

**Supervision of Special Education Instruction
in Rural Public School Districts: A Grounded Theory**

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A Grounded Theory Study

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(ABSTRACT)

The grounded theory presented in this study describes how the supervision of special education instruction occurs in public elementary schools in rural settings. Grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was employed in this study. Nine elementary schools in three rural districts in the state of Virginia participated in the study. Interview data were collected from 34 participants, including special and general education teachers, principals, and directors of special education. Observations were made in the schools and documents pertaining to the supervision process were collected. Data analysis allowed identification of categories and subcategories, processes, influencing conditions, strategies, and outcomes related to supervision, which contributed to the articulation of the theory. The grounded theory suggests that the supervisor's role is assigned to the principal. The principal negotiates among competing priorities and contextual factors while providing supervision. Competing priorities exist in three areas: (1) management and administration versus supervision; (2) monitoring for legal compliance versus supervision of instruction for students with disabilities; and (3) evaluation of teachers versus supervision of instruction. Contextual factors include systemic conditions such as enrollment size of school, time, and number of administrators. Contextual factors also include personal conditions such as knowledge of special education, definitions of special education instruction, and perceived competence of teachers. The outcome of negotiating competing priorities and contextual factors is a dispersal of responsibility for supervision to three groups of educators. Principals, as the primary supervisors, utilize three strategies to address supervision: (1) the observation/evaluation process; (2) supervision by wandering; and (3) open communication. Directors of special education have a supportive role in supervision through communication and collaboration with teachers and principals. Teachers provide some supervision when they mentor new teachers and serve as special education coordinators.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In the fall of 1990, I was hired as a special education teacher. My first teaching position was in a self-contained classroom that the school principal fondly referred to as “Special K.” This was a class for children, ages 5 to 7 years, who had developmental delays. Picture the scene--these 20 children with a range of ability levels and unique needs, two special education teachers, and two paraprofessionals shared a small classroom that was in dire need of supplies and equipment.

As an enthusiastic first year teacher, fresh from the university with my bachelor’s degree in elementary education and mental retardation, I was totally oblivious to the challenges I was about to face. During that first year, I struggled daily to find appropriate teaching strategies to use with my students as I tried to help them overcome significant learning and behavioral difficulties. I asked for suggestions from my peers, the assistant principal, the principal, and a supervisor of special education. I received a few helpful ideas, but continued to feel that I was not meeting the unique needs of the children in my class.

As a first year teacher, I was required to participate in the Beginning Teacher Assistance Program (BTAP). One day my co-teacher took half of the children out to the playground, so that I was left with the 10 most cooperative and advanced of our students for the next hour. I proceeded with a well-planned and structured group lesson on one-to-one correspondence and counting. Another adult watched from the back of the room and assessed me with the instrument designed for the BTAP. I worked meticulously to ensure that she saw me performing as many of the objectives on her checklist as possible. I passed with flying colors, then the rest of the 20 students returned and the true reality of my teaching began again.

In April, I was called to the principal’s office for my year-end evaluation. Despite the fact that the principal had observed me teaching a whole lesson only once during the year, I received a glowing review. The only suggestion for improvement was that I be more assertive and confident in sharing my knowledge and skills with my co-teacher in the program.

The situations above describe the types of supervision I received in my first year. Despite what may seem like a shaky start to a teaching career, I survived to teach seven more years before returning to school myself. The challenges never eased, only changed with new students, new coteachers, new principals and supervisors. As I developed in my teaching competence, I

relied on many sources for help in identifying effective instructional strategies to use with students with disabilities. These included talking with coworkers, reading professional literature, attending in-services and workshops, obtaining a masters degree in learning disabilities, taking university courses about emotional disabilities, and occasionally receiving feedback and assistance from principals and supervisors. It is this last aspect that is the focus of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Supervision, as a field of practice, has the goal of ensuring quality teaching and optimal learning for students. In its current context, supervision can be seen as a tool for fostering improvement in instruction, enhancing learning outcomes for all students, and promoting professional development for educators. Supervision is a long-standing function in public education in the United States (Glanz, 1998). It has evolved over time and is conducted in many formats, but is applicable to teachers of all students, including teachers of students with disabilities.

With the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), Public Law 94-142, in 1975, and its subsequent reauthorizations and amendments, students with a wide range of disabilities gained access to education within the public school arena. As did its predecessors, the most recent iteration of the law, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA), entitles qualified students with disabilities to a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services (§601(d)(1)(A)). Such students require instruction and services that are specially designed to meet their unique educational needs, which may include cognitive, physical, social, and emotional needs. Students with disabilities can be instructed in diverse educational settings, such as resource rooms, self-contained classrooms, general education classrooms, alternative schools, hospitals, and homes. A range of personnel, including special education teachers, paraprofessionals, general education teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and counselors, may provide special education and related services. The requirements of the IDEA point to the need for supervision of special education instruction.

Additional aspects of the current educational system create a need for supervision of special education instruction and support the need for further study of the topic. Recent reform movements such as inclusion, site-based management, and accountability initiatives demand that educators target positive outcomes for students. Supervision is one tool that may assist teachers

in improving instruction and targeting those outcomes. A second current issue that implies a need for supervisory interactions is the shortage of certified special education teachers. The lack of administrative and supervisory support has been identified as a factor related to teacher attrition (Billingsley, 1993).

As the personal experience related in the opening section of this chapter demonstrates, teachers of students with disabilities seek out interactions with supervisors who are knowledgeable about issues of disability and about the provision of special education instruction. Unfortunately, in my experience, those productive and supportive interactions were not always forthcoming. Although special educators often have a building-level leader and a district-level leader, system constraints may preclude the provision of supervision for special education instruction. A greater understanding of the process used in supervising special education instruction in public schools is needed.

Theoretical Base/Relationship to Prior Knowledge

A review of the literature related to the supervision of special education instruction, detailed in Chapter 2, reveals that the theoretical base and body of research directly related to this substantive area is sparse. Existing research studies have investigated perceived roles and responsibilities of directors of special education and of school principals in relation to the supervision of special education. These studies resulted in prescriptive listings of knowledge, skills, and values needed by such supervisors (Fidler, 1986; Johnson, 1987; Johnson & Burrello, 1988; Quigley, 1991; White, 1993). Some studies have addressed perceptions of teachers and supervisors about the frequency and quality of supervision (Breton & Donaldson, 1991; Clouse, 1993; Farley, 1991). However, this literature lacks detailed descriptions or explanatory theories about how the supervision of special education instruction actually occurs in school settings.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop a grounded theory that describes and explains supervision of special education instruction in rural public elementary schools. A grounded theory is “theory that is derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 12). The theory developed in this study provides a detailed explanation of the central processes in the supervision of special education instruction in such schools, identifies influencing factors and conditions, and explains resulting strategies and outcomes.

Research Questions

The over-all guiding question for this study was this: What is the theory that explains how the supervision of special education instruction occurs in public elementary schools in rural settings? Subordinate questions relate to the development of the grounded theory and include: (a) What are the general categories and subcategories that emerge in open coding of the collected data? (b) What are the central processes in conducting the supervision of special education instruction that emerge from the collected data? (c) What are the needs that are addressed by the process of supervision? (d) What conditions cause supervision to be conducted as it is? (e) What conditions serve as barriers to the provision of supervision of special education instruction? and (f) What are the resulting associated strategies and outcomes?

Significance of the Study

A theory is “a set of well-developed concepts related through statements of relationship, which together constitute an integrated framework that can be used to explain or predict phenomena” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 15). The study conducted and reported in this paper did not begin with an a priori theory. Strauss and Corbin indicate that a researcher conducting a grounded theory study “does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind...Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data” (p. 12).

The grounded theory that was developed from this study contributes to the currently limited research and theoretical base of knowledge about the supervision of special education instruction. The theory provides a set of inter-related generalizations that serve to explain how the supervision of special education instruction occurs in rural public elementary schools. This explanation offers insight into this aspect of instructional supervision to practitioners and educational researchers, enhancing an understanding of the complex nature of supervision, and suggesting action to supervisors and teachers in rural school districts.

Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this study:

Supervision is the school function that improves instruction and student learning through direct assistance to, and support of, professional development for teachers. It involves face-to-face contact, discussion, observation, analysis of data, and planning for instruction.

Special education is specially designed instruction to meet the unique educational needs of students with disabilities, as defined in the IDEA.

Student with a disability is a child who has mental retardation, a hearing impairment including deafness, a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment including blindness, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, an other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, because of that disability, needs special education and related services.

Supervisor includes school personnel who provide supervision. Principals, assistant principals, directors of special education, supervisors of special education, or teacher peers can fill this role.

Delimitations/Limitations

The grounded theory developed in this study has emerged from data collected in a sampling of rural public school districts, and more specifically in rural elementary schools, in the state of Virginia. The reader of the research must make the decision of the transferability of the study's findings to other settings. The reader should compare the context of the study's sample to his or her own school contexts. A description of the characteristics of the three districts is provided in a prologue to Chapter 4 in order to enable readers to confidently make that transferability decision.

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation research involved a qualitative, grounded theory study. Data were provided through interviews with school personnel engaged in the provision and supervision of special education, observations of events related to the supervision of special education instruction, and relevant school documents. Through continuous data collection and analysis, a substantive theory was developed that describes how supervision of special education instruction is occurring in rural public elementary schools.

Chapter 1 of this dissertation report includes an introduction to the topic, a statement of the purpose and significance of the study, research questions, definitions of terms, and delimitations/limitations of the study. Chapter 2 provides a review of the related literature, describing the problem in its current context; briefly reviewing the historical evolution of the field of supervision; and describing current models of practice. Theoretical literature and professional commentary about the general supervision of instruction are reviewed before narrowing the focus to supervision specifically related to special education instruction. Ten

research studies focusing on the supervision of special education are critically analyzed and synthesized. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in the study, including an explanation of the study's design, the sampling procedures, the data collection and management procedures, and the data analysis procedures. A Prologue to Chapter 4 describes the characteristics of the participating schools and districts. Chapter 4, itself, describes the grounded theory that emerged from the collected data. A visual model of the theory is provided and vignettes drawn from the data are integrated into the narrative explanation of the theory. Chapter 5 provides discussion of the grounded theory, conclusions drawn from this study, implications for practitioners, and implications for future research. An epilogue is included, followed by references and appendices.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter examines the literature related to the supervision of special education teachers responsible for the delivery of individualized instruction to students with disabilities in American schools. Additional literature that was reviewed during the collection and analysis stages of this study is incorporated into Chapters 4 and 5. This topic is important for several reasons. First, states and localities are required by the IDEA to provide an individually appropriate education to students with disabilities and both federal and state laws require that teachers be qualified and trained to provide special education. Supervision is one tool that can help school systems meet these requirements.

Second, recent educational reform movements have implications for the supervision of special and general education in order to promote improved educational outcomes for all students. Examples of such reform efforts include site-based management, the greater inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classes, and state standards and accountability initiatives. Supervision practices should assist teachers with implementing aspects of their jobs linked to these reform movements.

Third, there is a shortage of special education teachers and literature in the field suggests that administrative and supervisory support is a factor related to teacher attrition and retention (Billingsley, 1993; Cherniss, 1988; Littrell, Billingsley, & Cross, 1994). Effective supervision and teacher support should increase job satisfaction and help to keep good special education teachers from leaving the field.

Finally, as special educators work to ensure students' progress toward their Individualized Education Program (IEP) and general curriculum goals, objectives, and standards, there is a potential for supervision to be lacking or ineffective due to role and responsibility conflict. Special educators often have two or more leaders, a building level principal and a district level special education supervisor or director. Each leader can offer different expertise. A building level administrator may have expertise in general instructional principles and curriculum, but lack knowledge about characteristics of students with a range of disabilities and instructional techniques that are effective with them. The special education leader may possess this expertise, but may have little direct supervisory contact with special education teachers due to time constraints and other managerial duties. Unless the supervision of special education

teachers is provided in a coordinated and thoughtful fashion, these teachers may not receive the supervisory support that fosters improvement of instruction.

Community of Scholars

Because supervision of special education is often a shared responsibility of general and special education leaders, it is important to consider the supervision of special education within the context of supervision of public education in general. The field of supervision has been the focus of scholarly writing and diverse research efforts since the inception of public education in the United States. This is reflected in the Handbook of Research on School Supervision (1998) edited by Gerald Firth and Edward Pajak, which includes 52 chapters authored by 77 individuals, predominantly members of the Council of Professors of Instructional Supervision.

