

Proportional Representation of Students with Disabilities Based on Race, Gender,
and Socio-Economics Status in Virginia between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014: How
Has It Changed?

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Proportional Representation of Students with Disabilities Based on Race, Gender, and Socio-Economics Status in Virginia between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014: How Has It Changed?

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Abstract

Although there are strong opinions both for and against identifying exceptional children, it is important school divisions as well as schools ensure that student sub groups are not overrepresented in special education.

The purpose of this study was to determine the representation of students in special education by category (SWD, ED, SLD, and ID) and by demographic identifier (Ethnicity, Gender, SES) for 2008-2009 and to determine changes in representation between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 in the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The 2013-2014 data reported in the Casey (2017) study were used in this study. In addition, this study examined specific disability categories by race, gender, and socioeconomic status from all 132 Virginia public school divisions and compared data from 2008-2009 to data from 2013-2014.

Data for the study were retrieved from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) related to specific categories. Findings included a comparison of the data for 2008-2009 and 2013-2014. In 2008-2009 some data were missing, which may have contributed to the limited findings. Overrepresentation was determined through the use of the standard 10 formula for overrepresentation.

Findings for 2008-2009 revealed that Black students were identified as over represented in the area of Intellectual Disabilities (ID) in 2% of the school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. In the school year 2008-2009, 0% of school divisions identified Hispanic students as disproportionate in the areas of ID, Students with Disabilities (SWD), Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), and Emotionally Disturbed (ED). In the 2008-2009 school year, 2% of the school divisions in Virginia identified economically disadvantaged students as disproportionate in the disability category SWD, and 20% of the school divisions identified economically disadvantaged students as disproportionate in the disability category SLD. Additionally, 17% of the school divisions identified economically disadvantaged students as disproportionate in the disability category ED, and 38% percent of the school divisions in Virginia identified

economically disadvantaged students as disproportionate in the disability category ID. The 2008-2009 data, when compared to the 2013-2014 data, were less disproportionate.

Proportional Representation of Students with Disabilities Based on Race, Gender, and Socio-Economics Status in Virginia between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014: How Has It Changed?

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General Audience Abstract

The accurate identification of students for special education is necessary both for school divisions and for students. Thus, it is important that school divisions as well as schools ensure student sub groups are not overrepresented in special education.

The purpose of this study was to determine representation of students in special education by category (SWD, ED, SLD, and ID) and by demographic variables (Ethnicity, Gender, SES) for 2008-2009, and to determine changes in representation between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 in the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The study utilized 2013-2014 data reported in the Casey (2017) study.

Data from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) were used for the study. Analysis of the data revealed less disproportionate representation in each of the groups examined in 2008-2009 when compared to the data reported by Casey (2017). In 2008-2009 some data were missing, which may have contributed to a lack of over representation in several areas. While Blacks were overidentified in ID in a few divisions in 2008-2009, Economically disadvantaged students were overidentified in a larger number of school divisions in SLD, ED, and ID. However, the 2008-2009 data, when compared to the 2013-2014 data, indicated less disproportionality.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. I first wish to acknowledge my mother, Barbara I. Walker, who supported and guided me throughout my lifetime. She encouraged me to pursue my professional and educational goals. Her unconditional love, sacrifices, encouragement, and strength have provided me with the confidence to achieve whatever I set my mind to. She is responsible for developing the individual I am today. Her love for education and her pushing me to be my personal best will forever be inherent in my inner most being. My mother was the epitome of a “Phenomenal Woman” who never met a stranger and was caring, independent and loving. She went without so that her children would never want for anything. She stood beside me and wanted to see me through this journey.

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Finally, to my siblings, Lynne and Scott you are my backbone. You make me want to do better and keep going. Know that everything I do is because of the love I have for you. We are sisters and brother, but we are friends. No matter how far away we are from one another, we are close at heart. I love you more than words could express. I will forever be your big-little sister.

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Chapter 1

Context of the Study

With the implementation of federal law and policies using the States Performance Plan (SPP) indicators 9 and 10, states are required to monitor and report on the scope of representation of minority students identified for special education services. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) requires school divisions to take corrective action if findings indicate there is overrepresentation of students reported in special education (Virginia Department of Education, 2010). According to Artiles, Trent, and Palmer (2004):

In 1968, the U.S. Office of Civil Rights began sampling school districts for special education student data. African American students were found to be over identified and overrepresented in special education programs, specifically in the categories of Mental Retardation (MR) and Emotionally Disturbed (ED) (p. 3).

Misidentification of students may lead to unwarranted services and supports for those students. Some educators believe that some of the labels used to identify students with disabilities may stigmatize them and can deny them opportunities in the least restrictive environment. For example, students who are misidentified are more likely than those who are not to have limited access to higher level rigorous curriculum (Harry & Klingner, 2006).

On December 3, 2004, President Bush signed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, which reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The president believed that The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 would help children learn better by encouraging accountability for results, enhancing parent involvement, using proven practices and materials, providing more flexibility, and decreasing paperwork for teachers, states and local school districts.

The Virginia Department of Education utilized and relied upon federal regulations for guidance in the formulation of state regulations. These federal regulations focused on rulemaking, support and facilitation of special education programs. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, as of 2014–2015, the number of children and youth aged 3–21 receiving special education services was 6.6 million, or 13%, of all public school students.

Overview of the Study

This study was a comparison of the data in the study completed in 2017 by Casey with data from 2008-2009. In the Casey study, *Proportional Representation, based on the Risk Ratio formula, of Students with Disabilities Based on Race, Gender, and Socio-Economics Status in Virginia*, data from the Virginia Department of Education for the 2013-2014 school years were analyzed. In this study, data from the Virginia Department of Education from the 2008-2009 school years were examined, along with data from the Casey study, to assess changes in both representation statistics and trends in the representation of students in grades K-12 with and without disabilities. The disability categories that were examined included overall identification of Students with Disabilities (SWD), and the specific categories of Emotional Disability (ED), Specific Learning Disability (SLD), and Intellectual Disability (ID). In addition, gender (male and female) and racial group (Black and Hispanic) were examined, as was the socioeconomic level of economic disadvantage based upon students' eligibility for the National School Lunch Program free or reduced price lunch. The data were retrieved from VDOE for each of the 132 Virginia Public School divisions from 2008-2009 school years and from the Casey study. The data were examined and analyzed to determine a measure of representation for students with and without disabilities by category, using risk-ratio as the measure of disproportionality. The results were disaggregated by the demographic categories of race, gender, and socioeconomic status.

Justification for the Study

Special education was established to provide needed supports to students who are not achieving adequately.

If special education brings needed services to struggling students, then why is disproportionality of concern? The need for and purpose of special education is to improve outcomes for students who exhibit poor performance on academic and other measures and are consequently identified as having disabilities (Maydosz, 2014, p. 82).

Disproportionality is of concern because minority students have been overrepresented in these programs for decades. Consequently, such identification for special education services often means that students are placed in more restrictive environments than their peers (Maydosz, 2014, p. 82).

According to the study completed by Casey in 2017, “Understanding what, if any, progress has been made could help policy makers and school administrators determine appropriate next steps in addressing the disproportionality phenomena” (p.14). The comparison of the data from 2008-2009 to the data presented from 2013-2014 allowed the researcher to assess whether there were any changes in representation of students in special education. Because of the recent emphasis placed on overrepresentation on the federal and state levels, it was anticipated that the most current data would reveal changes in proportionality.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine representation of students in special education by category (SWD, ED, SLD, and ID) and by demographic (Ethnicity, Gender, SES) for 2008-2009, and to determine changes in representation between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 in the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The study utilized 2013-2014 data reported in the Casey (2017) study.

Data from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) were related to overall representation of Students with Disabilities and specific categories of special education disabilities (Intellectual Disability, Learning Disability, and Emotional Disability), socioeconomic status, gender and racial backgrounds, particularly African-American and Hispanic. Findings included a comparison of the data for 2008-2009 to 2013-2014. In 2008-2009 some data were missing, which may have contributed to a lack of over representation in several areas.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the researcher in investigating the representation of students in special education programs in public school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2008-2009 as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater.

1. What is the status of representation of students from selected racial groups, students of both male and female genders, and economically disadvantaged students in school divisions in special education programs in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater?
2. What is the status of representation of Black and Hispanic, male and female, and

- economically disadvantaged students in SLD special education programs in school divisions in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater?
3. What is the representation of Black and Hispanic, male and female, and economically disadvantaged students in ED special education programs in school division in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater?
 4. What is the status of representation of Black and Hispanic, male and female, and economically disadvantaged students in ID special education programs in school divisions in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater?
 5. What changes in disproportionality, if any, have occurred between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014?

Definition of Terms

The following key terms are used throughout the study.

African American. “A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa” (VDOE, n.d., *Race & Ethnicity Data Reporting*).

