field notes will be handwritten for the items below.

Setting _____
_____Activities _____
_____Interactions _____
_____People _____
_____Impressions _____
_____Difficulties _____
_____Surprises _____

Appendix L

Focus Group Observation Matrices

Principal _____ Date _____

School _____ Interviewer _____

Start Time _____ Ending Time _____ Location _____

The researcher will write tally marks beside the respondents' pseudonyms and under the categories for energy levels as observations are taken of the focus group discussion.

Energy Level during Focus Group Discussion

	5	4	3	2	1	0
Respondents	High	Spontaneous	Probed	Single	Gaps of	No
Pseudonyms	Engagement	Engagement	Requests	Response	Silence	Responses
PJ						
VA Girl						
George						
Mary						

Voice Level during Focus Group Discussion

Principles of the Star Model					
	1.0 EP	2.0 IC	3.0 EUL	4.0 EPR	5.0 PP
Respondents	High	High	High	High	High
Pseudonyms	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
PJ					
VA Girl					
George					
Mary					

Frequency of Responses during Focus Group Discussion

Principles of the Star Model						
Respondents	1.0 EP	2.0 IC	3.0 EUL	4.0 EPR	5.0 PP	Totals
Pseudonyms						
PJ						
VA Girl						
George						
Mary						

Observations of Participants during Focus Group Discussion

	Respondent	Respondent	Respondent	Respondent
	PJ	VA Girl	George	Mary
Listened				
Used wait time to consider questions				
Waited his/her turn				
Responded while others were talking				
Side conversations				
Emotional outbursts				
Passionate				
Rapid speech patterns				
Slow speech patterns				
Moderate/normal speech patterns				
Opinions changed				
Responses dominated by one or more persons				

Note: 1 = observed during discussions; 0= not observed during discussions. Codes appeared several times in responses or lack of responses by participant.

Appendix M

Perceptions of roles of teachers for J. P. Allison School, District, State (percentages) 2008

Factors	Large to Primary Roles			Small to Moderate Roles			No Role at All		
	School	District	State	School	District	State	School	District	State
Selecting instructional materials and resources (EUL, EPR)									
Devising teaching techniques (EPR, IC)									
Determining the content of in-service professional development programs(EPR)									
Deciding how the school budget will be spent (EUL)									

Source: Teacher Working Conditions Survey 2008. Retrieved October 26, 2010 from www.ncpublicschools.org

Appendix N

Perceptions of School and Educator Leadership (Percentages)

Teacher Working Conditions Survey 2008 Question	Strongly/ Somewhat Agree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Strongly/ Somewhat Disagree
The faculty is committed to helping every student learn (EP, IC, PP).			
The school leadership consistently supports teachers (EP).			
Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction (EPR).			
Teachers are centrally involved in decision making about educational issues (EP, PP)			
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about professional development (EPR).			
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about empowering teachers.			

Source: North Carolina Teaching Working Conditions Survey 2008. Retrieved February 15, 2010 from

<http://www.ncteachingconditions.org/reports08>