In order to gain a broad base of knowledge about instructional supervision, works from the following group of scholars were reviewed: Carl D. Glickman, professor at the University of Georgia and co-author of Supervision of Instruction: A Developmental Approach (1998); Thomas J. Sergiovanni, professor at Trinity University and author of Leadership for the Schoolhouse (1996); Robert J. Starratt, Director of Educational Administration and Higher Education Programs at Boston College and co-author with Sergiovanni of Supervision: A Redefinition (1993); Susan Sullivan, College of Staten Island, and Jeffery Glanz, professor at Kean College, authors of Supervision that Improves Teaching (2000); Edward Pajak, of the University of Georgia and author of Approaches to Clinical Supervision (1993); and Allan Glatthorn, professor of education at East Carolina University and author of Supervisory Leadership: Introduction to Instructional Supervision (1990). In addition to the Handbook mentioned previously, two of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's Yearbooks (Sergiovanni, 1982; Glickman, 1992) were particularly informative regarding the evolution of the field of supervision and of current issues and research.

In the area of supervision of special education specifically, the research and scholarly writing is limited. Though much commentary and a good amount of study has been given to special education administration, the focus has primarily been on the management and legal aspects of the role with less attention given to instructional supervision. There is an emerging body of literature on the role of the principal as instructional leader for all. The scholars who predominantly inform this area include Leonard Burrello of Indiana University, and his collaborators, Johnson and Sage, who have addressed the role of the special education

administrator and the collaborative training of special and general education leaders. William Swan, of the University of Georgia, has also written in the area of training principals in special education as well as on collaborating for comprehensive services and on skills for beginning special education teachers. Swan was the author of the chapter on supervision of special education in the Handbook of Research on School Supervision (1998). William Breton and Gordon Donaldson have studied the supervision provided to resource room teachers in the state of Maine. Others who have contributed to the broad discussion on supervision of special education teachers include Bonnie Billingsley and colleagues at Virginia Tech who have addressed supervision of rural programs, administrative supports and teacher attrition. Several doctoral dissertations from Virginia Tech and other institutions have addressed this issue in varied respects and a selected number are included in this review of literature.

Purpose of Review

The primary purpose of this chapter is to examine existing literature in the field of instructional supervision specifically related to supervision of special education. The guiding question for this review is: How are special education teachers supervised as they provide individualized instruction for students with disabilities? In order to provide background and to answer this question, I first consider the following: (a) the current context of supervision in special education; (b) legislative foundations that establish the need for supervision of special education; (c) the historical evolution of the field of supervision; (d) current models of practice; and (e) theoretical bases for supervision of special education. Next, I critically analyze and synthesize findings of 10 chosen research studies. I discuss conceptual and methodological issues in this body of research. Then, I consider the potential needs for future research in the area of supervision of special education instruction as suggested by the literature review.

In order to accomplish this review of literature, computerized database searches of ERIC, PSYCHINFO, and Dissertation Abstracts International were conducted. References located in texts, book chapters, journal articles, and dissertations related to supervision also led to identification of additional sources. In reviewing literature on supervision in general, search terms including, but not limited to, supervision, supervisors, administration, principals, instructional leadership, instructional improvement, teacher evaluation, clinical supervision, developmental supervision, differentiated supervision, collegial supervision, and professional development were used. Because of an interest in the historical development of supervision

practices and policies and their influence on current practices, no time limits were applied to these search terms.

In order to locate studies related to the supervision of special education specifically, the same databases were utilized, with the above search terms being paired with terms such as special education, special education teachers, disabilities, and individualized instruction. These searches were limited to the time period following the enactment of Public Law 94-142 in 1975 up to the present. Studies were included for this critical review that specifically investigated the following: (a) roles and responsibilities for special education supervision; (b) perceptions of public school special education teachers and their supervisors about the utility and effectiveness of supervisory practices; (c) training needs for supervisors of special education teachers; and (d) the implementation of specific models of supervision with special education teachers.

Definitions of Supervision

Defining supervision has been a recurrent and controversial issue in the field of educational supervision (Bolin & Panaritis, 1992; Glanz, 1996; Harris, 1998). In 1926, Barr and Burton (as cited in Bolin & Panaritis, 1992) brought together conflicting perspectives by defining supervision as “coexistence with the range of things physical and spiritual, which are primarily concerned with bettering the conditions that surround learning. A direct attack may be made upon improving learning through the improvement of instruction” (1926, p. 21). As the field of supervision and the theories that supported its practices evolved, divergent views about the definition and function of supervision emerged and continue today (Glanz, 1996).

In 1934, the committee developing the Seventh Yearbook of the Department of Supervisors and Directors of Instruction had difficulty reaching consensus on a definition. The committee chose as a purpose “pupil growth through teacher growth.” Clifford Woody who wrote an evaluation of the yearbook, chided them, referring to the same problem with the previous committee, saying, “This previous committee proceeded on this assumption, ‘Supervision is like electricity; we don’t know what it is, but we’ve got it and can measure its amounts and effects’” (as cited in Bolin and Panaritis, 1992).

Harris (1998), in reviewing current definitions of supervision, enumerates the following consistencies contained in definitions of supervision: “focus on teaching and learning; focus on responding to changing external realities; providing support, assistance and feedback to teachers;

recognizing teaching as the primary vehicle for facilitating school learning; and promoting new, improved innovative practices” (p.2).

Current Issues Influencing the Supervision of Special Education Instruction

Education for students with disabilities may require special materials, teaching techniques, equipment and facilities that are not typically required by most general education students. Zigmond (1997) describes special education as “treatment out of the ordinary” and as “something unique and separate from general education” (p. 388). Special education involves instruction that is designed to meet individual characteristics and learning needs of students. Examples of instructional methods that might be utilized include Direct Instruction programs or strategy instruction. Modifications and accommodations to curriculum, materials, and instructional methods may need to be implemented. Supervision should improve the delivery of special education to students who have unique educational needs and are served in a variety of educational settings by a diversity of professionals.

The area of supervision of special education instruction is problematic and is influenced by the unique dimensions of special education, including student and teacher demographics, varied settings in which special education is delivered, the shared responsibility for leadership of special education, and the impact of legislation, policies, and reform movements.

Current Student and Teacher Demographics

According to the 21st Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of IDEA, over 95% of students with disabilities were provided their special education and related services in regular school buildings. Of those, nearly half were removed from regular education classrooms for less than 21% of their day (1999, p. vi). Effective supervision from both school principals and special education leaders is needed to help teachers, both special and general, provide appropriate education to this body of students. The Report goes on to suggest the use of universal design of curriculum to meet all learners needs in varied settings (p. I-25). Universal design involves consideration of needs of all students when creating standards, curriculum, and materials. Teachers need supervisory support and assistance in identifying instructional needs, as well as materials and techniques.

Swan (1998) emphasizes the need for supervision in order to provide expertise and support for teachers given the dimensions of special education. He refers to the need for collaborative supervision at varied levels (preschool, elementary, middle, and high school), for

varied exceptionalities (learning disabilities, autism, visual impairment, etc.), and in varied locations for service delivery (general classroom, resource room, self-contained classroom).

In the 20th Annual Report to Congress (1998), data on the national teaching force in special education from the years 1987-88 to 1995-96 were presented. Trend analysis showed a persistent chronic shortage of fully trained special education teachers. During the time period reviewed, special education teacher shortages for children ages 3-5 ranged between 2,000 and 4,000. For children ages 6-21, the shortage has averaged 27,000 per year. For the last year of that period, 328,000 special education teaching positions were reported. Nine percent of those were reported as vacant or filled by teachers who were not fully certified. This pool of teachers who are employed to educate students with disabilities but who are not fully trained and certified to do so will need effective supervision that ensures the delivery of appropriate instruction and that continually assists such teachers in improving their knowledge and skills.

Role and Responsibility Dilemmas

Swan (1998) in his review of literature related to supervision of special education repeatedly calls for collaboration between building level leaders and special education leaders for the effective supervision of special education. Initiatives have addressed collaborative training of principals and special education supervisors, but this is not the norm in practice. Many principals do not have the background knowledge about disabilities and their impact on learning. Many never take courses in special education as part of their administrative training, yet most have shared or sole responsibility for supervising special education personnel and programs in their schools (Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994).

Special education supervisors and directors often perform duties that are both supervisory and administrative. Administrative duties including budgeting, compliance with regulations, paperwork, and meetings may limit time for supervisory contact and direct consultation with teachers.

Mandates and Policies Affecting Supervision

Federal and state legislation has played a predominant role in assuring public education for students with disabilities in the last 25 years. These mandates, as well as state and local policy and educational reform initiatives, carry implications for the supervision of teachers in today's public education settings. Supervisors must possess knowledge of rules, regulations, and

policies, as well as best practices, in order to supervise the work of educators who provide instruction to children with disabilities.

Federal and state legislation related to special education. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA) is the federal financing statute that entitles students with disabilities to public education. The federal regulations and corresponding state law and regulations provide guidance to states and localities for the delivery of special education to such students. Special education is “specially designed instruction, at not cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. . .” (IDEA, 1997, §602(25)). The legislation entitles qualified students to a free appropriate public education (FAPE), defined as:

special education and related services that—(A) have been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; (B) meet the standards of the State educational agency; (C) include an appropriate preschool, elementary, or secondary school education in the State involved, and; (D) are provided in conformity with the individualized education program (IDEA, 1997, §602(8)(A-D)).

In describing the purpose of the law, Congress stated, “Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities” (IDEA, 1997, §601(c)(1)). Referring to the 20 years of research and experience since the initial passage of the Act, Congress found that the education of such children could be made more effective by “supporting high-quality professional development for all personnel who work with such children . . .” (§601(c)(5)(E)).

In order for states to maintain eligibility for federal financial support under the law, they must establish and maintain standards to ensure that personnel providing special education services are “appropriately and adequately prepared and trained” (IDEA, 1997, §612(a)(15)). States must also have a comprehensive system of personnel development that is designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified personnel (§612(a)(14)). In addition, IDEA provides for State Improvement Grants that may be used to help states and localities address personnel development (§651(a)(6)(F-G)).

The regulations for the 1997 Amendments make specific and repeated references to involvement and progress in the general curriculum for each child with a disability (§300.347(a)(1-5); §300.550-553; §300.138(a); §300.344(a)(2); §300.346(d)). This seems to add

additional implications for teachers and their supervisors. Congress, in Section 651 (a)(6)(A) of the Act, reinforces the notion of maintaining high academic standards and performance goals for students with disabilities, consistent with standards and goals for all students. This requires knowledge and use of effective teaching strategies, materials, accommodations, and modifications to the general curriculum by both special and general educators. Accordingly, supervisors need to be able to provide knowledgeable support to all teachers in their efforts to educate students with disabilities. Supervision of special education teachers and individualized instruction requires the supervisor to be aware of mandates, regulations, and best practices in instruction for children with disabilities.

Impact of state and local policies and reforms on teacher supervision. State and local policies have exerted a growing influence on the supervision and evaluation of teachers and learning. Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1992) suggest that recent legislation and policies have been launched with a focus on professionalizing the field of public education, but that many recent reform efforts have adopted a more bureaucratic view of teaching. The policies and reform initiatives of the 1980's and 1990's have had great influence on supervision and its related function, evaluation.

Darling-Hammond and Berry (1988) identified more than 1,000 state legislative acts related to teachers in the 1980's. Many of these acts pertained to teacher preparation, certification, induction of new teachers, recertification of veteran teachers, mentor programs, and lead teachers with supervisory duties. Other legislation dealt with evaluation systems, which are often inextricably tied to supervision practices.

State level policies related to beginning teacher induction and to teacher supervision and evaluation affect supervision practices at the local level. Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1992) observe that at the beginning of 1990, 18 states had implemented beginning teacher supervision/evaluation programs and 30 more were developing or considering similar programs. As referred to in the opening section of this paper, in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the state of Virginia, each new teacher was required to participate in the Beginning Teacher Assistance Program. This was a statewide effort at assistance and assessment of all beginning teachers. The program involved observation by a team of professionals during the first year of teaching. The assessors completed an observation tool, which listed many performance indicators primarily

drawn from the effective schools research literature. Print resources, assistance and staff development training, and evaluation were all components of this program.

Policies that address evaluation systems can have impact on supervision practices. One limitation to prescriptive type induction, supervision, and evaluation systems is that the training teachers receive, pre-service and in-service, promotes a focus on using specific instructional methods to meet the prescribed evaluation criteria. This may prevent teachers from adapting instruction to particular subjects or students. Also, the topics discussed with supervisors may be narrowed to only those included in the observation and evaluation form. These were some limiting effects of the Florida Beginning Teacher Program reviewed by Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1992) in their discussion on policy and supervision.

Due to the shortage of certified personnel in special education described elsewhere in this paper, the need for supervision of beginning special education teachers is imperative. Some of this supervision comes in the form of mentors assigned by local school divisions or supervising teachers for unendorsed personnel who are teaching while completing appropriate degree work at the same time. Descriptions and evaluations of these types of supervision programs can be found in the literature (Bernhardt & Jensen, 1993; Guerrero & Goldberg, 1990; Kueker & Haensley, 1991; Lane & Ganosa, 1995; Weisbender, 1989). This literature reported perceptions of participants as moderately positive. A few evaluations of the programs showed positive longitudinal data on retention of special educators or improvement in instruction as a result of the mentoring programs (Fishbaugh & Christensen, 1998; Ikei & Hoga, 1995).