Disproportionality. “[T]he over identification or under identification of the number of students of a particular racial/ethnic group in any given category of special education.” (VDOE, 2018, p. 36). For the purpose of this study, disproportionate representation was determined by using Indicator 10 of the Special Education Performance Report, and disproportionate representation was determined for those school divisions that exceeded the risk-ratio threshold of 2.0. (VDOE, n.d., *Instructions for Reporting indicators 9 and 10 data*)

Economically Disadvantaged. “A student who is a member of a household that meets the income eligibility guidelines for free or reduced-price school meals (less than or equal to 185% of Federal Poverty Guidelines)” (VDOE, 2012b).

Educational placement. “[T]he overall instructional setting in which the student receives his education including the special education and related services provided.... 34 CFR 300.327.)” (VDOE, 2011, p. 4).

Emotional Disability (ED). [A] condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s

educational performance: (34 CFR 300.8(c)(4)) 1. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; 2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; 3. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; 4. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or 5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (VDOE, 2011, p.4)

Evaluation. “[P]rocedures used in accordance with this chapter to determine whether a child has a disability and the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs. (34 CFR 300.15)” (VDOE, 2011, p.4).

Hispanic. “A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South American, Central American or other Spanish culture or origin” (VDOE, n.d., *Race & Ethnicity Data Reporting*).

Indicator 10. “Division identified with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification” (VDOE (n.d.). *Special Education Data Collection*).

Individualized education program (IEP). “[A] written statement for a child with a disability.... The IEP specifies the individual educational needs of the child and what special education and related services are necessary to meet the child’s educational needs. (34 CFR 300.22)” (VDOE, 2011, p.6)

Intellectual disability (ID). “[F]ormerly known as “mental retardation” and means significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. (34 CFR 300.8(c)(6))” (VDOE, 2011, p. 6).

Least restrictive environment” (LRE). T]o the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities... are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes... occurs only when 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. (34 CFR 300.114 through 34 CFR 300.120) (VDOE, 2011, p. 6)

Local Educational Agency (LEA). “[A] local school division governed by a local school board, a state-operated program that is funded and administered by the Commonwealth of Virginia.... (§ 22.1-346 C of the Code of Virginia; 34 CFR 300.28)” (VDOE. 2011, p. 7)

Risk ratio. “[A] risk ratio measure is applied to division level data to identify disproportionate representation. Through an extensive analysis, VDOE has determined that a risk ratio of 2.0 or above is representative of disproportionate representation” (VDOE, n.d., *Instructions for Reporting indicators 9 and 10 data*).

Specific Learning Disability (SLD). [A] disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. (VDOE, 2011, p.11)

Student with a Disability (SWD). [A] child evaluated in accordance with the provisions of this chapter as having an intellectual disability, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disability (referred to in this part as “emotional disability”), an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, an other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services.... (§ 22.1-213 of the Code of Virginia; 34 CFR 300.8(a)(1) and 34 CFR 300.8(a)(2)(i) and (ii)). (VDOE, 2011, p. 2)

Suppression Rule. “Any group filtered on economically disadvantaged status, Limited English Proficiency status and/or disability status with fewer than 10 students is not included in the data” (VDOE, n.d., *Data dictionary*, p.2).

Limitations

All data were retrieved from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) website. The data were limited to Fall Membership, December 1 Child Count, 2008-2009, and compared to data from 2013-2014 reported in the Casey study. Proportional representation, based on the Risk Ratio formula of students with Disabilities based on Race, Gender, and socio-economics status in Virginia was researched. This study is a comparison that was limited to the three special education categories (ID, LD, and ED) and included two ethnicities (Black and Hispanic) and two genders (male and female). The study was also limited by the reporting requirements related to small populations in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The two years that were compared may have limited the study in that no other years or states were examined.

Delimitations

The Commonwealth of Virginia was chosen for the study because of interest the researcher has in learning whether there have been changes in representativeness based on these data and those of Casey (2017). This study does not allow findings to be applied to other states. Finally, this study is limited to three categories (LD, ED, and ID), two ethnicities (Hispanic and Black), economically disadvantaged, and gender. The study does not include other disabilities, ethnicities, or other factors. These areas were designated to allow for a comparison of the results to those of Casey (2017).

Organization of the Study

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 includes an introduction, justification for the study, research questions and major definitions. Chapter 2 contains a literature review that provides a foundation for this investigation. Chapter 3 includes the methodology that incorporates a description of the population to be examined. Chapter 4 includes the data from 2008-2009 as well as an analysis of the data. Chapter 5 includes the findings, implications, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine representation of students in special education by category (SWD, ED, SLD, and ID) and by demographic identifier (Ethnicity, Gender, SES) for 2008-2009, and to determine changes in representation between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 in the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The study utilized 2013-2014 data reported in the Casey (2017) study.

Data from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) were related to specific categories of special education disabilities (Intellectual Disability, Learning Disability, and Emotional Disability), socioeconomic status, gender and racial backgrounds, particularly African-American and Hispanic. Findings included a comparison of the data for 2008-2009 to 2013-2014. In 2008-2009 some data were missing, which may have contributed to a lack of over representation in several areas.

This chapter includes the examination of pertinent research related to proportionality in special education. The review of literature includes research on minority students and students of low socioeconomic status who are identified in specific disability categories.

Current research asserts that some minority students are found eligible for special education services at a larger level than majority students:

On average, African American and Hispanic students are found eligible for special education services at higher rates than their populations would suggest, while White and Asian students are less likely to be found eligible for special education relative to the size of their respective populations (Deninger, 2008, p.1).

As a result, school districts throughout the nation examine whether minority students are actually delayed as compared to their peers, or whether they are being misidentified. The overrepresentation of minority students in special education has been of national concern for many years. “It has been reported that an African American child is one and a half times more likely to be placed in a classroom designed for children with Emotional Disabilities than a White child” (Children’s Defense Fund, 2011, p. 6). Education must be provided to all children in the least restrictive environment (LRE). “It is important to note that the IDEA has determined that

students learn more in general education classes or least restrictive environment” (Children’s Defense Fund, 2011, p. 6). According to Virginia 8VAC20-81-130, students should be placed within the least restrictive environment and students should only be removed from the regular classroom when inclusion inhibits the education of a student (VDOE, 2010). Social attitudes have changed over the years. Practices have been put in place in order to ensure inclusion of children with special needs in schools and other community groups, improvements in medical technology, and advances in educational research of special needs populations.

In this chapter, the researcher examined literature related to disproportional representation of race, gender, and socioeconomic subgroups of students identified for and served in special education. The first section of the chapter focuses on the limitations to those provisions that speak to representation in special education legislation. In the second section of the chapter, over identification of minorities in special education is addressed. The third section focuses on factors related to overrepresentation of minorities in special education. In the fourth section the researcher presents information on the identification process and assessment of biases in special education. Section five of the chapter focuses on teacher perception and training in special education identification and services. The last section discusses special education issues in Virginia.

Special Education Legislation on Representation

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed in order to protect the rights of minorities and those who are underrepresented in the area of education. Prior to the passing of this law, people with disabilities were not included under this law's umbrella of protection. Protections for persons with disabilities were not specifically addressed until 1973, with the passing of The Rehabilitation Act. Section 504 of the Act mandated nondiscrimination of people with disabilities (Regulations of the Offices of the Department of Education, 1973).

The court case and ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) laid the foundation for further legislation. Throughout the country, advocates and parents supported children with disabilities, leading to the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-142). With the passage of this law, any and all children with a disability were guaranteed the right to a free, appropriate public education. Furthermore, the United States Department of Education reported that, with the passing of Public Law 94-142,

there has been and continues to be substantial advancement over the past 35 years in the implementation and management of special education programs for students with disabilities (USDOE, 2010).

According to the Virginia Department of Education, the Early Education for Handicapped Children Program of 1970 was initiated to provide funds for the development and operation of experimental, demonstration, and outreach preschool and early intervention programs for children with disabilities. The subsequent Rehabilitation Act of 1973 determined that it is illegal to discriminate against any person on the basis of disability (VDOE, 2011).

The Education Amendments of 1974 (Public Law 93-380) was put in place to ensure that all students are provided due process and that students are educated in the least restrictive environment. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) was passed by Congress in 1975. Legal standards and requirements were established to provide a free and appropriate public education to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (USDOE, 2010).

The United States Department of Education has spearheaded the movement to reduce disproportionality in the area of special education at both the state and local levels. One of the most notable advancements came on January 8, 2002, when President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The U.S. Department of Education proclaimed that the legislation was the "...most sweeping reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act since ESEA was enactment in 1965" that "...redefines the federal role in K-12 education" (USDOE, 2002). NCLB championed accountability for "... all students, including student groups based on poverty, race and ethnicity, disability and limited English proficiency." (National Council on Disabilities, 2004, p. 17-18).

Such accountability has been expanded by the requirements put forth in the 2004 IDEA revisions, whereby states are required to monitor disproportionate representation in the categories of race or ethnicity as it relates to student placement in special education. In doing so, states must use measurable indicators to avoid inappropriate identification of students of specific racial or ethnic groups [34 CFR 300.600(d)(3)]. 2004 IDEA further indicates that if disproportionate representation is found, states are required to review their present policies, practices and procedures, and to disaggregate their data. Data are to be used to compare the

proportions of non-disabled students to those who are determined to be disabled at the local or state agencies [34 CFR 300.646(b)].

States are allowed to allocate 15% of their federal IDEA Part B monies, which can be devoted not only to comprehensive early intervention services for students in all groups, but also to ensure that those monies are designated for this purpose are utilize in the area of students identified and found to be over-identified. It is important that the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) of all states engage in these processes publically, and openly report all changes made to policies and procedures [34 CFR 300.646(b)] [20 U.S.C. 1418(d)(2)].

In the provisions of Part B of IDEA (2004), any state that receives funds is required to gather and inspect data to see if there is any substantial disproportionality in students identified for and receiving special education services based upon race and ethnicity. These inspections include an assessment of the number of students with disabilities who have more disciplinary actions, suspensions and expulsions than their nondisabled peers [34 CFR 300.646(a)] [20 U.S.C. 1418(d)(1)]. With revisions and updates to the IDEA 2004, the USDOE also mandated that all states must have procedures and policies in place that would prevent over-identification and/or over representation of students in special education due to race or ethnicity [34 CFR 300.173] [20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(24)].

The United States Department of Education, in an effort to address the overrepresentation and disproportionality of minorities in special education, submitted a request for information to address significant disproportionality under Section 618 (d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Within the request, they asked for all stakeholders to submit ideas and recommendations to address the issue. In 2016, the USDOE released its final findings and established new as well as revised regulations to address the issues that were found. The final regulations, which became effective on January 18, 2017, required that those states receiving federal funds ensure that steps be taken to determine if there is any significant disproportionality. Additionally, if disproportionality is found, states are to ensure they take steps to improve the issue (VDOE, 2011).

According to the United States Department of Education, schools have moved in a positive direction, as children identified with disabilities are now being educated in public schools and classrooms with their regular education peers (USDOE, 2016). Moreover, the

number of students identified with disabilities who have enrolled in post-secondary schools has tripled (USDOE, 2016).

Over Identification of Minorities in Special Education

Congress passed the Education Amendments of 1974 in order to ensure all students with special needs received appropriate educational opportunities. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, also known as Public Law 94-142, ensures that children with disabilities, as well as their families, are protected. PL 94-142 assists states as well as local educational agencies in providing all students with disabilities a high quality education, ensuring all educational institutions are effective in educating children with disabilities, guaranteeing that children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education, and establishing that all of the needs of students with disabilities are met through specially designed services (USDOE, 2016).

Since its inception in 1974, PL 94-142 has evolved and changed to meet the needs of students. Between the years 1975-1997, many amendments have been added to the Education for the Handicapped Act (EHA) and IDEA. In 1986, states were mandated to provide various programs and services for students from birth, which was adopted through PL 99-457.

Deninger (2008), brings forth a unique perspective to understanding the meaning of disproportionality. He states:

In light of our country's demographics, African Americans represent a much greater proportion of the National Basketball Association relative to what one would expect. Or, in other words, relative to our country's demographics, there is a disproportionate number of African Americans in the NBA (Deninger, M. 2008, p. 1).

Similarly, Deninger elaborates that:

On average, African American and Hispanic students are found eligible for special education services at higher rates than their populations would suggest, while white and Asian students are less likely to be found eligible for special education relative to the size of their respective populations (Deninger, 2008, p.1).

Morgan (2015) made the assumption that "... minority children are frequently overrepresented in special education classrooms, however, a team of researchers suggests that minority children are less likely than otherwise similar white children to receive help for their

disabilities” (p. 1). He asserted that overrepresentation is most likely due to a greater exposure to environmental and economic risk factors. Moreover, Morgan (2015) ascertained that “... minority children in the U.S. are much more likely to be born with low birth weight than children who are white, as well as more likely to be exposed to lead in their environment” (p. 1).

According to Felton (n.d.) in a Hechinger Report that was based on federal data, there are racial differences among varying ethnicities in special education. “Nationally, 76 percent of white students in special education who exited high school in 2014-15 earned a traditional diploma. That falls to 65 percent for Hispanic students and 62 percent for black students with special needs” (paragraph 5). The findings serve as an example that, while African American students in general may experience difficulty demonstrating achievement in the school environment, those who are identified with disabilities tend to experience slower growth and achievement which can extend into their post-secondary learning and possibly their work environment. Therefore, if students are inappropriately identified and placed in special education settings, they may unnecessarily encounter some of these adverse long-term outcomes.

Identification Process and Assessment Biases in Special Education

Referral for special education evaluation. According to Maydosz (2014), “The disproportional representation of African American students in special education remains a national concern. The process and procedure for identifying students for special education is a subjective one, considering the implications for the student, the family and the school” (p. 1).

The *Evaluation and Eligibility for the Special Education and Related Services: Guidance Document* (2018) was published by the Virginia Department of Education for use by educational intuitions to identify students for special education services. Once a referral is documented, the Child Study team has ten business days to schedule a team meeting, a meeting that includes the parent/guardian, administrator, teachers, school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, and any agencies involved with the child. This initial Child Study meeting is held to address the concerns regarding the student, and to assist all persons responsible for educating the student in developing interventions and strategies for helping the student in question, and to prevent, whenever possible, the need for special education referral. In an effort to reduce special education referrals, the IDEA has begun to permit school districts to utilize a ration of their special education funding to offer extra support for such struggling students.

The objective of the initial Child Study meeting is for the team to review data that include grades, conduct, standardized assessment scores, and any other information deemed valuable to the child's educational well-being. The team would then develop student-specific interventions to assist the student in improving their performance, academically and/or behaviorally, in school. Next, the team reconvenes at a future date, typically four to six weeks following the initial Child Study meeting. The impact of the interventions is assessed by the team, and should the interventions be proven ineffective, and the student continues to not accomplish at the rate of his or her peers, or the student's conduct continues to not be improved by behavioral management interventions, it would be recommended that the student be referred for a special education evaluation (VDOE, 2010). Then the team reviews existing data in order to determine whether to move forward with an evaluation or if additional steps are not justified. If the team deems it necessary to not move forward, the student's parent must be provided with Prior Written Notice and the process stops. This process must contain specific, essential elements and should focus on the reasons the team determined the student is not considered of having a disability and/or does not require specially designed instruction (Virginia Department of Education, 2013).

In cases where the team determines evaluations are necessary, the special education evaluation and eligibility processes are initiated, following the implementation and documentation of interventions that have proven unsuccessful for the student. At this point, a student is considered to potentially have a disability and has need of specially designed instruction. The consideration that a student may have a disability must be documented on a Referral for Evaluation form.

Referrals for evaluation can come from any source or individual, although best practice deems that once a referral for evaluation has been made, the principal then requests that the team which is school-based analyze the information and make a decision whether a referral for evaluation is appropriate. (Virginia Department of Education, 2013). The Child Study team must complete a Component Selection, whereby they determine the evaluations they deem necessary. Best practice is a comprehensive evaluation, in which a psychological evaluation, social history, educational evaluation, observation, vision screening, and hearing screening are included, as well as any other evaluations the team deems relevant to the specific student. In addition, at the period of referral for special education evaluation, the parent/guardian must be provided with a

copy of the Procedural Safeguards Notice, signed verification of receipt of this notice, and must provide written consent for the evaluations to be completed (Virginia Department of Education, 2013).

The Child Study Team is provided a 65 business day timeline to complete the requested evaluations. The timeline initiates when the special education administrator receives the referral for evaluation. Once the referral is received by the special education administrator or designee, they have three business days to decide upon one of three options: the initial evaluation procedures begin, the child is referred to the school-based team in order to review and respond to the request, the request is denied and the parent is provided Prior Written Notice (Virginia Department of Education, 2013). However, because the special education administrator or designee is typically a member of the Child Study team, the administrator will most likely consent to the completion of the evaluation process.

Review of existing data. During the review of data, the administrator or designee might decide that an initial evaluation is necessary. At that time, all of the decisions reached must be documented in the student's educational record. The Virginia Department of Education maintains eligibility process forms and disability worksheets on their website. "These sample forms are provided to assist Local Education Agencies in documenting eligibility determinations in accordance with the criteria contained in the Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia, effective July 7, 2009" (VDOE, 2017, p. 1). Another reason to review existing data would be to determine if the student would continue to be eligible for special education. The student's experiences in school as well as any strategies that were attempted and the results of those strategies need to be reviewed.