State and local policies have impact on the supervision that veteran teachers receive as well. Valentine (1990) observed that half of the states required scheduled classroom observations of veteran teachers by a supervisor. The observation requirements varied from twice a year to once every three years. Valentine indicated that the supervisory observation often required note taking, prescriptive observation forms, post-observation conferences, use of or constraints against the use of nonobservational or artifact data, and written plans for professional development.

Reform initiatives. Many reform efforts in general education as well as in special education have implications for supervision of special education instruction. Current reforms centered on inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms, site-based management of schools, and standards and accountability systems impact the practices of

teachers who serve students with disabilities. These reform initiatives also have an impact on the roles and responsibilities of principals and supervisors. Swan (1998) suggests that the implications of such reform movements for the supervision of special education include continual update of knowledge and skills on the part of building level and special education leaders, as well as the need for increased collaboration between these supervisors.

Theoretical Foundations for Instructional Supervision

Thus far in this review, the need for supervision of special education instruction has been set forth and several factors that influence current supervision practices have been discussed. In this section, the theoretical basis for the supervision of instruction in general is discussed. The history of supervision theory and practices in schools is briefly described and then current models of supervision are presented.

Theory ideally should serve as a basis for the development of models and practices. Tracy (1998) observes, “the field of supervision of instruction unfortunately suffers from the lack of its own firm base of theory and research” (p. 86). She suggests that the field of supervision has drawn from other fields for its theoretical base, including leadership theory, communication theory, organization theory, counseling theory, educational psychology, and change theory.

Glatthorn (1998) reiterates this view of the theoretical basis for supervision, suggesting that the nature and functions of supervision can be viewed through several dimensions or perspectives, including scientific, social, human, aesthetic, and industrial dimensions. He indicates that viewing supervision through both individual and multiple perspectives will be useful in understanding and in researching the field of supervision.

History of Supervisory Perspectives

Most accounts of the history of supervision refer to eras or periods of time in which supervision was influenced by social, political, and economic movements in society and education (Bolin & Panaritis, 1992; Glanz, 1998; Karier, 1982; Tracy, 1995). The accounts trace the history of supervision from colonial times to present day. Though differing slightly in their representations of the evolution, most depict seven stages: (1) inspection; (2) efficiency; (3) democracy; (4) scientific; (5) human relations; (6) second wave scientific; and (7) human development.

Glanz (1998) referred to the first two stages as inspection and efficiency. At the turn of the 20th century, supervision was influenced by bureaucratic management methods and practices.

Initially, teachers were viewed as deficient and supervisors inspected their practices for errors. In the second stage, supervision was influenced by the scientific principles of business management and industry and aimed at making teaching more efficient.

The third phase, around the 1920s to 1940s, included an attempt to make supervision a more democratic process. Supervision was seen as a helping function and aimed at improving instruction through paying attention to human relations. A return to scientific supervision happened in the late 1940s to 1960s. This phase was characterized by reliance on observation systems and class data to improve instruction. The fifth phase emerged in the 1960s and again focused on democracy and human relations. Supervision was conceived as leadership and tried to remove itself from bureaucratic management methods and legacies of the past.

Glanz (1998) suggests that in the 1970s, the field of supervision was plagued with ambiguities, including the lack of a clear definition of supervision and a lack of agreement on its functions. Emerging during this phase, clinical supervision attempted to provide a clear process and to foster collaboration between the teacher and supervisor in order to improve instruction.

The last phase, from the 1980s to the present, has seen the emergence of models of supervision, often modifications of clinical supervision, that are based in adult learning theory, collaboration, and a concern for meeting both the needs of teachers and of the school organization. Current models of supervision will be briefly reviewed in the next section.

Current Models of Instructional Supervision

Pajak (1993) observes that clinical supervision has remained an important process in the field of supervision. He suggests its “guise may have changed over the years as various authors have reinterpreted and elaborated on the basic framework” (p. 7), but that clinical supervision has remained vital for more than two decades. Some models have taken a humanistic and artistic stance while others are more technical and didactic models. In the mid 1980s to present day, several developmental and reflective approaches to clinical supervision have emerged. Some of these models are described in the following paragraphs. A shift is evident in current practice that suggests using a range of supervision approaches to meet diverse needs and situations.

Clinical supervision. Pajak (1993) provides an overview of the original clinical supervision model developed in the 1960s. The origins of the clinical supervision model came from work completed by Morris Cogan and Robert Goldhammer at Harvard University and expanded by Ralph Moser and David Purpel. Clinical supervision is concerned with the collegial

relationship between a teacher and a supervisor. The focus is on face-to-face interaction between teacher and supervisor in attempts to improve instruction. Observation of classroom behaviors of teachers and students serve as a basis for analysis and choice of alternative teaching actions. Though each of the original developers proposed a slightly different process, clinical supervision included, at minimum, a pre-observation conference, observation, analysis of the teaching and learning behaviors, a post observation conference, and an evaluation of the supervision process. Clinical supervision was viewed as a cyclical process.

Developmental supervision. Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (1998) propose developmental supervision. This is a model in which the supervisor matches the approach to supervision to individual teacher characteristics and developmental level. The supervisor might choose to be directive, collaborative, or nondirective in working with an individual teacher. There are three phases to developmental supervision: (1) choosing the best entry-level supervisory approach for a teacher based on adult developmental level, commitment, and expertise; (2) applying the chosen approach; and (3) fostering teacher development of instructional skills while gradually increasing teacher choice and decision-making responsibility.

Collegial supervision. Several authors in the field of supervision propose collegial processes as options for supervision of teachers (Glatthorn, 1990; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). Glatthorn describes cooperative professional development as “ a process of fostering teacher growth through systematic collaboration with peers” (p. 188) and includes a variety of approaches such as professional dialogue, curriculum development, peer observations and feedback, and action research projects. Supervisors help to coordinate the collegial teams and monitor the process and goal attainment. Other terms that describe forms of collegial supervision include mentoring, cognitive coaching, and peer coaching.

Self-directed supervision. Self-directed supervision is another current model of supervision (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993). In this approach, teachers set goals for their own professional development and present a plan for achieving these goals to a supervisor. At the end of a specified period of time, the teacher and supervisor conference to review data that represents the teacher’s work toward the goal and reflect upon what was learned before setting a new set of goals. Others refer to this as goal-setting or performance-objectives models.

Differentiated supervision. Glatthorn (1990) proposes differentiated supervision as providing a range of options for supervision. He suggests allowing teachers to choose the type of

supervision in which they are involved. Options can include those already described such as clinical supervision, collegial supervision, and self-directed supervision. A fourth option is administrative monitoring in which a supervisor conducts a series of brief and informal observations that are used to assist and assess the teacher.

The theoretical discussion and description of current models above was included in this paper to provide context for the supervision of education within public schools. Because of the shared responsibility for supervision by special education and general education leaders, supervision of special education must be situated within general education supervision practices of the public school arena.

Theoretical Basis for the Supervision of Special Education Instruction

Professional commentaries as well as supervision and administration resources include descriptive and prescriptive accounts of the skills and knowledge needed by building administrators and district supervisors. These accounts also include calls for improved practice.

Pajak (1990) proposes 12 dimensions of supervisory practice that contribute to instructional improvement or professional growth. These dimensions represent more than 300 specific areas of knowledge, skills, and attitudes identified in supervision literature and apply to educational supervisors at all organizational levels. The identified dimensions include the following:

1. Communication: ensuring open and clear communication among individuals and groups throughout the organization;
2. Staff Development: developing and facilitating meaningful opportunities for professional growth;
3. Instructional Program: supporting and coordinating efforts to improve the instructional program;
4. Planning and Change: initiating and implementing collaboratively developed strategies for continuous improvement;
5. Motivating and Organizing: helping people to develop a shared vision and achieve collective aims;
6. Observation and Conferencing: providing feedback to teachers based on classroom observations;

7. Curriculum: coordinating and integrating the process of curriculum development and implementation;
 8. Problem Solving and Decision Making: using a variety of strategies to clarify and analyze problems and to make decisions;
 9. Service to Teachers: providing materials, resources, and assistance to support teaching and learning;
 10. Personal Development: recognizing and reflecting upon one's personal and professional beliefs, abilities, and actions;
 11. Community Relations: establishing and maintaining open and productive relations between the school and its community;
 12. Research and Program Evaluation: encouraging experimentation and assessing outcomes.
- (p. 78)

These dimensions of supervision represent technical knowledge and procedural skills, but also seem to emphasize that supervision is about human relations and is a very person-oriented activity. These dimensions are suggested as important for the general supervision of schools. Other sources emphasize additional skills and knowledge competencies specific to supervision of special education instructional programs.

The National Regional Resource Center Panel on Indicators of Effectiveness in Special Education (1986) attempted to provide guidance to states in evaluating their special education programs. Section 4 of their publication addressed staffing and leadership of special education programs. Emphasis was given to the shared responsibility for leadership between general and special education personnel. Effectiveness indicators for leadership in local special education programs were provided for instructional leaders, principals and special education administrators. Examples of these indicators included the following:

- (a) Establish instructional norms that unify staff and motivate people to accomplish the school's mission;
- (b) Direct instruction, set clear expectations and standards for quality curriculum and instruction;
- (c) Know and can apply teaching and learning principles; are knowledgeable of research, and foster its use in problem solving; model effective teaching practices for staff as appropriate;

- (d) Support efforts of special and regular education staff to improve through staff development and training opportunities;
- (e) Assume responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of special education programs in their schools;
- (f) Emphasize the improvement of instruction and student performance through on-going staff supervision, observation, and consultation. (pp. 4.9-4.13)

Goor, Schwenn, and Boyer (1997) focus on the role and preparation of principals for leadership in special education. They first suggest that principals must be led to embrace essential beliefs, including the beliefs that all children can learn, that all children are accepted in a school, that teachers can teach a wide range of students, and that teachers are responsible for all students' learning. Also, principals must believe that they are responsible for the education of all children in their building. These beliefs lead the principal to include supervision of special education instruction in their leadership functions.

Goor and colleagues also describe core knowledge and skills needed by principals. Knowledge about disabilities and their impact on learning, the special education process, records maintenance and confidentiality, parental involvement, personnel management, discipline, technological advances, and cultural diversity are areas of need. Essential skills for effective leadership of special education involve collaborative planning and decision-making, supporting teacher growth through means of supervision and staff development, and advocating for effective instructional programs and service delivery models. The authors encourage training programs for principals that address reflection in practice.

Billingsley and Jones (1993) address unique needs and strategies for supervision in rural areas. As they conceive it, supervision of special education can be provided by a variety of personnel, but they stress the importance of clear delineations of responsibilities and commitments in this area. Suggested supervisory tasks for special education include: (a) establish program descriptions; (b) establish a comprehensive staff development program; (c) provide individualized assistance to teachers; (d) develop and/or modify curriculum; (e) facilitate IEP development and implementation; (f) facilitate the coordination of services and programs; (g) provide and coordinate instructional resources; (h) facilitate the induction of staff members; and (i) evaluate instructional programs. These authors promote the use of peer supervision and

mentoring as means to support professional growth of beginning special educators and to break the sense of isolation that many special education teachers feel in rural areas.

Research Studies Addressing Supervision of Special Education Instruction

This section of the review will analyze how special education teachers are supervised as they provide individualized instruction to students with disabilities. First, the rationale for including studies for review is discussed. Next, a brief synthesis of the studies' purposes, methodologies, and samples is provided to give the reader an overview. Then, the 10 studies are presented and critically analyzed. The review addresses three general conceptual areas: (a) Who provides supervision of special education instruction? (b) What skills and knowledge are perceived as necessary for supervisors to possess in order to provide effective supervision of special education instruction? and (c) What does supervision of special education instruction look like in actual practice in contemporary schools? These areas serve as the organizational structure for the analysis and synthesis of studies in this section.

Research Studies Included for Review

Specific parameters for selection of studies for the review were set prior to searching the literature. First, studies were to be conducted with school supervisors and teachers of students with disabilities who were receiving special education instruction in K-12 public schools in the United States. As discussed earlier, different school personnel may fill the role of supervisor, such as principal, special education supervisor, or director of special education. Because it is widely acknowledged that the trend in the education of students with disabilities is toward a shared practice between general and special educators, I did not limit studies to one particular supervisory or teaching position or to any particular categories of disabilities.

Second, studies were to be conducted with fully employed public school supervisors and teachers. Studies of the supervision of pre-service special education teachers were excluded. Alfonso and Firth (1990) cautioned against applying findings from studies of supervision of student teachers to teachers in traditional classroom settings. The relationships between student teachers, their supervisors and schools are not the same as the relationships between teachers, their supervisors and employing school districts. Several studies were located in this vein, particularly studies of specific collegial and clinical supervision models, but are not included for review here.