Referral and diagnosis issues. According to Zhang and Katsiyannis (2002), the purpose and intent of referral teams is to assess student needs and to ultimately determine whether students require and would benefit from special education services. National educational statistical data reveal a consistent disproportionality of African American males referred and identified for special education evaluation and services across districts, states, and the country. Emphasis has been placed on the disproportionality that has been revealed in the disability categories of Specific Learning Disability and Emotional Disability (Zhang & Katsiyannis, 2002).

Cultural Awareness. As reported by Kozlesk (2010):

Schools facing a disproportionality of minority students referred to and identified for special education services should strive to foster honest, tactful discussions on issues of race, academic achievement, and pedagogy. Experts often suggest organizing meetings in cross-functional teams to explore educators' own experiences and perspectives. They need to get people to talk about who they are and their own views of things, and then to examine their practice and their curriculum (Kozlesk, 2010, p. 258).

Throughout these conversations, school leaders should be mindful and cognizant of indirect cultural prejudices that educators may reference to justify high rates of special education referrals for minority students (Fergus & Noguero, 2010).

Harry and Klinger (2007) found that the misidentification of minority children as students with disabilities, and their ensuing overrepresentation in special education programs, were often caused by teacher and prejudices, inappropriate statewide policies (such as using scores from standardized tests to diagnose language impairment), and the misconception of students identified as SLD as having societal, rather than learning, disorders. Studies such as this demonstrate the importance of teachers participating in specific training to effectively educate multicultural students. The use of models designed to challenge educators' explicit and implicit beliefs and possible stereotypes is often employed by teacher training programs and institutions of higher learning (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). Such educational endeavors seek to develop increased awareness, skills and knowledge necessary for working with various students.

Teacher Perception and Training

To assist teachers in their professional competency in educating challenging students, Harry and Klingner (2007) recommend frequent classroom observations by experienced teachers and the partnering of less experienced with more experienced staff members. This practice creates a climate and culture of collaboration and support, as well as the provision of necessary tools and assistance from the more experienced teachers. Moreover, they ascertain that when students are struggling, "... educators should first contemplate the possibility that they are not receiving satisfactory instruction before it is presumed they are not responding because they have deficits and shortfalls of some kind" (Harry & Klingner, 2007, p. 19).

Similarly, Fergus & Noguera (2011) assert that "... educators need to understand the correct procedure for attaining assistance from the support or intervention teams in their buildings or school divisions" (p. 2240).

According to Fergus & Noguera (2011), as recommended by the Response to Intervention (RTI) process, educators need to closely monitor student progress and disaggregate data at minimum on a bi-weekly basis. These data should be comprised of test results, written work, homework and class projects. By constantly studying students' work, teachers begin to see whether their students are systematically developing at an adequate pace and if they are on grade level with their peers. This progress monitoring allows educators to focus on areas in which students are lacking or not advancing adequately and create a purposeful learning environment (Fergus & Noguera, 2011).

Educators must have the ability to detect, analyze, and strategize ways to alter their teaching practices to better meet the needs of diverse students. Teachers should consider personalizing the content by using familiar scenarios and ideals to relate new concepts. Ladson-Billings (1994) and Moll and Gonzalez (2004) found that students' academic performance is strengthened when students' community knowledge is tapped.

Milner (2014) recommends teachers make every effort to "ascertain the motivation behind the behaviors that students display, as opposed to punishing them or removing them from class. In many cases when a child is performing in a negative manner, chances are something is happening elsewhere beyond the behavior" (p.36). "Students experience peer pressure, or they might be experiencing some family change or some form of abuse" (Milner, 2014, p. 5). Consequently, educators should try to be cognizant of their students' social/emotional or experiential issues to help them to be able to self-monitor and implement appropriate coping skills. Teachers and school staff should not make assumptions about students on the basis of behavioral issues. According to Fergus and Noguera (2011), "We're all responding from our own cultural frameworks of what we expect behaviors to look like in the classroom, and not every kid instinctively knows how to manage that" (Fergus & Noguera, 2011, p. 2233).

Special Education in Virginia

As stated in the Parent's Guide to Special Education, "Virginia has a history of funding and providing special education programs for children with disabilities. The first legislation in

Virginia to require special education for certain children with disabilities was passed in 1968” (VDOE, 2009, p. 62). In 1972, legislation was expanded to include all children with disabilities. Congress also studied the need for a national policy for the education of children with disabilities. In response to the study, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-142) was signed into federal law.

The 1997 amendments restructured IDEA. The most recent revision to IDEA occurred in 2004, and final regulations to guide states in implementing these changes were issued in October of 2006. The current legal provisions in the area of special education in Virginia are modeled after IDEA. They can be found in the Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia, effective July 7, 2009 (VDOE, 2010).

The Virginia Department of Education has created and implemented the Guidance Document for Developing Local Policies and Procedures required for Implementation of Special Education Regulations in Virginia’s Public Schools. This document was created in 2009 to ensure that national as well as state regulations are followed.

To receive federal funds available under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA), local school boards must adopt and implement special education policies and procedures consistent with federal and state regulations to ensure a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all students who are eligible for special education.” (VDOE, 2009, p.3.).

The VDOE also implemented the Parent’s Guide to Special Education, which was most recently revised in 2010. This booklet was developed and published to ensure parents know and understand how state and federal laws affect their children. The guide was established in order for parents to know and understand their rights and responsibilities, their child’s rights, and the responsibilities of the school system in which their child attends.

Casey Study

Casey (2017) suggested that further study on disproportionality should consist of researchers examining disproportionality over a series of years in Virginia, and comparing their findings to the findings in her study, which was completed in 2013-2014. The study that was completed consisted of the comparison of data retrieved from the VDOE for the years 2008-2009 with the data provided from Casey’s study.

According to Casey (2017), “Economically disadvantaged students were disproportionately identified in over a third of the school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia.” (p. 60). Another noteworthy finding that Casey (2017) found in her study was that:

Female students were not disproportionately identified in any school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. In the study it was found that in the SWD group indicated that 9 of school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia, or 7% , had fewer than ten female students identified as needing special education services” (p. 61).

When examining male students, Casey (2017) found that they were “ disproportionately identified as ED in less than one – quarter of the school divisions.” (p. 62).

According to Casey’s (2017) findings on minorities, it was determined that Black students were disproportionately identified as ID in approximately one-third of the school divisions in Virginia. Conversely, Casey concluded that Hispanic students were disproportionately identified as SLD, ED, and ID (MR) in few school divisions, and less than other groups studied, with the exception of female students.

Conclusion

The overrepresentation of minority students referred to and identified for special education services is a long-term, prevalent, and complex issue. It also is reflective of the inconsistency in academic achievement between African American and European American students. Many factors, including inadequate referrals, inappropriate assessments, low expectations, and poverty contribute to this phenomenon.

Efforts aimed at the prevention and reduction of the prevalence of minority students referred to and identified for special education services include strategies to better educate this population, the implementation of a proper referral process, and teacher training in the provision of effective education tools. A compilation of all of these interventions would provide meaningful and productive results, not only in preventing and reducing referrals and identification of African American males for special education services, but also in improving their educational and behavioral performance in school.

One of the most important factors is pointed out by Fergus & Noguera (2011) when they state:

Another step that school communities can take to decrease the overrepresentation of minorities in special education is district-wide curriculum measures. Often, the materials do not have a good scope and sequence or curriculum map that show the educators what they could be doing and where they ought to be at during various portions of the school year, given the standard they need to meet for the state. (p. 2234).

Students being able to relate to what they learn and use real world experiences might increase knowledge of students with disabilities.

The overrepresentation of male or underrepresentation of female students identified and placed in special education is an important area that was examined. Haggerty (2009), in her article, determined that there are reasons and changing aspects that lead to a difference in the number of boys and girls placed in special education. Haggerty (2009) claimed that there are three underlying factors that contribute to the higher prevalence of boys than girls in special education. Some factors may include the fact that boys have more behavior issues, boys learn differently than girls, and there is teacher bias favoring girls in the American educational system.

Finally, it is imperative that all students are able to relate to the curriculum that they are expected to learn. In order for students to connect with curriculum and for the curriculum to motivate students to want to learn, it needs to be of high interest and have cultural relevance. Therefore, it would be beneficial for leaders of schools to examine the curriculum that is being utilized for these factors, in order to increase student engagement and to avoid the exclusion of particular groups of students.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine representation of students in special education by category (SWD, ED, SLD, and ID) and by demographic identifier (Ethnicity, Gender, SES) for 2008-2009, and to determine changes in representation between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 in the 132 school districts in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The study utilized 2013-2014 data reported in the Casey (2017) study.

Data from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) were related to specific categories of special education disabilities (Intellectual Disability, Learning Disability, and Emotional Disability), socioeconomic status, gender and racial backgrounds, particularly African-American and Hispanic. Findings included a comparison of the data for 2008-2009 and 2013-2014. In 2008-2009 some data were missing, which may have contributed to a lack of over representation in several areas.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the researcher in investigating the representation of students in special education programs in public school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2008-2009 as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater.

1. What is the status of representation of students from selected racial groups, students of both male and female genders, and economically disadvantaged students in school divisions in special education programs in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater?
2. What is the status of representation of Black and Hispanic, male and female, and economically disadvantaged students in SLD special education programs in school divisions in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater?
3. What is the representation of Black and Hispanic, male and female, and economically disadvantaged students in ED special education programs in school division in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of

- 2.0 greater?
4. What is the status of representation of Black and Hispanic, male and female, and economically disadvantaged students in ID special education programs in school divisions in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater?
 5. What changes in disproportionality, if any, have occurred between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014?

Research Design

The research design that was used is a quantitative design methodology. As stated by Creswell (2014), quantitative design involves the processes of collecting, analyzing, interpreting and writing the results of the study. There are specific methods that exist in both survey and experimental research. They relate to identifying a sample and population, specifying the type of design, collecting and analyzing data, presenting the results, making an interpretation, and writing research in a manner consistent with a survey or experimental study. Data were gathered from the Virginia Department of Education's website from the years 2008-2009 in order to answer the research questions, as well as to compare the research to the data used in the study of 2013-2014, completed by Casey in 2017.

Data Sources

The data for this study were obtained from previously-reported information disclosed by each of the 132 Virginia public school divisions. The Student Record Collection system allows the Commonwealth and its school divisions to comply with the information and reporting requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The system is also designed to reduce the reporting liability on school divisions and ensures continuity and legitimacy in all enrollment-based data collections. "School divisions are required to report an unduplicated count of students with disabilities receiving special education on December 1 or the closest school day to December 1 for state funding and federal reporting under provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B" (VDOE, n.d., *Data Dictionary*, p. 2). For the purpose of this report, data will be compiled for 2008-2009 from the Virginia Department of Education website.

Permission to Conduct Study and Use Data

Prior to beginning the research process, written permission was sought from Virginia Tech's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study. Once permission was received (see Appendix A), data were obtained from the VDOE website. The data were examined and compiled. No personally identifying information about students was obtained, nor was any information collected directly from students. In addition, no individuals were involved in the study and all data were public. Approval was given by Casey to utilize her methodology in this study (see Appendix B)

Data Gathering Procedures

The research involved the researcher obtaining enrollment and special education data on K-12 student populations for each of the 132 public school divisions in the Commonwealth through the VDOE's Virginia Longitudinal Data System (VLDS) database representing the 2008-2009 school year. These data were compared to the 2013-2014 school year data that are represented in Casey's study. This information included numbers by disability categories and the number of students within disability groups by the key demographic variables of race and socioeconomic status. The disability categories used were intellectually disabled (ID), emotional disturbed (ED), and learning disabled (LD). Data included the racial subgroups of Black and Hispanic, and gender (male and female). Data for socio-economic status included the December 1 count for those students identified as economically disadvantaged.

Data Management

In this study, data were combined into a single data source from the Special Education December 1 Count and the Fall Membership (October 1). The October 1 Fall Membership data related to disability and demographic variables were downloaded from the VDOE website for a comparison of 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 information. The data were specifically analyzed from students by ethnicity, gender, and students identified as economically disadvantaged for each of the three disability categories of learning disabled (LD), emotional disturbed (ED), and intellectual disability (ID). All of the data that were utilized in this study are publicly available. The VDOE does not disseminate or allow any access to data that might violate students' right to

privacy. All data are considered de-identified data. This de-identification process was used to prevent a person's identity from being connected by the information that is disclosed.

Data Analysis

A spreadsheet was developed using Microsoft Excel software to organize data from the two VDOE report sources. The data were downloaded from the VDOE website then put into excel software to disaggregate student counts by disability status (LD, ED, ID) and demographic variables (race/ethnicity, gender, and economically disadvantaged recipients).

Once all data were obtained and organized in Excel, formulas were employed to calculate risk ratios in accordance with the formula outlined in Indicator 10 of the Special Education Performance Report. The bases of analysis were on the individual school division level, and proportionality risk-ratios will be reported on the school division level. The formula is as follows (VDOE, 2014):

Disproportionality Risk Ratio =

Where:

a_1 = Count of SWD* who are in the specific racial, gender, or socio-economic group and have a Specific Disability (Dec. 1 Child Count)

a_2 = Count of all students who are in the specific racial, gender, or socio-economic group (Fall Membership)

b_1 = Count of SWD who are not in the specific racial, gender, or socio-economic group and have a Specific Disability (Dec. 1 Child Count)

b_2 = Count of all students who are not in the specific racial group (Fall Membership)

Once the 2008-2009 data were analyzed, the researcher compared them to the data reported by Casey (2017) using percentages. The data were reported in tables.

Methodology Summary

This study provided a comparison of special education populations in public school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia. All of the information was consistent with the school division reports of enrollment totals. All of the data collected represent students (K-12) by race, gender, and socio-economic status from the total student population, special education

population, and the *population* from the special education categories of, learning disabled, intellectually disabled, and emotionally disturbed from the years 2008-2009 and 2013-2014.

In conclusion, this quantitative methodology was used to investigate disproportional identification of students for special education, based on race, gender and socioeconomic status. The investigation focused on special education programs located in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the unit of analysis was to be disproportionality defined by the disproportionality Risk Ratio. The study findings will provide stakeholders such as educators and community members that are concerned with issues surrounding disproportionality possible trends and shed light on the special education identification process. The two years 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 that were examined are intended to determine if earlier data indicate greater or lesser disproportionality, which might suggest that recent efforts have impacted the proportionality of the identified subgroups. This information was utilized to inform the level of success of recent efforts to address disproportionality.

Chapter 4

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine representation of students in special education by category (SWD, ED, SLD, and ID) and by demographic (Ethnicity, Gender, SES) for 2008-2009, and to determine changes in representation between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 in the 132 school districts in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The study utilized 2013-2014 data reported in the Casey (2017) study.

Data from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) were related to specific categories of special education disabilities (Intellectual Disability, Learning Disability, and Emotional Disability), socioeconomic status, gender and racial backgrounds, particularly African-American and Hispanic. Findings included a comparison of the data for 2008-2009 to 2013-2014. In 2008-2009 some data were missing, which may have contributed to a lack of over representation in several areas.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following main question with the subsequent sub-research questions:

1. What is the status of representation of students from selected racial groups, students of both male and female genders, and economically disadvantaged students in school divisions in special education programs in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater?
2. What is the status of representation of Black and Hispanic, male and female, and economically disadvantaged students in SLD special education programs in school divisions in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater?
3. What is the representation of Black and Hispanic, male and female, and economically disadvantaged students in ED special education programs in school division in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater?

4. What is the status of representation of Black and Hispanic, male and female, and economically disadvantaged students in ID special education programs in school divisions in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater?
5. What changes in disproportionality, if any, have occurred between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014?

Results of the Study

Research Question 1. What is the status of representation of students from selected racial groups, students of both male and female genders, and economically disadvantaged students in school divisions in special education programs in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater?

In response to Research Question 1, related to overrepresentation of specific groups within the broad category of students with disabilities (SWD), the data indicate very little overrepresentation. Out of the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year of 2008-2009, zero school divisions (0%) identified Black students disproportionately for special education services based on the disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater. In 2008-2009, zero school divisions (0%) identified Hispanic students disproportionately for special education services based on the disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater. In 2008-2009, two school divisions (2%) identified economically disadvantaged students disproportionately for special education services based on the disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater. In 2008-2009, Zero school divisions (0%) identified male or female students disproportionately for special education services based on the disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater. See Table 1.

Table 1

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 for SWD.

	Black		Hispanic		Economically Disadvantaged		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2.0 or greater	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%	0	0%	0	0%
CNC	1	1%	2	2%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Research Question 2. What is the status of representation of Black and Hispanic, male and female, and the economically disadvantaged students in SLD special education programs in school divisions in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater?

Out of the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year of 2008-2009, zero of the school divisions (0%) identified Black, Hispanic, male and female students disproportionately for special education services in the category of Specific Learning Disability (SLD) based on the disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater. Out of the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year of 2008-2009, 40 school divisions (30%) identified economically disadvantaged students disproportionately for special education services based on the disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater. Out of 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, one school division (1%) did not report students who were not Black as being identified for special education services resulting in not being able to calculate Indicator 10 for Black student. Out of 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year 2008-2009 two school divisions (2%) did not report students who were not Hispanic as being identified for special education services resulting in not being able to calculate Indicator 10 for Hispanic students.