Third, studies were conducted after the implementation of EAHCA in 1975. Studies were found that were published prior to this date, but are not included in this review. The context for providing education to students with disabilities changed dramatically after this legislation passed, so only studies published during the last 25 years were included.

Fourth, studies were to address mainly supervisory duties as opposed to management and administrative duties related to budgeting, finance, legal issues, compliance monitoring, or evaluation. Though these duties are often closely linked to supervision and may be performed by the same educational leadership personnel, my focus and interest is on supervision for instructional improvement, not on administration or evaluation.

An Overview of Studies Included

Descriptions of the 10 studies included for review appear in Appendix A. The studies are arranged alphabetically by first authors' last names for ease of location. This table briefly summarizes the following elements: (a) author and year of publication; (b) purpose of the study; (c) definition of supervision used; (d) methodology and sample used; and (e) major findings related to supervision of special education instruction for each study. Readers are encouraged to refer to the table for details of the studies selected for review.

Purposes. Researchers have studied various aspects of supervision. Some looked at frequency and utility of supervisory behaviors (Breton & Donaldson, 1991; Farley, 1991). Others attempted to define knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed for effective supervision (Fidler, 1986; White, 1993) or identified critical success factors and competencies for effective supervision (Johnson & Burrello, 1988; Johnson, 1987; Quigney, 1992). Some investigated supervision within inclusive environments (Franks-Randall, 1998; White, 1993). One study looked at program specific and generic supervision in special education (Clouse, 1993).

Definitions of supervision. The studies were quite varied in how they defined supervision. In some, supervision was defined as targeted behaviors or processes (Breton & Donaldson, 1991; Johnson, 1987) or by a model name and characteristics (Clouse, 1993). Others did not define the term supervision explicitly, but addressed supervisory competencies within a superordinate concept such as administration, leadership, or school management (Frohoff & Lindle, 1988; Quigney, 1991). The remainder of the studies defined supervision as encompassing broad categories of supervisor responsibilities.

Methodologies. The predominant methodology used in these studies was mail survey (Breton & Donaldson, 1991; Farley, 1991; Franks-Randall, 1998; Frohoff & Lindle, 1998; Quigney, 1992) or a combination of personal interviews and surveys (Fidler, 1986; Johnson, 1987; Johnson & Burrello, 1988; White, 1993) with descriptive and inferential statistical analysis performed on the data. One study involved in-depth interviewing alone (Clouse, 1993).

Samples. Studies collected data in the form of perceptions of special education administrators/supervisors (Fidler, 1986; Johnson & Burrello, 1988), principals (Johnson, 1987), teachers (Franks-Randall, 1998), or a combination of personnel (Clouse, 1993; Farley, 1991; Frohoff & Lindle, 1998; Quigney, 1992; White, 1993).

Who Wears the Supervisory Hat?

Swan (1998) suggests that there is a need for collaboration between building level leaders and special education leaders in providing supervision to special education. Building level leaders can include principals, assistant principals, team coordinators, and lead teachers. Special education leaders can include special education coordinators, special education supervisors, or special education directors.

The supervision of special education programs has increasingly become a concern for building principals since the passage of disability legislation in 1975 and the growth of special education programs within regular schools. Organizational structures such as site-based management and inclusive education promote the principal as the leader for all programs and students, including those in special education. Yet, school systems also have central office administrators and supervisors who retain responsibility in varying degrees for special education programs and staff. In some cases, supervision of special education staff is perceived to be the sole responsibility of the principal or the special education supervisor; in others, supervision is perceived as shared responsibility. The following sections analyze studies relative to principals and special education leaders as supervisors and reveal who is wearing the supervisory hat.

Supervision and the Building Principal

Breton and Donaldson (1991) investigated perceptions of special education resource room teachers about the supervision they received. A mail survey was sent to the entire population of resource room teachers in the state of Maine. Of the 865 teachers, 580 returned the survey. Using the survey data, a profile of the supervision of resource room teachers in Maine was created. This profile identified who supervised resource teachers, how often they supervised,

and how useful teachers found this supervision to be. The participants were asked to identify their primary supervisor for three domains of supervision, including formal observation, consultation on teaching performance, and consultation on non-teaching duties. Choices for primary supervisor for each domain included principal, special education director, curriculum coordinator, school superintendent, and assistant superintendent. Only 57% of the 580 respondents reported being supervised at all across the three domains by any supervisor. Of these, 39% indicated that the building principal is their primary supervisor.

In the domains of supervision studied, 45% of the teachers reported never being formally observed by a principal. Thirty-four percent were never provided consultation on teaching performance by a principal and 26% never received consultation on non-teaching duties by the principal. This is quite disconcerting given the current view of principals as instructional leaders for the whole school and that over 95% of students with disabilities are now educated within regular school buildings (21st Annual Report, 1999). Principals are generally the supervisor closest in proximity to teachers, but many teachers in this study received no supervision from principals.

An interesting finding by Breton and Donaldson (1991) indicated that resource room teachers in Maine rated the supervision provided by principals as no less useful than that provided by special education directors. The reported lack of background knowledge and training in special education of principals discussed earlier in this paper apparently did not make principal supervision less useful for the teachers surveyed. Breton and Donaldson, despite this finding, call for more training for principals in special education issues. This appears to go against their findings, but is logical when viewed in light of the overall finding that resource teachers in Maine received very little supervision from any supervisors, but found all supervision helpful when given. The authors infer that the more supervisory attention given to resource room teachers by principals who are knowledgeable about disabilities and special education, the more positively teachers will view their jobs.

A second study, also conducted in Maine, surveyed secondary public school principals about their roles as supervisors and evaluators of special education staff. Johnson (1987) used elite interviews with 18 expert/key informants and a review of literature to develop a survey questionnaire. The survey collected principals' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities for the supervision and evaluation of special education staff, as well as perceptions of principals'

own training needs. Fifty-five of the total population of 97 secondary school principals in Maine returned the survey.

Johnson (1987) found that 46% of the principals felt they had full responsibility for the supervision of special education staff, while an additional 44% felt they shared this responsibility with the director of special education. Given that nearly all the principals responding had full or shared responsibility for supervision of special education, it is disappointing to note that nearly half of these principals did not feel that they possessed the necessary competencies to supervise special education staff. Over half of the principals indicated that they utilized directors of special education and other special education teachers as resources to help special education staff improve performance. While conclusions cannot be drawn from this study about the effectiveness of that practice for improving special education instruction, it is at least indicative that many principals are willing to search for help in providing supervision and support to special education teachers.

A third study took a national perspective and investigated perceptions of special and general education teachers about the supervision they received as collaborative teachers in inclusive schools. Franks-Randall (1998) surveyed 322 regular educators and 159 special educators within 15 school districts across the United States. These teachers were educating children with a range of disabilities in inclusive K-12 general education classrooms. Fifty-eight percent of the teachers were supervised and evaluated by their building principals. Another 27% were supervised and evaluated by assistant principals. No significant differences were found in identification of the supervisor between regular and special educators or between elementary and secondary school settings.

The three studies cited above utilized perceptions of differing populations in varied settings, including K-12 resource room teachers in Maine, secondary school principals in Maine, and collaborative general and special education teachers in inclusive K-12 schools across the United States. The studies revealed that principals often have sole or shared responsibility for supervision of special education instruction.

Supervision and the Special Education Leader

Breton and Donaldson's (1991) survey, described in detail above, indicated that 53% of Maine resource room teachers perceived the special education director to be their primary supervisor. This was higher than the 39% who identified the principal as the primary supervisor.

It is noteworthy that while special education directors are most often the primary supervisors, they generally have responsibility for teachers and programs in many schools, so they may be less accessible to resource room teachers than building level principals. This perhaps accounts in part for the low frequency of supervisory contacts received by Maine resource room teachers.

In Johnson's (1987) survey of secondary school principals in Maine, the presence of a full-time special education administrator in the school district was significantly associated with items involving principal responsibility. When a full-time special education administrator was present in the district, no principals reported full responsibility for supervision of special education. When the special education director was only part-time, 50% of principals reported full responsibility. When there was no special education administrator, 80% of principals reported full responsibility for supervising special education staff. This data is not surprising. It seems logical that when there is a special education leader in a district, supervision is provided by that leader or at least shared by that leader. Again, however, special education administrators' responsibilities are district-wide and they are perhaps less accessible to teachers. If principals defer supervisory responsibilities to special education directors completely, this may negatively influence the frequency and quality of direct supervision special education teachers receive.

Summary

From the studies discussed in this section, it is evident that the principal and the special education supervisor/administrator both wear the supervisor's hat and provide instructional supervision for special education. Perceptions of general and special education teachers, as well as principals and special education leaders, indicate that supervision of special education is sometimes the sole role of principals or of special education leaders, but is often a shared role. Given that most students with disabilities are educated within regular school buildings and given the trends toward site-based management, collaboration, and inclusion, this shared role seems rational. However, the continuing role of the special education leader as supervisor appears to indicate that there is a need for expertise in disability issues and instructional strategies. This leads to some concern about how, if in fact collaborative supervision occurs, responsibilities are shared so that supervision of special education instruction does not fall by the wayside due to role ambiguity.

In the next section, studies that investigated the supervisory roles and responsibilities in-depth will be reported and analyzed. The studies addressed knowledge and behaviors that educators and supervisors perceived as necessary for effective supervision.

Knowledge and Skills Needed for Supervision of Special Education

Some studies investigated the role and responsibilities of the special education supervisor in isolation (Clouse, 1993; Fidler, 1986; Johnson & Burrello, 1988), while others investigated this in tandem with principal roles and responsibilities (Farley, 1991; Frohoff & Lindle, 1998; Johnson, 1987; Quigney, 1992). If, as the research cited above indicated, that supervision of special education was often a shared responsibility, it would seem to be important for building leaders and special education leaders to clearly delineate responsibilities in order to ensure supervision is provided for all teachers. This section will synthesize study findings related to roles and responsibilities for each type of leader, perceived important competencies, aspects of collaborative supervision and potential areas of role conflict, and perceived training needs.

Competencies Needed by Special Education Leaders as Supervisors

Special education is a complex system. IDEA identifies 13 disability categories under which students may be found eligible for special education and related services. Different disabling conditions impact learning in unique ways. Educators and researchers have devised particular methods and strategies to utilize when teaching students with varying learning characteristics related to their disabilities. Special education teachers are subsequently trained in these methods and frequently certified by their state departments of education to teach students with particular disabilities. In addition to knowledge of disability characteristics and special instructional techniques, other unique dimensions of special education service delivery exist including legal requirements, itinerancy of staff, related and support services, location of services, and delivery models. The complexity of special education service provision raises a practical question: Do all supervisors need to possess knowledge of such disability-specific aspects in order for effective supervision to be provided to special education instruction?

Disability specific knowledge. In contrast to Breton and Donaldson's (1991) conclusion that resource teachers in Maine did not find supervision by any one type of administrator more helpful than others, Clouse (1993) found that special education teachers, when given a choice, preferred to be supervised by persons who had the same area of training and expertise as the area in which they were teaching. Clouse conducted in-depth interviews with 20 special education

teachers and six special education supervisors in Pennsylvania. The sample was intentionally varied to include elementary through high school levels and varied special education teaching certification areas in that state. The purpose of the study was to investigate special education teachers' perceptions about program and generic supervision. As defined in the study, program supervision occurs when the supervisor has expertise in the same disability area as the teacher. For example, in program supervision, a supervisor certified in learning disabilities would supervise teachers of students with learning disabilities. Generic supervision occurs when supervisors are assigned on the basis of geography, not on disability expertise. In this case, a supervisor with training in learning disabilities might be assigned to five closely located schools and would be supervising teachers of students with learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, speech impairments, and vision impairment.

In Clouse's study, 17 of 20 special education teachers and 4 of 6 supervisors preferred program supervision to generic supervision models. The teachers felt program supervision was more conducive to effective communication between teachers and supervisors and thought program specific knowledge on the part of supervisors was particularly beneficial for new teachers. The supervisors cited ease of communication, continuity in programs across schools and districts, and reduced teacher isolation as benefits to program supervision. Teachers and supervisors were concerned that supervisors in a generic model would not be able to keep abreast of emerging best practices related to specific disabling conditions. Dividing their energies between several disability areas could lead to less time for developing expertise to be shared with teachers. As one speech teacher who had a generic supervisor related,

This goes back to the fact that she is not trained in my area of expertise. When there are some fine lines in my diagnosis or just in observation of the child . . . I don't think she can offer as much as someone that might be more specifically oriented to my profession . . . I don't feel comfortable to sit back and bounce off ideas to her. . . She just doesn't have the expertise. (Clouse, 1993, p. 65)

Despite their preference for program supervision, all interviewees suggested benefits of generic supervision as well. They indicated that generic supervision might promote broader knowledge of school and district-wide issues, increase accessibility of supervisors, lessen travel time and costs, allow for cross-training opportunities, and promote greater inclusion in school-wide activities.