Table 2

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 for SLD.

	Black		Hispanic		Economically Disadvantaged		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2.0 or greater	0	0%	0	0%	40	30%	0	0%	0	0%
CNC	1	1%	2	2%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Research Question 3. What is the representation of Black and Hispanic, male and female, and the economically disadvantaged students ED special education programs in school division in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater?

Out of the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year of 2008-2009, zero school divisions (0%) identified Black, Hispanic, male and female students disproportionately for special education services based on the disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater. Out of the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year of 2008-2009, 23 of school divisions (17%) identified economically disadvantaged students disproportionately for special education services based on the disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater.

Out of 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, 33 school division (25%) did not report students who were not black as being identified for special education services resulting in not being able to calculate Indicator 10 for Black and Hispanic and Economically Disadvantaged students. Out of 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, zero school divisions (0%) did not report students who were not male and female as being identified for special education services resulting in not being able to calculate Indicator 10 for ED students.

Out of 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, 33 school divisions (25%) did not report students who were not black as being identified for special education services resulting in not being able to calculate Indicator 10 for black student. Out of 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, 33 school divisions (25%) did not report students who were not Hispanic as being identified for special education services resulting in not being able to calculate Indicator 10 for Hispanic students.

Out of 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, 33 school divisions (25%) did not report students who were not Economically Disadvantaged as being identified for special education services resulting in not being able to calculate Indicator 10 for ED students. See Table 3.

Table 3

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 for ED.

	Black		Hispanic		Economically Disadvantaged		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2.0 or greater	0	0%	0	0%	23	17%	0	0%	0	0%
CNC	33	25%	33	25%	33	25%	0	0%	0	0%

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Research Question 4: What is the status of representation of Black and Hispanic, male and female, and the economically disadvantaged students in ID (MR) special education programs in school divisions in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater?

Out of the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year of 2008-2009, 3 of school divisions (2%) identified Black students for special education services based on the disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater. Out of the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year of 2008-2009, zero school divisions (0%) identified Hispanic, male and female students disproportionately for special education services

based on the disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater. Out of the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year of 2008-2009, 50 school divisions (38%) identified economically disadvantaged students disproportionately for special education services based on the disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater.

Out of 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, 15 school divisions (11%) did not report students who were not Black as being identified for special education services resulting in not being able to calculate Indicator 10 for Black students. Out of 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, 16 school divisions (12%) did not report students who were not Hispanic as being identified for special education services, resulting in not being able to calculate Indicator 10 for Hispanic students. Out of 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, 15 school divisions (11%) did not report students who were not Economically Disadvantaged as being identified for special education services, resulting in not being able to calculate Indicator 10 for ID students. See Table 4.

Table 4

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 for ID.

	Black		Hispanic		Economically Disadvantaged		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2.0 or greater	3	2%	0	0%	50	38%	0	0%	0	0%
CNC	15	11%	16	12%	15	11%	0	0%	0	0%

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Research Question 5. What changes in disproportionality, if any, have occurred between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014?

Out of the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia, there were changes from 2008-2009 to 2013-2014 in each of the identifying areas of SWD, SLD, ED and ID disproportionately for special education services based on the disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater. In 2008-2009, when considering Black students, zero school divisions (0%) were

disproportionate in the area of SWD, zero school divisions (0%) were disproportionate in the area of SLD, zero school divisions (0%) were disproportionate in the area of ED, and three school divisions (2%) were disproportionate in the area of ID, base on an indicator 10 ratio Greater than 2.0 in Virginia. Whereas in the 2013-2014, when considering Black students, 10 school divisions (8%) were disproportionate in the area of SWD, 16 school divisions (12%) were disproportionate in the area of SLD, 17 school divisions (13%) were disproportionate in the area of ED, and 42 school divisions (32%) were disproportionate in the area of ID, base on an indicator 10 ratio Greater than 2.0 in Virginia. See Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Table 5

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Black Students

		SWD					
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change	
Disproportionality							
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%			
2.0 or greater	0	0%	10	8%	0		+8%%
CNC	1	1%	0	0%			

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Table 6

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Black Students

SLD						
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
Disproportionality						
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%		
2.0 or greater	0	0%	16	12%	0	+12%%
CNC	1	1%	0	0%		

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Table 7

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Black Students

ED						
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
Disproportionality						
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%		
2.0 or greater	0	0%	17	13%	0	+13%%
CNC	1	1%	0	0%		

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Table 8

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Ratio Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Black Students

		ID				
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
Disproportionality						
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%		
2.0 or greater	3	2%	42	32%	0	+32%
CNC	15	11%	0	0%		

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Out of the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia, Zero school divisions (0%) identified Hispanic students disproportionately for special education services based on the disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater. In 2008-2009, in the areas of SWD, SLD, ED, and ID, zero school divisions (0%) identified Hispanic students with an indicator 10 ratio Greater than 2.0 in Virginia. Whereas in the 2013-2014, two school divisions (2%) identified Hispanic students in the area of SWD, seven school divisions (5%) identified Hispanic students in the area of SLD , zero school divisions identified Hispanic students in the area of ED, and one school division (1%) identified Hispanic students in the area of ID with ratios greater than 2.0 for Hispanic students based on indicator 10. See Table 9, 10, 11 and 12.

Table 9

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Hispanic Students

SWD						
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
Disproportionality						
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%		
2.0 or greater	0	0%	2	2%	+2%	
CNC	2	2%	0	0%		

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Table 10

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Hispanic Students

SLD						
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
Disproportionality						
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%		
2.0 or greater	0	0%	7	5%	7%	
CNC	2	2%	0	0%		

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Table 11

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Hispanic Students

ED					
	2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
Disproportionality					
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%	
2.0 or greater	0	0%	0	0%	
CNC	33	25%	0	0%	

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Table 12

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Hispanic Students

ID					
	2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
Disproportionality					
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%	
2.0 or greater	0	0%	1	1%	+1%
CNC	16	12%	0	0%	

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

In 2008-2009, when considering economically disadvantaged students, two school divisions (2%) were disproportionate in the area of SWD, 40 school divisions (30%) were disproportionate in the area of SLD, 23 school divisions (17%) were disproportionate in the area of ED, and 50 school divisions (38%) were disproportionate in the area of ID, base on an indicator 10 ratio Greater than 2.0 in Virginia. Whereas in the 2013-2014, when considering

economically disadvantaged students, 40 school divisions (33%) were disproportionate in the area of SWD, 47 school divisions (36%) were disproportionate in the area of SLD, 35 school divisions (27%) were disproportionate in the area of ED, and 60 school divisions (45%) were disproportionate in the area of ID, base on an indicator 10 ratio Greater than 2.0 in Virginia. See Table 13, 14, 15 and 16.

Table 13

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Ratio Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Economically Disadvantaged Students.

		ID					
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change	
Disproportionality							
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%			
2.0 or greater	2	2%	44	33%	0		+31%
CNC	0	0%	0	0%			

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Table 14

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Economically Disadvantaged Students

SLD						
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
Disproportionality		N	%	N	%	
Risk Ratio Level						
2.0 or greater		40	30%	47	36%	+6%
CNC		0	0%	0	0%	

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Table 15

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Economically Disadvantaged Students

ED						
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
Disproportionality		N	%	N	%	
Risk Ratio Level						
2.0 or greater		23	17%	35	27%	+10%
CNC		33	25%	0	0%	

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Table 16

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Economically Disadvantaged Students

ID						
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
Disproportionality						
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%		
2.0 or greater	50	38%	60	45%	+7%	
CNC	15	11%	0	0%		

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

What is the representation of female students in special education programs in school divisions in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater? Out of 132 school divisions in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 there were no changes. No divisions reported female students identified as disproportionate for special education in SWD, SLD, ED and ID programs based on Indicator 10. See Table 17, 18, 19 and 20.

Table 17

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Female Students

SWD						
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
Disproportionality						
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%		
2.0 or greater	0	0%	0	0%	0	
CNC	0	0%	0	0%		

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Table 18

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Ratio Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Female Students

SLD						
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
Disproportionality						
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%		
2.0 or greater	0	0%	0	0%		
CNC	0	0%	0	0%		

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Table 19

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Female Students

ED							
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change	
Disproportionality							
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%			
2.0 or greater		0%	0	0%			
CNC	0	0%	0	0%			

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Table 20

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Female Students

ID							
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change	
Disproportionality							
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%			
2.0 or greater		0%	0	0%			
CNC	0	0%	0	0%			

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

What is the representation of male students in special education programs in school divisions in Virginia between 2008-2009, and 2013-2014 the data represented by Casey (2017) as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater?