Supervisory skills. Knowledge of a content area or disability specialization is important, but supervisors need skills in human relations and management as well. Fidler (1986) examined the process of supervision and the skills, knowledge, and values perceived to be important for supervision. Twelve supervisors of special education and 36 special education teachers from Illinois were participants in this study. Interviews were conducted with the supervisors to solicit their perceptions about their role as supervisor of special education and about the skills, knowledge, and values they viewed as important to the supervisory process. Both teachers and supervisors also completed a questionnaire that included 14 skill items related to the supervisory process. Teachers rated the importance of and their supervisors' effectiveness with each skill. Supervisors rated their own effectiveness with each skill, the degree of importance of each skill, and the level of pre-service training they had received on each skill.

Fidler (1986) used content analysis and thematic coding procedures to analyze the interview transcripts. Reliability was established through two independent coders. Questionnaire responses from teachers and supervisors were compared. The content analysis revealed 5 roles, 15 skills, 6 knowledge areas, and 5 values considered important for effective supervision by the supervisors interviewed. The top two roles included consultative and supportive roles. Consultative roles involved providing technical assistance, modeling techniques, and providing resources. Supportive roles involved providing emotional support and helping others grow personally. Skills for supervisors of special education receiving the highest ratings in importance included communication, style flexibility, conflict resolution, building rapport, and teaming. The knowledge area rated highest by supervisors was personalities, while teachers rated knowledge of technical skills such as instructional methods highest. Supervisors and teachers agreed that honesty was the value rated most highly in importance.

Some disagreement between teachers and supervisors was noted in their rankings. Teachers ranked professional treatment and teacher autonomy significantly higher in importance than supervisors. Motivation was ranked higher by supervisors than by teachers. While teachers and supervisors agreed that all 14 items on the questionnaire were important to some degree, the differences in their rankings point to the need for open discussion of what teachers want from supervision and what supervisors perceive to be important in order for supervision to be helpful.

It is pertinent to note that the 12 special education supervisors in Fidler's study actually held a range of positions and job titles, including consultant to teachers, principal, supervisor of

teacher consultant, and assistant superintendent as well as special education supervisor. This limits the ease of application of the study's findings to varied contexts and supervisory positions.

Johnson and Burrello (1988) assessed what special education administrators considered to be most important factors for their personal and organizational success. Through personal interviews with 15 special education administrators in Indiana, 30 critical success factors grouped by personal/organizational and 7 general themes were identified. The critical success factors were then incorporated into a survey instrument that was pilot tested with 20 directors and supervisors from Massachusetts and then sent to 83 special education directors in Indiana. The sample included single and multiple district directors representing both rural and urban areas. The directors were asked to rank the importance of each factor to their personal and organizational success as special education administrators.

The five most highly ranked critical success factors dealt with program and organizational effectiveness. The top ranked factor was, "Special education must demonstrate that it is providing instructionally effective programs and services that promote student growth in three areas: academics, behavior, and social skills", while the second factor stated, "Special education must be perceived as a part of the entire school cooperation and participate in the regular education process in such areas as personnel development" (Johnson & Burrello, 1988, p. 6). Other supervisory skills that received strong agreement and high ranking from directors among different types of districts included the following: (a) being supportive to teachers; (b) using problem-solving skills; (c) communicating with principals about planning and change; (d) having reasonable and consistent procedures; and (e) promoting community relations.

Competencies Needed by Principals

Two studies included for review assessed knowledge and skills perceived as important for principals who serve as supervisors of special education instruction within their buildings. Using a review of the literature related to general education and special education instructional leadership, Farley (1991) developed a conceptual model for effective instructional supervision for special education programs. A questionnaire based on the model and reviewed by experts in the field was sent to a random sample of principals, special education teachers, and general education teachers in the state of Virginia. The random sample represented elementary through high school level, a range of service delivery options, geographic settings, and years of

experience in education. Two hundred ten principals, 404 special education teachers, and 291 general education teachers returned the surveys.

Principals and teachers were asked to rate each of 31 competencies within five broad areas for importance and level of current practice. The five areas included: (1) communication; (2) staff development; (3) systematic evaluation of teachers; (4) collaboration; and (5) instructional programming. Examples of the competencies within the five areas are provided below:

- (a) Provides clear direction and active support to teachers regarding the goals and expectations of special programs;
- (b) Communicates to teachers that the education of disabled and at-risk students is the responsibility of all school staff;
- (c) Provides opportunities to apply, practice, and reflect on skills presented in in-services;
- (d) Provides on-going support and assistance to new teachers;
- (e) Provides resources for implementing interventions;
- (f) Encourages the use of various innovations to improve instruction; and
- (g) Schedules frequent observations for improving instructional effectiveness. (Farley, 1991, pp. 45-46).

Principals and teachers validated that all of the competencies in the model were highly important for effective instructional supervision of special education programs. There were no significant differences between the ratings of principals, special education teachers, or general education teachers or among any of the other demographic variables analyzed.

Johnson's (1987) survey of 97 secondary principals in Maine, described in detail earlier, provides additional information on competencies for principals who supervise special education instruction. When principals ranked general supervisory functions, staffing for instruction was ranked as most important, followed by developing curriculum, relating to the public, organizing for instruction, utilizing support services, providing in-service education, and finally, developing learning resources. Principals also rated skill and knowledge areas for importance. The generic supervisory process skills of observation, planning, conferencing, and decision-making were rated as more helpful than knowledge of characteristics and needs of children with specific disabilities, models of service delivery, special education methods/materials, and understanding

of specialized testing. Somewhat in opposition to this, 75% of the principals expressed a desire for more training in those disability specific areas. Perhaps the rating of generic supervisory skills reflects the knowledge areas that principals are most comfortable with, not the areas that are most helpful in supervising special education instruction specifically.

Collaborative Leadership and Role Ambiguity

Swan (1998) touts collaboration as an absolute necessity in the supervision of contemporary special education. However, this collaboration of a building level leader and a district level leader must be carefully planned and carried out. There is potential for some supervisory responsibilities to be duplicated or to be ignored in this paradigm. The studies reviewed revealed that collaboration was happening but some findings pointed to potential role ambiguity and conflict.

Over half of the 55 secondary principals surveyed by Johnson (1987) indicated that they called on the special education director or other special education teachers as resources in improving the performance of the special education staff. Johnson's survey revealed that there were requests for collaboration, but did not indicate the quality of teamwork, or knowledge and skills used, in such collaborative efforts.

Frohoff and Lindle (1998) surveyed 180 principals and 180 special education directors from Kentucky about their roles and potential areas of role conflict. They hypothesized that no significant differences would be found between principals and special education directors' perceptions of responsibilities for 11 categories of tasks associated with administration and supervision of special education programs. The 11 categories included: fiscal management; personnel management; in-service and professional development; program development; evaluation; curriculum and instruction; pupil personnel services; relationships with general education; community and public relations; political and legal areas; advocacy; and assessment. Their data disproved their null-hypothesis, indicating that there were significant perception differences in 10 of the 11 areas. The only area in which directors of special education and principals in Kentucky did not exhibit role ambiguity was in fiscal management. Unfortunately, Frohoff and Lindle did not clarify in their report exactly who, directors or principals, were perceived to have responsibility for fiscal management of special education.

One important area of ambiguity was in personnel management (i.e., hiring, assigning to schools, evaluating, coordinating between general and special education). The majority of special

education directors saw this as a shared role, but over 50% of principals saw this as their sole domain. This may be a finding that cannot be generalized to other states since guidelines for the Kentucky Education Reform Act and the School-Based Decision Making Councils place this responsibility with principals (Frohoff & Lindle, 1998). However, it is obvious from the findings that directors of special education desire to be actively involved in personnel decisions.

Assessment of students for eligibility and IEP purposes was another area of ambiguity. Eighty-one percent of directors claimed assessment as their sole responsibility, while 50% of principals perceived assessment as a shared role. In light of other study results that indicate principals do not often have knowledge of disability characteristics and testing techniques or rate them as highly important for effective supervision (Johnson, 1987), it seems imperative that special education leaders maintain involvement in student assessment processes. However, given that the regulations for IDEA require certain members to be on eligibility and IEP teams, it would seem that assessment should be a shared role. Principals and special education supervisors are often both present at such meetings and should actively participate in such decision-making in a knowledgeable manner.

Areas including professional development, curriculum and instruction, and development of relationships between general and special education also reflected differences in perceptions though not as significant as the areas discussed above. Frohoff and Lindle (1998) asked directors and principals whether they felt principals clearly understood their roles for providing special education programs and services. Seventy-four percent of special education directors and 46% of principals responded “no”. This implies significant role ambiguity. It appears that there is a need for communication at the district level to clarify roles and responsibilities for supervision of special education instruction. A second implication from this study is the need for collaborative training of principals and special education directors at the pre-service and in-service levels. More opportunities to dialogue about roles and responsibilities could lead to less role ambiguity.

Quigney (1992) surveyed 200 principals, 200 special education supervisors, and 313 special education teachers in Ohio. The survey asked participants to rate 78 competencies grouped within six categories for importance to the role of principal and the role of special education supervisor. The majority of the competencies received a mean rating of at least “of considerable importance” by all three groups in the sample. However, analysis of the ratings showed some differences in perceptions among the three groups as to the importance of

competencies for supervisors versus principals. From this analysis, Quigney was able to suggest priorities for shared roles for each leader. For the special education supervisor, priorities followed this sequence: (1) law/regulations; (2) family/community relations; (3) staff development; (4) program operations; (5) curriculum and instruction; and (6) personnel management. For the principal, priority areas fell within a different sequence: (1) staff development; (2) personnel management; (3) law/regulations; (4) family/community relations; (5) curriculum and instruction; and (6) program operations.

Legal issues and regulations compliance were high in priority for both leaders. This perhaps reflects special education's history as a highly regulated system and one that has evolved as a result of legislation and litigation. On the other hand, curriculum and instruction was ranked fifth for both leaders. This is disconcerting, especially for the role of the special education supervisor, the person who is most likely to possess knowledge of disability characteristics, their impact on learning, and special instructional methods and materials. Within the curriculum and instruction subset, there were significant differences among the three groups in the sample in regard to the importance of nine specific competencies. Teachers rated competencies dealing with design of curriculum and instruction, IEP development, and evaluation of instruction and materials at a lower importance than did principals and supervisors. Quigney (1992) suggests this may be because the teachers see instructional issues as more within their realm of responsibility rather than in the supervisor's due to their own training or that teachers' previous contacts with supervisors did not address instructional issues, leading them to see such supervisory interventions as unnecessary.

Pre-service/ In-service Training of Leaders

Frohoff and Lindle's (1998) survey of principals and special education directors in Kentucky, discussed previously, questioned participants about their university preparation as related to supervision of special education programs. Principals felt they were not adequately prepared to handle state and federal regulations or to handle special education students. They indicated a lack of adequate preparation to work with curriculum as well. Directors echoed the same areas of need. Principals were split evenly on whether they are adequately prepared to work with special education teachers.

Supervisors in Fidler's (1986) Illinois study, referred to earlier, most frequently discussed a need for pre-service training in interpersonal skills and a desire for practicum experiences.

Eleven of 12 supervisors interviewed felt their pre-service training had not adequately prepared them with the knowledge, skills, and values they deemed important to effective supervision of special education.

Summary

The studies reviewed in this section revealed some conflicting findings about important knowledge and skills for supervision of special education instruction. It appears that teachers perceive disability specific knowledge as important for supervisors, while some supervisors place less emphasis on disability knowledge and more emphasis on supervisory process skills and knowledge. Specific competencies related to special education issues and supervision of instruction were set forth, however, perceptions about role and responsibilities for supervision of special education demonstrated the potential for role conflict and ambiguity among principals and special education supervisors. Principals and special education supervisors do not feel adequately prepared for their roles and responsibilities and further training at both the pre-service and in-service level is desired.

Current Practices in the Supervision of Special Education

The previous two sections of this review summarized study findings related to who fills the supervisory position and to what knowledge and skills are required for effective supervision of special education instruction. Most of the studies reported the perceptions of teachers, principals, or special education leaders related to the importance of supervisory behaviors. Some of the studies also identified the frequency and type of supervision received. Additional findings that reflected the current practices in schools will now be reviewed. All but one of the studies included for review in this section have been discussed in detail in previous sections, thus only findings will be summarized. The reader is encouraged to refer to Appendix A for review of the purpose, methodology, and sample for each study as needed.

Specific Supervisory Practices Utilized

White (1993) examined the involvement of elementary principals in the supervision of special education programs using personal interviews with six principals and a survey of 104 general education teachers and 11 special education teachers who worked under the supervision of those principals. The site for the study included six elementary schools in an urban district in Arizona. White compared responses from the three sample subgroups to provide a picture of their perceptions of current practices in the supervision of special education programs. All of the

subgroups perceived principals to be involved in implementation of special education legislation. However, on more instructional supervision issues, perceptions of current practices differed. Most special education teachers reported minimal and inconsistent principal supervision, while principals reported that they were involved in all aspects of supervision of special education. The special education teachers in five of six schools felt that their programs were of a lower priority to principals than were general education programs. All principals reported giving special education programs equal priority to general education programs.

Subgroups of teachers in White's (1993) study had different perceptions of the principals' involvement in certain supervisory aspects. More special education teachers (63.5%) than general education teachers (34.1%) reported that principals provided training experiences on integration of special and general education. Teachers also differed on whether the principals communicated high expectations for achievement for special education students. Only 30.2% of general education teachers agreed with this, while 72.7% of special educators did.

Both subgroups of teachers felt the principals were least involved in curriculum and instruction decisions, but reported that principals did provide collaborative planning time for teachers to focus on these issues. Teachers and principals concurred that principals are most involved in aspects related to student discipline and parent relations. Principals report the availability of district staff and resources to assist with supervision of special education, but both groups of teachers reported that principals were not actively involved in soliciting district assistance or resources for special education within their schools. The different perceptions of current supervisory practices may indicate a need for joint clarification of teachers' needs and principals' responsibilities for supervision of special education.

Special education and general education teachers in Virginia, surveyed in Farley's (1991) study, echoed the findings in White's (1993) study. Both special education and general education teachers believed that principals were not demonstrating many of the behaviors that they felt characterized effective instructional supervision. For most practices, principals reported the current use of supervision practices at higher levels than the teachers. Teachers perceived that principals were providing very little supervision in the area of instructional programming. More special education teachers than general education teachers reported they were not receiving effective instructional supervision from their principals.

On a more positive note, special education teachers in Clouse's (1993) study rated their special education supervisors on average as somewhat helpful. Younger teachers and less experienced teachers needed and received more supervisory contacts than did older and more experienced teachers. Also, special and general education teachers in inclusive settings in Franks-Randall's (1998) study reported that their supervisors fostered collaboration and team building and attempted to create an atmosphere of trust and collegiality.

Current Models

Very few of the studies reviewed addressed the use of particular models of supervision. In Franks-Randall's (1998) survey of special education and general education teachers in inclusive schools, elements of four types of supervisory models were seen including summative evaluation, informal peer coaching, clinical supervision, and cognitive coaching. It is not surprising that elements of peer coaching and cognitive coaching were evident. The teachers surveyed were working in collaborative teaching, inclusive models of service delivery. The use of pre- and post-conferences, elements of clinical supervision, were seen and teachers reported receiving feedback during the post-conferences from their supervisors. No significant differences were found among the subgroups of the sample including elementary and high school, special and regular educator, disability conditions, or duration of collaborative experience.

Johnson (1987) reported that only 21% of principals surveyed in Maine used the clinical supervision process. An interesting finding was that younger principals, primarily those with only 5-9 years of experience made up the majority of those utilizing that model of supervision. This group of principals seemed to place more importance on the use of a structured process in providing supervision to teachers. However, this study did not assess what other models might be in use. Johnson also reported that supervision was often subsumed into the formal evaluation process, which required observations of teachers.

The only other study that addressed models of supervision was that of Breton and Donaldson (1991). Using Glickman's developmental supervision model and the teachers' responses to a modified Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire, the researchers were able to analyze the supervisory style of primary supervisors. The dominant style was nondirective (74%), followed by collegial (14%), directive (6%), while 6% reported no specific style of supervision. There were no significant differences between styles of principals and special education directors. Given that 43% of the teachers in this study reported no supervision

and only 6% reported no style of supervision, it may be that teachers related nondirective to nonparticipation, so caution should be used in interpreting the percentage of supervisors using a nondirective style.

The apparent lack of use of models of supervision may account in part for the infrequent supervision reported by special education teachers. When there is no established structure or process, it would seem that there is potential for inconsistency and low utility for supervision that does occur.

Barriers to Supervision

Several studies revealed barriers or weaknesses in the current practice of supervision of special education. Most predominant was a lack of time by supervisors to provide direct supervision (Clouse, 1993; Farley, 1991). General and special education teachers in Franks-Randall's (1998) survey specifically lamented the lack of time to reflect on practices with their supervisors and to have supervisors model instructional techniques. Principals and special education leaders must perform many duties related to administration and management of programs and schools. Instructional supervision is just one of the duties they must attend to.

As mentioned in previous sections, many principals felt unprepared to work with special education teachers, to deal with curriculum and instruction issues, or to understand disability specific issues. Johnson (1987) found that 76.5% of secondary principals in Maine felt that supervising special education staff was different from supervising general education staff and that the principals desired training in both special education knowledge and in general supervisory skills.

Another weakness identified by special education teachers in Clouse's (1993) interviews was a lack of organizational skills on the part of special education supervisors. The teachers in this study desired more observations, feedback, and consultation from supervisors. Special education supervisors must be organized in order to meet the supervision needs of special education teachers in schools across their district. Because supervisors may be working with teachers of students with varying disabilities, supervisors need to be ready to provide resources and assistance with a wide range of instructional topics.

Summary

The findings reported in the above sections paint a rather dismal picture of the current realities in the supervision of special education. Teachers appear to receive infrequent and

inconsistent instructional supervision. Principals and special education leaders are often unprepared to supervise special education or are constrained by a lack of time and other barriers.

Conclusions

The research studies reviewed in this paper represent a diversity of approaches to the topic. The research base for supervision of special education is relatively limited and includes some inconsistencies in findings. Even so, some conclusions may be drawn from the data. Supervision of special education is a function that is filled by a range of personnel, including school principals, assistant principals, supervisors of special education, and directors of special education. Competencies and categories of knowledge and skill have been developed for the principal and special education administrator that address instructional supervision. Research points to the need for collaboration of educational leaders, but delineation of the roles and responsibilities within collaborative supervision needs further study and clarification. Many teachers feel that supervision of special education instruction is inadequate in frequency and utility. Most of the research to date is based on perceptions of those involved as supervisors or supervisees.

Research Considerations

The 10 research studies reviewed in this paper provide insight into some aspects of supervision of special education. The research base needs to be broadened and continued as special education as a field evolves and public schools change through reform movements. The studies in this review bring to light several conceptual and methodological issues that should be considered in future research into this topic. The issues include definition clarity, sampling procedures and variables, and methods of study.

Definition of Supervision

Evident in many of the studies was a lack of clear definition of supervision. Some defined supervision in terms of a process with a limited number of behaviors (Breton & Donaldson, 1991) while many defined supervision by listing competencies (Farley, 1991; Fidler, 1986; Frohoff & Lindle, 1998; Johnson & Burrello, 1988; Quigney, 1992). Still others defined supervision broadly in narrative form or referred to superordinate terms such as leadership and administration as the focus for their studies (Franks-Randall, 1998; Johnson, 1986; White, 1993). This is not to say that any particular definition is more appropriate or more clearly defined than others. Perhaps the nature of the beast defies standard definition. This is not a problem that is

unique to the study of supervision of special education. Alfonso and Firth (1990) claim this lack of consensus on definition of supervision permeates both the research history in the field and the current practice of supervision. “This lack of agreement . . . allows potentially helpful research to be ignored, or worse, interpreted to support particular biases” (p. 18).

Very few of the studies identified a theoretical position or conceptual framework upon which the study was hinged. In defining and studying supervision, most appeared to combine scientific, human relations, and human resources paradigms. Identification of a theoretical basis for the studies would help to clarify the specific concept and process of supervision under study and would make findings more easily interpreted.

Defining the Supervisor

The studies reviewed here point to the many positions and personnel who perform supervisory duties. Some studies clearly defined the supervisor as principal (Farley, 1991; Johnson, 1987; White, 1993), some as the special education administrator/supervisor (Clouse, 1993; Johnson & Burrello, 1988), while others looked at combinations of principals and special education supervisors. One study (Fidler, 1986) referred to the sample as special education supervisors, but this sample encompassed people who held a range of job titles including consultant to teachers, principal, supervisor of teacher consultants, and assistant superintendent. This lack of clear delineation of supervisor and job title and descriptions makes it difficult to analyze the state of supervision of special education and make any generalizations to particular supervisors or contexts. Supervision is a complex process and is provided in many contexts by diverse educational personnel. This is an unavoidable consideration when studying this field. However, researchers need to clearly define their sample in order for readers to be able to interpret and apply the research findings.

Sampling Procedures

A related issue to defining the supervisor is the sampling procedures for these studies. The studies reviewed here contain varying sample sizes. The smallest included only 26 (Clouse, 1993) and the largest included 905 (Farley, 1991). Small sample sizes can limit the generalizability of the study findings. As many of the authors noted, studies need to be replicated with larger, more representative samples.

Another caution about sampling procedures in the studies reviewed is that most were restricted to one geographical area. Most sampled from one state only. White (1993) studied only

one school division. Only one researcher, Franks-Randall (1998), took a national perspective. Some studies did attempt to address demographic variables, such as size and type of district, and analyzed the findings relative to those contexts.

When researchers surveyed general education and special education teachers, they sometimes did not assess for the variables of content area, disability specialization, or years of experience. Such variables have potential for influencing perceptions about the usefulness and importance of supervision and need to be addressed.

Methods of Study

The majority of the studies used quantitative mail survey or a combination of personal interviews and surveys (Breton & Donaldson, 1991; Farley, 1991; Fidler, 1986; Franks-Randall, 1998; Frohoff & Lindle, 1998; Johnson, 1987; Johnson & Burrello, 1988; Quigney, 1992; White, 1993). One study involved in-depth interviews (Clouse, 1993). Most of the studies used self-report and solicited perceptions of current practices and their importance in effective supervision. Caution must be used in interpreting self-reports. There is potential for subjects to indicate ideal performance instead of actual when reporting on their own job performance. This may account for some of the discrepancies found between teacher and supervisor perceptions.

While quantitative survey methodology provided a certain amount of empirical information through descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of the data, the qualitative interviews provided a detailed description of the multidimensional context of supervision of special education instruction and leadership in general. More studies utilizing qualitative methodologies are needed that investigate the complex nature of supervision and the interactions of people and policies that are unique to special education. Alternate approaches and methods of study should be considered.

No study included for review here attempted to link supervision to student learning outcomes. Since most definitions of supervision include reference to improvement of instruction for student learning, it would seem pertinent to study this link. Understandably, this would be a complicated undertaking, as many variables contribute to student learning and control of extraneous variables would be difficult.

Needed Research

The research reviewed in this chapter reveals that supervision of special education instruction has been studied mainly through surveys or combinations of surveys and

questionnaires. The studies have produced findings related to the perceived roles and responsibilities and particular knowledge, skills, and values that principals and directors feel are important. The studies have investigated to a limited extent teacher's perceptions of their experiences in the supervision process. This is a good start, but there is much left to be uncovered.

After reviewing the professional literature, I determined there was a need to establish a more detailed picture of the landscape of supervision of special education instruction through qualitative methods that collect the perceptions and experiences of those involved in such supervision. There is a need to understand the process as it occurs in its natural settings, that is, within the school sites. There is a need to further identify and explain the process, factors that promote and constrain the process, strategies that are used to overcome constraints, and to explore the perceptions of teachers, principals, and directors in more depth. In order to accomplish this, I conducted a grounded theory study. By entering the field with no preconceived theory and sampling multiple participants and events through interviews, observations, and documents, I was able to produce a theory that appropriately describes the current practices of supervision of special education instruction in public elementary schools in rural settings.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Providing quality special education instruction to students with disabilities is an important goal and one that is supported by law. Special education instruction is delivered by a range of teachers and in differing settings to students with a variety of disabling conditions. Supervision should enhance the delivery of instruction by special educators and general educators to students with disabilities. The review of literature revealed that the provision of supervision of special education instruction is a complex activity and can be influenced by many factors, including knowledge of the supervisors, numbers of staff, time, and role ambiguity.

In a recent publication by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), results of a two-year study on the conditions of special education teaching and learning were reported (CEC, 2000). Three compelling realities emerged related to special education instruction. The report indicates that many students with disabilities do not receive high-quality education, many teachers teach under conditions that prevent the delivery of high-quality instruction, and many special educators' roles are "fragmented, ambiguously defined, and obscured by conflicting responsibilities" (p. 58). Some of the pressing issues contributing to the lack of high-quality instruction include inadequate district and administrative support, significant teacher isolation, poorly prepared new general and special educators, and insufficient focus on improved student outcomes. The action agenda proposed by the CEC Commission on the Conditions for Special Education Teaching and Learning calls for every student with a disability to receive individualized services and supports from qualified teachers, for teachers who have the knowledge and skills that allow effective practice, and for instructional leaders who establish strong expectations for the use of effective practices.