Out of 132 school divisions in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 there were changes. In 2008-2009, zero school divisions (0%) identified male students as

disproportionate for special education in SWD, SLD, ED and ID programs based on Indicator 10. In 2013-2014, 24 school divisions (18%) identified male students as disproportionate for special education in the area of SWD. In 2013-2014, 13 school divisions (10%) identified male students as disproportionate for special education in the area of SLD. In 2013-2014, 31 school divisions (23%) identified male students as disproportionate in the area of ED. In 2013-2014, three school divisions (2%) identified male students as disproportionate in the area of ID. See Tables 21, 22, 23 and 24.

Table 21

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Male Students

SWD						
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
Disproportionality		N	%	N	%	
Risk Ratio Level		N	%	N	%	
2.0 or greater		0	0%	24	18%	18%
CNC		0	0%	9	7%	

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Table 22

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Male Students

SLD						
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
Disproportionality						
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%		
2.0 or greater	0	0%	13	10%	10%	
CNC	0	0%	9	7%		

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Table 23

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Male Students

ED						
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
	N	%	N	%		
2.0 or greater	0	0%	31	23%	+23%	
CNC	0	0%	45	34%		

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Table 24

Number and Percent of School Divisions with Indicator 10 Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level Greater than 2.0 in Virginia for Male Students

		ID				
		2008-2009		2013-2014		% Change
Disproportionality						
Risk Ratio Level	N	%	N	%		
2.0 or greater	0	0%	3	2%	+2%	
CNC	0	0%	19	14%		

Note: CNC = “Could Not Calculate” Disproportionality Risk Ratio because there were no students reported in the opposite group of analysis, therefore resulting in division by zero.

Superintendent’s Analysis by Regions

In addition to answering the research questions, it was of interest to the researcher to examine the disproportional identification of the student groups under study by the different superintendent’s regions in Virginia. Public school divisions in Virginia are grouped in eight Superintendent’s regions based on geographical location. These locations are: Region 1- Central VA; Region 2- Tidewater Region; Region 3- Northern Neck Region; Region 4- Northern Virginia; Region 5-Valley; Region 6- Western Virginia; Region 7 - Southwest; and Region 8- South Side. Table 25 shows the locale descriptions and student demographic makeup of each region during the 2008-2009 school year.

Table 25

Number and Percent of Divisions by Superintendent's Region with Risk Ratio Greater than 2.0 for Categories (ED, ID, SLD, SWD)

Region	Total # of Divisions in Region	ED	ED	ID	ID	SLD	SLD	SWD	SWD
1	15	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
2	15	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
3	17	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
4	19	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
5	20	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
6	15	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
7	19	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
8	12	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Grand Total	132	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

In table 26, zero school divisions (0%) over identified Black students for special education services in the areas of ED and SLD by superintendent's region. However, three school divisions (2%) over identified Black students for special education services in the area of ID by superintendent's region.

Table 26

Number and Percent of Division by Superintendent's Regions with Risk Ratio Greater than 2.0 for Black Students by Category in 2008-2009.

Region	Total # of Divisions in Region	ED	ED	ID	ID	SLD	SLD	SWD	SWD
1	15	0	0%	1	7%	0	0%	0	0%
2	15	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
3	17	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
4	19	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
5	20	0	0%	1	5%	0	0%	0	0%
6	15	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
7	19	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
8	12	0	0%	1	8%	0	0%	0	0%
Grand Total	132	0	0%	3	2%	0	0%	0	0%

Table 27 illustrates that zero school divisions (0%) over identified Hispanic students for special education services in the areas of ED, ID, SWD and SLD by superintendent's region.

Table 27

Number and Percent of Division by Superintendent's Regions with Risk Ratio Greater than 2.0 for Hispanic Students by Category in 2008-2009.

Regions	Total # of Divisions in Region	ED	ED	ID	ID	SLD	SLD	SWD	SWD
	15	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
2	15	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
3	17	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
4	19	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
5	20	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
6	15	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
7	19	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
8	12	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Grand Total	132	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

In Table 28, 23 school divisions (17%) over identified economically disadvantaged students for special education services in the area of ED, 50 school divisions (38%) over identified economically disadvantaged students in the area of ID, 40 school divisions (30%) over identified economically disadvantaged students in the area of SLD, and two divisions (2%) over identified economically disadvantaged students in the area of SWD by superintendent's region.

Table 28

Number and Percent of Division by Superintendent's Regions with Risk Ratio Greater than 2.0 for Economically Disadvantaged Students by Category in 2008-2009.

Region	Total # of Divisions in Region	ED	ED	ID	ID	SLD	SLD	SWD	SWD
1	15	2	13%	2	13%	1	7%	0	0%
2	15	4	27%	7	47%	5	33%	0	0%
3	17	2	12%	5	29%	7	41%	1	6%
4	19	2	11%	6	32%	3	16%	0	0%
5	20	6	30%	6	30%	9	45%	0	0%
6	15	2	13%	7	47%	4	27%	0	0%
7	19	5	26%	10	53%	6	32%	0	0%
8	12	0	0%	7	58%	5	42%	1	8%
Grand Total	132	23	17%	50	38%	40	30%	2	2%

Table 29 illustrates that zero school divisions (0%) over identified female students for special education services in the areas of ED, ID, SWD and SLD by superintendent's region.

Table 29

Number and Percent of Division by Superintendent's Regions with Risk Ratio Greater than 2.0 for Female Students by Category in 2008-2009.

Region	Total # of Divisions in Region	ED	ED	ID	ID	SLD	SLD	SWD	SWD
1	15	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
2	15	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
3	17	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
4	19	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
5	20	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
6	15	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
7	19	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
8	12	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Grand Total	132	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Table 30 illustrates that zero school divisions (0%) over identified male students for special education services in the areas of ED, ID, SWD and SLD by superintendent's region.

Table 30

Number and Percent of division by Superintendent's Regions with Risk Ratio greater than 2.0 for Male Students by category in 2008-2009.

Region	Total # of Divisions in Region	ED	ED	ID	ID	SLD	SLD	SWD	SWD
1	15	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
2	15	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
3	17	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
4	19	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
5	20	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
6	15	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
7	19	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
8	12	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Grand Total	132	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine representation of students in special education by category (overall, ED, SLD, and ID) and by demographic (Ethnicity, Gender, SES) for 2008-2009, and to determine changes in representation between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 in the 132 school districts in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The study utilized 2013-2014 data reported in the Casey (2017) study.

Data from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) were related to specific categories of special education disabilities (Intellectual Disability, Learning Disability, and Emotional Disability), socioeconomic status, gender and racial backgrounds, particularly Black and Hispanic.

Findings included a comparison of the data for 2008-2009 to 2013-2014. In 2008-2009 some data were missing which may have contributed to a lack of over representation in several

areas. The data in 2008-2009 indicated less disproportionality than the 2013-2014 data. Data in 2013-2014 reported as more disproportional than data from 2008-2009.

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine representation of students in special education by category (SWD, ED, SLD, and ID) and by demographic (Ethnicity, Gender, SES) for 2008-2009, and to determine changes in representation between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 in the 132 school districts in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The study utilized 2013-2014 data reported in the Casey (2017) study.

Data from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) were related to specific categories of special education disabilities (Intellectual Disability, Learning Disability, and Emotional Disability), socioeconomic status, gender and racial backgrounds, particularly African-American and Hispanic. Findings included a comparison of the data for 2008-2009 to 2013-2014. In 2008-2009 some data were missing, which may have contributed to a lack of over representation in several areas.

This study sought to answer the following research questions.

1. What is the status of representation of students from selected racial groups, students of both male and female genders, and economically disadvantaged students in school divisions in special education programs in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 or greater?
2. What is the status of representation of Black and Hispanic, male and female, and economically disadvantaged students in SLD special education programs in school divisions in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater?
3. What is the representation of Black and Hispanic, male and female, and economically disadvantaged students in ED special education programs in school division in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater?
4. What is the status of representation of Black and Hispanic, male and female, and economically disadvantaged students in ID special education programs in school divisions in Virginia for the school year 2008-2009, as defined by a disproportionality risk ratio of 2.0 greater?

5. What changes in disproportionality, if any, have occurred between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014?

Summary of Findings

Data from 2008-2009 were analyzed and compared to data from 2013-2014 in specific areas of special education. After analyzing the data related to the research questions, a number of findings were manifested regarding special education services and identification in the disability categories SWD, SLD, ED and ID.

Findings 1: In the school year 2008-2009, 2% of the school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia identified Black students disproportionately as ID, and 0% of the school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia identified Black students disproportionately as SWD, SLD, and ED. In contrast, in 2013-2014, Black students were disproportionately identified in the area of SWD in 8% of the school divisions. Black students were disproportionately identified in the area of SLD in 12% of the school divisions in 2013-2014, and they were disproportionately identified in the area of ED in 13% of the school divisions. Finally, in 2013-2014, 32% of the school divisions in Virginia identified Black students disproportionately according to Indicator 10.