As described in Chapter 2 of this report, research on the supervision of special education instruction is sparse and the theoretical base is lacking. It is evident from the studies reviewed that the supervisor's role may be filled by a variety of personnel, and that there are knowledge and skills competencies that supervisors, principals, and teachers think are important in the supervision of special education instruction. Many special education teachers who participated in these studies find supervision inadequate in frequency and utility. The professional commentary reviewed indicates that there is a need for collaboration between general and special education leaders, but provides no clear sense of how this would happen in practice. In the literature

reviewed, no detailed explanation of how the supervision of special education instruction operates in current public school settings emerges. This is the problem that was addressed in the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop a substantive, grounded theory describing and explaining the supervision of special education instruction in public school districts in rural settings. The grounded theory, drawn from data collected through interviews, observations, and documents in three rural school districts, provides insight into the supervision of special education instruction, enhances understanding of the process and influencing factors, and provides a meaningful guide to action for practitioners in the field.

Research Questions

The central question that guided this study was this: What is the theory that explains how the supervision of special education instruction occurs in public elementary schools in rural settings? Because this was a grounded theory study, the central and subquestions related to the development of the substantive theory in the area of supervision of special education instruction. Subquestions for this study included: (a) What are the general categories and subcategories that emerge in open coding of the collected data? (b) What are the central processes in the conduct of supervision of special education instruction that emerge from the collected data? (c) What are the needs that are addressed by the process of supervision? (d) What conditions cause supervision to be conducted as it is? (e) What conditions serve as barriers to the provision of supervision of special education instruction? and (f) What are the resulting associated strategies and outcomes?

Significance of the Study

Swan (1998) indicated that the research literature in the supervision of special education supervision is sparse. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how supervision of special education instruction is occurring within rural public school settings. This study goes beyond a surface level scan about the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and the frequency or perceived utility of supervision. It extends and expands the current knowledge of supervision of special education instruction derived from the primarily quantitative surveys identified in the research literature and from the pilot study/survey project I previously conducted. It provides a grounded theory that gives insight into the supervision of special education instruction through identification of causal conditions, strategies, conditions and context, and consequences. It also

identifies, from the perspectives of the participants, how acceptable current practices in the supervision of special education instruction are and what additional practices are desired. This grounded theory describing and explaining the supervision of special education instruction is intended to be useful to school personnel who are implementing supervision, to higher education institutes who prepare school leaders, and to future researchers in this topical area.

Procedures

The sections to follow describe the design of the study, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures. This was a qualitative design using grounded theory methodology. The procedures outlined in the proposal of the study gave an initial structure to the process. Following Strauss and Corbin's (1998) guidelines for grounded theory research, the design was allowed to emerge. "As concepts and relationships emerge from data through qualitative analysis, the researcher can use that information to decide where and how to go about gathering additional data that will further evolution of the theory" (p. 33).

Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design

A qualitative research design was chosen to allow for a rich description and explanation of the process of supervision of special education instruction. Gathering qualitative data from varied sources provided detailed in-depth information about participants' views of the supervision of special education instruction. Exploring this problem through a qualitative research design allowed a needed substantive theory to be generated that describes how supervision of special education instruction is occurring in rural, public elementary school settings.

The Type of Design

The method utilized was grounded theory. Grounded theory, defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998), is "theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process" (p. 12). Strauss and Corbin indicate that researchers using grounded theory methodology do not begin a study with a preconceived theory in mind. Rather, the researcher begins with a topic of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data as it is collected and analyzed. In this case, the area of study is the supervision of special education instruction and the unit of analysis is the rural public school district, particularly elementary school settings within rural districts.

The Researcher's Role

In the qualitative research paradigm, “the investigator is the primary research instrument” (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1993, p. 110). As the researcher, I interacted with subjects through interviews, observations, and document analysis. This interaction and my sensitivity to the initial data collected and continuously analyzed led the direction of further data collection.

My personal biography inevitably played a role in this research. As a special education teacher and as a general education teacher, I had been in the position to be supervised related to the individualized instruction I was providing to students with disabilities. As a mentor and as an administrative intern, I had participated in supervisory roles that focused on improvement of instruction for students with disabilities. These experiences created the potential for an observer bias in the study. I attempted to control the influence of my own personal biography through several methods in the data collection and analysis procedures. First, at the end of each interview I would summarize the major points that had been shared and asked the interviewee if they agreed. In memos, I recorded my decisions about where, who, and what to sample and how this related to the emerging categories in the data. During the refinement of the theory, I reread each interview transcript to determine if the experiences expressed in the interviews fit within the theory. A summary of the theoretical findings was sent to eight participants for review and confirmation that the theory fit with the experiences of the participants.

Gaining Access and Entry

In the pilot study/survey project that I conducted in the spring and summer of 2000, directors of special education in each public school district in Virginia were sent a questionnaire regarding supervision of special education instruction within his or her district. The directors had seen my name and affiliation at least once prior to the initiation of the research detailed here. Ninety-four of 132 directors responded to the survey. Directors who responded received a summary report of the survey findings. Included with that summary report was a letter designed to solicit rural school districts for participation in the present study. The letter described the purpose of the study and the data collection procedures to be utilized. A copy of the letter is included in Appendix B. Directors were asked to discuss participation in the study with appropriate district personnel. I provided my contact information in the letter in the event that a director desired to contact me with questions or to express an interest in participating. It was my

hope that several districts would express an interest and that the initial sample would be selected from that pool. This did not occur.

One director responded to the letter included with the survey report. I subsequently secured permission from the superintendent to conduct the research in that district and did an initial site visit and orienting interview with the special education director. This district had only three elementary schools. Of the three principals, only one was willing to participate so I reluctantly dropped this district from my sample pool.

The entry point was the director of special education for each school district subsequently sampled. Communication was established with the director through an initial phone contact, then faxing of a one-page summary of the proposed research and a copy of the informed consent form to both the director and the superintendent of each of three districts. The informed consent letter is included in Appendix C. The director then communicated with principals and secured their agreement. An initial site visit and orienting interview was then conducted with each director.

Setting Selection

In grounded theory, the setting and participant selection is based on the potential of particular settings and participants to contribute to the evolving theory. This “theoretical sampling” begins with selecting a homogeneous sample of persons who have commonly experienced a process (Creswell, 1998, p.118). For purposes of this study, the homogeneous sample was drawn from rural public school districts in the state of Virginia. It was expected that rural settings would contain common features unique from urban settings that influenced the supervision of special education instruction. For example, one of these factors was predicted to be limited numbers of special education administrative staff available for supervision. In the pilot study/survey project I conducted, over half (54.9%) of the respondents indicated that they held the sole special education administrative position in their district.

Each of the districts that participated in the study fit the selection criteria of “rural” based upon four factors. First, each was considered rural based on the US Office of Management & Budget’s Metropolitan Statistical Area designation of non-metropolitan area (Universal Service Administrative Company, 2000). Second, each county had a population of 25,000 or less, confirmed by the US Census Bureau’s County Population Estimates for July 1, 1999 (United States Census Bureau, 2000). Third, each had less than 150 residents per square mile, the criteria for rural utilized by the National Rural & Small Schools Consortium. To determine this, the

Statistical Atlas of Virginia: Maps of Population Density was utilized (National Rural & Small Schools Consortium, 2000). By cross-referencing districts that fit the three criteria above, 39 districts were selected in Virginia. The Virginia Department of Education website was then utilized to determine those school districts that had at least three elementary schools, the fourth criteria for selection.

This limited the list of potential participants to 18 districts in Virginia. The 18 districts varied in their school configurations. Some utilized schools with grade configurations from kindergarten (K) through seventh. Others utilized grades K-5, while many had a mixture of school configurations. School enrollment sizes also varied, ranging from 109 students to 718 students. Three districts were chosen to reflect the variations in configurations. For more information related to specific demographics of the three participating districts and schools, the reader is referred to Appendix D.

Next, the directors of special education in the three districts were contacted. Following the initial phone contact, a one-page summary of the study, the informed consent, and a brief letter were faxed to the directors and superintendents of each of the three districts. The superintendents each gave consent. The directors then forwarded the information to the elementary principals. This process proceeded at varying rates in each of the districts, thus the soliciting of participants continued over a three-month period. Once agreement was received from at least three elementary principals in each district, I did an initial taped interview with the directors and made brief visits to each school. At each school, a schedule was developed for shadowing the principal and for interviewing at least one special educator and one general educator.

Another dimension of the delivery of special education instruction was addressed when selecting schools and participants. Special education instruction may be delivered in a range of settings. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (§614, 1997) and the federal regulations (CFR §300.551(b)(2), §300.26(a)(1)(i), 1999) governing its implementation call for a continuum of alternative educational placements. Within elementary schools, such instructional settings might include regular education classes, resource room classes, and self-contained special education classes. The instruction may be delivered by a variety of teachers, such as sole instruction by a special educator, co-teaching by a general educator and special educator, or consultative services by a special educator to a general educator in inclusive settings. For the

present study, I purposefully selected a range of instructional settings and configurations for delivery of special education within the districts sampled. This allowed for data collection and analysis of potential variations in perceptions of participants who taught in or supervised in various instructional settings. Appendices E, F, and G detail the demographic information for participating teachers, principals, and directors. The matrices show the subject and grades taught, the settings, areas of certification and number of years' experience.

Participant Selection

Creswell (1998) indicates that in grounded theory, “multiple individuals who have responded to action or participated in a process about a central phenomenon” are typically studied (p.112). For this study, multiple individuals who participated in the process of supervision of special education instruction were selected for participation. The director of special education in each sampled district, as the entry point, was interviewed and was asked to suggest three elementary schools within the district willing to be included in the study. Two of the districts had five schools. In these cases, all principals were forwarded the information about the study and the initial three who expressed an interest were selected. One district had only three elementary schools and all were willing to participate.

Within each school, taped interviews were conducted with the principal, at least one special education teacher, and one general education teacher who had children with disabilities in the regular class for 80% or more of their instructional time. In addition, other central office level personnel including a coordinator of instruction and a school psychologist were interviewed informally. This is an example of theoretical sampling in that teachers had mentioned utilizing these personnel as sources of help in delivery of special education instruction to students.

Directors, principals, and teachers were instrumental in recommendation and collection of documents for analysis as well as for observations. The sampling of participants, events, and documents from multiple sites provided important contextual information and allowed for comparisons of properties and dimensions of categories that emerged from the data, a second aspect of theoretical sampling.

Assurance of Confidentiality

Each individual participant and school district was assured of confidentiality at the outset of the study. Pseudonyms were assigned for individuals, schools, and school districts in the written report of the study. Before data collection began, written consent for participation was

obtained from the school divisions. Prior to interviews and observations, written consent was obtained from participating individuals after the purposes of the study, procedures to be utilized, and the proposed use of data collected were explained. A consent form, approved for use by the Institutional Review Board from the university was utilized (see Appendix C).

Data Collection Procedures

Data in the form of interviews, observations, and documents were gathered from the three participating school districts. The number of sites for collecting data, the number of interviews and observations, and the types of documents reviewed were determined by the need to reach saturation of categories related to the emergent theory. Data collection occurred at each of the nine schools for 3 to 5 sessions and each of the central offices for 2 sessions. The exact time spent in each school and district was influenced by the complexity and size of the district, the scheduling of interviews and observations, or the need to sample more events, persons, and documents based on the on-going data analysis and theoretical sampling inherent in grounded theory research.

Means of Collecting Data: Instrument Selection/ Construction

Data were collected at each site in the form of interviews, documents, and observations. As a starting point, a review of the literature and my own tacit knowledge of the supervision of special education guided the creation of an interview protocol, the selection of documents, and the selection of processes for observation. As a necessary part of grounded theory research, analysis of data began with the initial data collection and the emerging categories, and propositions were allowed to guide future data collection. This allowed me to complete theoretical sampling and to reach saturation of the data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe theoretical sampling as:

data gathering driven by concepts derived from the evolving theory and based on the concept of ‘making comparisons,’ whose purpose is to go to places, people, or events that will maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts and to densify categories in terms of their properties and dimensions.” (p. 201)

Additional questions beyond the initial protocol were asked in interviews in order to discover properties and dimensions of categories that emerged from line by line analysis of the interview transcripts. An example of this theoretical sampling included interviewing additional special education teachers who were also serving in the role of lead teacher or special education

coordinator for the building after several teachers and principals mentioned going to these persons for help with instructional issues and special education procedures. A second example included intentionally selecting new and non-tenured teachers for interviews when the coded categories of difference in value of observations and evaluation and difference in supervision of tenured and non-tenured emerged in early interviews. Theoretical sampling continued over a five-month period, from October through March, until saturation of the categories occurred and when no new concepts or categories emerged from collected data.

Interview procedures and protocols. Formal interviews were conducted with directors of special education, principals, special education teachers, and general education teachers. A total of 37 taped interviews were conducted with 34 participants. Other personnel, including a coordinator of instruction, a school psychologist, and teacher provided information through informal discussions. For more information regarding characteristics of interviewees, the reader is referred to the tables in Appendices E, F, and G.