Findings 2: In the school year 2008-2009, 0% of the school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia identified Hispanic students as disproportionate in the areas of ID, SWD, SLD, and ED. Comparatively, in the 2013-2014 school year, Hispanic students were disproportionately identified in 5% of the school divisions in the disability category SLD, in 0% school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the disability category ED, in 2% of the school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the disability category SWD, and in 1% of the school divisions in the disability category ID.

Findings 3: In the 2008-2009 school year, 2% of the school divisions in Virginia identified economically disadvantaged students as disproportionate in the disability category SWD, 30% of the school divisions identified economically disadvantaged students as disproportionate in the disability category SLD, 17% of the school divisions identified economically disadvantaged students as disproportionate in the disability category ED, and 38% of the school divisions identified economically disadvantaged students as disproportionate in the disability category ID. Comparatively, in the 2013-2014 school year, 33% of the school

divisions in Virginia identified economically disadvantaged students as disproportionate in the disability category SWD, 36% of the school divisions identified economically disadvantaged students as disproportionate in the disability category SLD, and 27% of the school divisions identified economically disadvantaged students as disproportionate in the disability category ED, and 45% of the school divisions identified economically disadvantaged students as disproportionate in the disability category ID.

Findings 4: Female students were not reported by any school division in the Commonwealth of Virginia as disproportionate. In comparing the school years 2008-2009 and 2013-2014, zero (0%) school divisions identified female students in the disability categories SWD, SLD, ED, and ID as disproportionate.

Findings 5: In the school year 2008-2009, zero (0%) school divisions identified males as disproportionate in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the disability categories SWD, SLD, ED, and ID. Comparatively, in the 2013-2014 school year, 18% of the school divisions identified male student as disproportionate in the disability category SWD, 10% of the school divisions identified male students as disproportionate in the disability category SLD, 23% of the school divisions identified male students as disproportionate in the disability category ED, and 2% of the school divisions identified male students as disproportionate in the disability category ID.

Findings 6: In 2013-2014 there were more superintendent Regions that reported over representation than were reported in 2008-2009.

Implications for Practice

Implication 1: State and Local school officials should monitor the reporting of data so that the data accurately reflect the level of proportionality.

Implication 2: School divisions should continue to investigate ways to mitigate the impact that poverty has on student performance. The study showed that in both years 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 students identified as economically disadvantaged are labeled as disproportionate in all areas. As stated by Thaler (2012), “Students identified as coming from economically disadvantaged families and lifestyles face significant barriers and these barriers may persist through their educational school years” p.1).

Implication 3: School divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia should continue to investigate how to address the needs of sub groups (male, female, Hispanic, Black) to minimize over representation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Implication 1: A study could be conducted to explore school divisions reporting practices.

Implication 2: Future research can include moving five years forward to see if data indicate improvement. Are there more areas that show overrepresentation? Compared to 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 what do data show for the years 2018-2019? The researcher found that the data set from the VDOE in 2008 was missing important information or points. Some of the possible reasons could be that the data from 2008 had reporting errors, that data reporting was not required, or that the data sets could have been less monitored than the data that were reported in more recent years. Also, there could be that there were no errors, but we don't know because the research does not show that.

Implication 3: In addition to research in the Commonwealth of Virginia, future research can move into other states. This could provide a broader collection of data.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine representation of students in special education by category (SWD, ED, SLD, and ID) and by demographic (Ethnicity, Gender, SES) for 2008-2009, and to determine changes in representation between 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 in the 132 school districts in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The study utilized 2013-2014 data reported in the Casey (2017) study.

Data from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) were related to specific categories of special education disabilities (Intellectual Disability, Learning Disability, and Emotional Disability), socioeconomic status, gender and racial backgrounds, particularly African-American and Hispanic. Findings included a comparison of the data for 2008-2009 to 2013-2014. In 2008-2009 some data were missing, which may have contributed to a lack of over representation in several areas.

The data analysis revealed that in the 2008-2009 school year, school divisions in Virginia reported a smaller number of school divisions with disproportionality than was reported in the school year 2013-2014. In both the 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 school years, disproportionality was most evident and reported in the area of economically disadvantaged students identified for special education services in the disability categories SWD, SLD, ED and ID.

An analysis of the data showed there was no change in disproportionality between the school years 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 in school divisions reporting of female students for special education services in the disability categories SWD, SLD, ED, and ID. Conversely, Male students were reported as disproportionate in more divisions and in more areas in the school year 2013-2014 than in the school year 2008-2009. Hispanic students were also identified as disproportionate in more school divisions in the 2013-2014 school year, as were Black students and economically disadvantaged students.

An analysis of the data retrieved from the Superintendent's Regions in the Commonwealth of Virginia's public schools regarding special education identification was compared to the analysis of data regarding special identification from the 2008-2009 to the 2013-2014 school years. The analysis revealed that there was a disproportional identification of Black students in Regions 1, 5, and 8 in the disability category ID in the 2008-2009 school year, whereas ID was disproportional for Black students in Regions 5 and 8 in the 2013-2014 school year. When examining data regarding Hispanic students, the researcher found that, in the 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 school years, of the eight Superintendent's Regions, there were no school divisions that identified disproportionately in any of the selected categories of special education. An analysis of the data regarding economically disadvantaged students in the 2013-2014 school year by Superintendent's Regions, Regions 2, 4, 7 and 8 reported 50% or more of their school divisions disproportionately identified economically disadvantaged students in the disability category ID, whereas in the 2008-2009 school year, the Superintendent's Regions reported Regions 7 and 8 disproportionately identified economically disadvantaged students in the disability category ID in over 50% of the school divisions within each region. In 2008-2009, all Superintendent's Regions reported at least some overrepresentation in at least 3 of the 4 reviewed categories (SWD, SLD, ED, ID).

When examining disproportional identification of male students by Superintendent's Regions, Regions 2, 4, 5, and 6 all reported to have over 50% or more of their school divisions

disproportionately identify male students as ED in the school year 2013-2014. Conversely, in the 2008-2009 school year, the Superintendent's Region reports identified no regions that identified male students as disproportionate in any disability category. An examination of Superintendent's Regions for the disproportional identification of female students in the disability categories SWD, SLD, ED and ID, determined that no Superintendent's Region identified any of their school divisions with female students as being disproportionately identified in any special education categories in the 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 school years.

Summary

The findings of the research showed that the data that were extracted from the Virginia Department of Education in 2008-1009 as compared to 2013-2014 varied. In comparing the data, the data from 2013-2014 showed over representation in all of the areas that were examined excluding females. The data in 2008-2009 and 2013-2014 showed that females were the only group that reported 0% over represented.

Researcher's Reflections

The prior research indicated that African American males had always been found eligible for special education services at a higher rate than other subgroups. As reported in chapter two by Deninger, 2008, African American and Hispanic students were found eligible for special education services at a higher rate than White and Asian populations. In completing this research, it was found that this was not true in the 2008-2009 school year according to the Virginia Department of Education. Economically disadvantaged students were found to be over represented both in 2008-2009 and in 2013-2014 in more school divisions. The researcher's perception has shifted in that it was thought that the educational system was getting worse for students, however as reported by the USDOE in 2007, when Public Law 94-152 was passed in 1975, there continues to be advancement in implementation and management of special education programs as well as for students with disabilities, even though we continue to have issues especially in the representativeness of the poor.

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Appendix A
IRB Approval



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120
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Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-3732 Fax 540/231-0959
email irb@vt.edu
website <http://www.irb.vt.edu>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 10, 2018
TO: Carol S Cash, Jennifer Yvette Smith
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires January 29, 2021)
PROTOCOL TITLE: Proportional Representation of Students with Disabilities Based on Race, Gender, and Socio-Economics Status in Virginia between 2008 and 2013: How has it changed?
IRB NUMBER: 18-090

Effective April 10, 2018, the Virginia Tech Institution Review Board (IRB) approved the New Application 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 within 5 business days 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 responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As: **Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 4**
Protocol Approval Date: **April 10, 2018**
Protocol Expiration Date: **N/A**
Continuing Review Due Date*: **N/A**

*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.

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Appendix B
Permission to Use Data Email

Jennifer Smith <jys1963@vt.edu>

Apr 18, 2018,
9:18 AM

to Maxine

Thank you so much...I am comparing 2008-09 data in the same areas that you worked on.

Number and Percent of school divisions at each Disproportionality Risk Ratio Level for SWD, SLD, ED, ID,

Percent of Disproportional Identification of Black students of Special Education Services by Superintendent's Region

Locale description and student demographic makeup of each superintendent's region

These are some of the items that you addressed.

-2018

I give Jennifer Smith permission to use 2013-14 data use in the dissertation called Proportional Representation of Students with Disabilities Based on Race, Gender, and Sociology-Economic Status in Virginia.

Sincerely,

Dr. Maxine Austin-Casey