Each interview began with an explanation of the purpose of the study, the procedures for the interview, assurances of confidentiality, and gaining written consent for participation. The interviews were scheduled at a convenient time and location for the school personnel, typically during planning periods for teachers and in classrooms, guidance counselors' offices, teachers' lounges, principals' and directors' offices. Principals chose to be interviewed at set times during the school day and subsequently some had to interrupt the interviews to answer phone calls or talk with teachers. When this occurred, the taping was paused while principals took care of issues.

An initial interview protocol for each category of interviewees is included in the Appendix I. The protocol asked for demographic/contextual information about the school district or school and then proceeded to ask general questions centered on issues related to the supervision of special education instruction. The interview protocol served as an initial guide for questioning, but was intentionally left open-ended to allow for emergence of topics. As coding categories emerged and theoretical sampling occurred, additional questions were asked. Teacher interviews lasted between 20 and 45 minutes. Principal interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 2 ¼ hours. Director interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1½ hour. Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed verbatim for subsequent data analysis by the researcher.

Observation procedures. The primary means of gathering observation data was the shadowing of the principal at each school. Time spent shadowing ranged from 1 to 2 full days in each school. Observation notes on all actions and interactions were made, particularly those related to the provision of special education services to students with disabilities. The field notes were transcribed following each session. The observation data was analyzed and compared to the categories that emerged from the primary interview data and document analysis.

Observations related to supervision of special education included IEP meetings, Eligibility meetings, parent conferences and phone calls, discussions with teachers and guidance counselors, meetings with agency personnel, phone calls to directors of special education, faculty meetings, teacher observation sessions, and interactions with individual students. Additional observation notes were made related to visits in classrooms, interactions seen in lunchrooms, halls, and offices.

Document data collection. As one procedure for document collection, I asked the principals in two schools to keep a journal for two weeks. In this journal, principals were asked to record the issues that arose and their actions related to the provision of special education at their schools. As a means of comparison and corroboration of data, I asked that the interviewed teachers at those schools also log their interactions with the principals for that two-week period. A journal and directions for its completion was provided to each participating principal and teacher. An example of the direction page is included in Appendix J. At the end of the two-week period, I met briefly with the principals and teachers individually, collected the journals, and discussed the experience. One principal did not return the journal despite repeated requests.

Other document sources included school board policies, organizational charts, memos from directors and principals, school websites, and records of supervisory conferences. School handbooks and policies were collected as well. A list of collected documents is provided in Appendix H.

Data Analysis and Management Procedures

Data analysis procedures for developing grounded theory proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) were utilized in this study and are outlined in the following paragraphs. The main goals of the data analysis were to identify categories within the data, to identify properties and dimensions of those categories, and to establish how categories relate to one another, thus developing a grounded theory about the supervision of special education instruction. An

additional source of technical guidance for data analysis was Maykut and Morehouse's (1994) detailed description of the use of the constant comparative method in qualitative data analysis. Miles and Huberman's (1984) suggestions for data management and data display were used.

Basic Operations in Data Analysis

The use of questioning and making comparisons are the basic operations in data analysis in grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). An important facet of the data analysis was the asking of questions and pursuit of their answers. In data analysis, I asked myself questions that sensitized me to the data (i.e., What is going on here? How do the participants define this situation?), questions that were theoretical (i.e., How do these two concepts relate to one another?), and questions that were practical and structural in nature (i.e., When, where, and how do I go to gather data for the evolving theory?).

Making of comparisons occurred throughout the data collection and analysis. This involved the inductive category coding as well as the constant comparing of each new unit of meaning to all other units of meaning and categories (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 134). In addition to comparing incident-to-incident to classify them, I made theoretical comparisons. "This involves comparing categories (abstract concepts) to similar or different concepts to bring out possible properties and dimensions when these are not evident to the analyst" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 94). An example of the use of this occurred when principals began talking about supervision by walking or wandering around. I culled the literature for the related business concept of management by walking around (Peters & Waterman, 1984) and used this information to make comparisons and think through the data.

The following paragraphs describe more specifically the coding procedures I utilized during data analysis. The procedures include: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Open coding. In open coding, data are broken down into discrete units, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences. This occurred initially through a line-by-line analysis and use of memoing. I recorded my analysis of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs by writing a key concept or code in the right margin and questions or thoughts about the code in the left margin. Concepts, representing phenomena, were drawn from the data. Units of meaning that were found to be conceptually similar were grouped into more abstract concepts, or categories. A label was given to each category and subcategories identified. Once categories were delineated, their properties and dimensions were explored. Properties included "the general

or specific characteristics or attributes of a category”, such as duration, while dimensions “represent the location of a property along a continuum or range”, such as occasionally to frequently (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 117).

Axial coding. Axial coding is the “act of relating categories to subcategories along the lines of their properties and dimensions. It looks at how categories crosscut and link” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 124). A category stands for a phenomenon, a significant issue, event, or happening. A subcategory answers questions about the phenomenon, such as when, where, who, how, why, and with what consequences. Strauss and Corbin identify four basic tasks in axial coding:

1. Laying out the properties of a category and their dimensions, a task that begins during open coding
2. Identifying the variety of conditions, actions/interactions, and consequences associated with phenomenon
3. Relating a category to its subcategories through statements denoting how they are related to each other
4. Looking for cues in the data that denote how major categories might relate to each other. (p. 126).

Axial coding resulted in tentative hypotheses, which then were validated or modified as data collection and analysis continued. Axial and open coding were not sequential or separate activities, but occurred on an on-going basis as new data was collected and compared with prior data and emerging categories. I recorded the process and products of axial coding in written memos and working diagrams of relationships.

Selective coding. Selective coding is the process of integrating and refining categories into a larger theoretical scheme. Integration toward a theory is a process that began with the initial data collection and continued until the final writing. Once an initial set of categories was identified and relationships among categories had been explored, I looked for the single category that was the central phenomenon of interest. This central category had to typify what the research was all about. Strauss and Corbin (1998) indicated that a central category must have explanatory power, that is, be able to pull all other categories together to create an explanatory whole. Locating the central category was not easily done and only emerged after several passes through

the categorized and recategorized data and through repeated reading of the transcripts and memos. A list of the coding categories that emerged from the data is included in Appendix M.

I next related major categories to the central category through explanatory statements of relationships. Some techniques I used during this phase include the sorting and reviewing of my coding memos, use of visual diagramming of the relationships, tabling of data and categories, audio taping and replaying of verbal analysis and description of the categories, and the writing of a brief explanatory storyline. Appendix M contains a listing of the categories and subcategories that emerged during coding of the interview transcripts, observations, and documents.

Data Management

The potential amount of data to be collected was great. The following paragraphs describe how I attempted to manage the data as it was collected, analyzed, and presented in the final report.

Transcripts and contact summary forms. Following each interview, the tape-recorded sessions were transcribed verbatim. As soon as possible following the initial interviews, I completed a contact summary form, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984, p. 52). This one-page form identified the type of contact, the interviewee, the date, and will summarize the main points addressed in the interview and any impressions that seem significant from my notes taken during the interview. I used this process for the initial interviews only. As I progressed in collecting interviews and simultaneously coding transcripts, I found this to be more time consuming than helpful. In the end, I used the interview protocol for recording the demographic data and attached that to transcripts.

Following each observation, field notes were transcribed. A contact summary form, described above, was also completed for initial observations (Miles & Huberman, 1984). An example of the contact summary form for interviews and observations is included in the Appendix K.

Document management. Collected documents were coded for source and filed for later use in analysis. Initially, each district was assigned a colored file folder. The journals that were provided to supervisors and teachers were also coded by district color. This was done to aide in data management and storage. After completion of data collection, I filed each document in a large binder for easier access as I analyzed and grouped data into categories.

Word files and index cards. For the data analysis process, I made an electronic file of each interview and observation transcript. Copies of the transcripts were used in line-by-line analysis and coding for concepts and categories. Once labeled, units of meaning were cut apart and taped onto 5 x 8 index cards. Each card was then labeled with the data source and coded with colored markers to identify school district and interviewee type. When coding for categories, I used poster sized Post-it sheets of paper as my working surface and put up the index cards with removable glue in order to allow for sorting and re-sorting the concepts by similarities and differences into categories and subcategories. When categories were refined, I placed a category code on each card and created a master index and visual diagram of codes and their relationships.

Memoing. I wrote memos during the coding processes. These memos were made and/or transcribed using a word processor. In the final analysis stage, memos were audio taped and replayed as a helpful clarifying tool. Memos provided a record of the analytic process. They contain the products of coding, provided direction for theoretical sampling, and enabled me to sort my ideas later. Memos were labeled with the date, a code number for the data source, page number of transcript, type of memo (code/theoretical/operational), and a heading. Printed memos were placed in a binder for later sorting during integration and refinement of the theory.

Diagrams and meta-matrix. I created working versions of diagrams in my attempts to explain relationships between categories. These were labeled with date and a topical heading and kept in the memo binder as well.

A version of an unordered meta-matrix, as explained by Miles and Huberman (1984), was used to display the final categories of data and provide sources of the data within each category and site. This, for me, was a refinement of the index card sorting I completed and of the selective coding. Having the information in tables or matrix form should provide an easy format for others to see more clearly how I arrived at categories and to return to the data from which categories were derived. Readers may review these matrices in Appendix L.

Finally, a visual diagram of the grounded theory was developed. All versions of this diagram were retained in the memo binder. Again, this will help me to validate how I arrived at the theory and will contribute to an audit trail.

Addressing Quality

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe procedures that address the trustworthiness of a qualitative research study. The concepts of credibility, transferability, confirmability, and

dependability are addressed in the following paragraphs. I also describe the procedures I used throughout my study to establish the trustworthiness of my findings.

Credibility. First, I was engaged in field study at each district for a period of 10 - 15 days. This period of engagement with sites allowed me to establish rapport and trust with the participants, to learn the context of each site, and to achieve the data collection. Second, by collecting data from multiple sources and with different techniques, I was able to use triangulation of data, which will help establish the credibility of my theory. Third, I used member checks to help to establish credibility of my analysis and grounded theory. I asked eight participants, including some teachers, some principals, and some directors, to read a draft summary of the grounded theory. I asked the participants to read the draft and to see if they were able to find themselves in the theory. I explained that their exact experiences may not fit every aspect of the theory, but the theory should fit well in general with their experiences if I have done a thorough job of grounding the theory in the data collected. The responses from the participants asked to review the draft agreed that the description of how the supervision of special education occurred fit with their personal experiences. One director did express that her responsibilities for other programs were not as wide-ranging as indicated in the study, so I made revisions in my descriptions of directors' roles.

Transferability. By recording my impressions of the school districts, schools, participants, and demographic data for each, I was able to provide thick description of the context in my final research report. This allows readers of the report to compare the context of the study sample to their own school context, thus determining the relevance the grounded theory has for them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mertens & McLaughlin, 1995).

Confirmability. The data collection and management procedures described earlier relate directly to addressing confirmability. The transcription of interviews and observations, contact and document summary forms, index cards, various types of memos, and working diagrams were kept. This contributes a record of the data collection and stages of analysis leading to the formulation of the grounded theory.

Dependability and additional criteria for evaluation of grounded theory studies. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest additional specific criteria for judging the quality of the research process and of the grounded theory produced here that seem to be similar to what Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as establishing dependability. These criteria were useful to me as I created

the final report for the study and may provide additional guidance to readers who desire to judge the quality of my study. Criteria for evaluation of the research process include:

1. How was the original sample selected? On what grounds?
2. What major categories emerged?
3. What were some of the events, incidents, or actions (indicators) that pointed to some of these major categories?
4. On the basis of what categories did theoretical sampling proceed? That is, how did theoretical formulations guide some of the data collection? After the theoretical sampling was done, how representative of the data did the categories prove to be?
5. What were some of the hypotheses pertaining to conceptual relations (i.e., among categories), and on what grounds were they formulated and validated?
6. Were there instances in which hypotheses did not explain what was happening in the data? How were these discrepancies accounted for? Were hypotheses modified?
7. How and why was the core category selected? Was this selection sudden or gradual, and was it difficult or easy? On what grounds were the final analytic decisions made?
(Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.269)

Additional criteria for evaluating the empirical grounding of a study include:

1. Are concepts generated?
2. Are the concepts systematically related?
3. Are there many conceptual linkages, and are the categories well developed? Do categories have conceptual density?
4. Is variation built into the theory?
5. Are the conditions under which variation can be found built into the study and explained?
6. Has process been taken into account?
7. Do the theoretical findings seem significant, and to what extent? (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp. 270-272)

PROLOGUE TO CHAPTER FOUR

Readers of this qualitative research report must ascertain the relevance and transferability of the grounded theory to their own particular situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mertens & McLaughlin, 1995). Providing descriptions of the three rural school districts that participated in the study is designed to allow consumers of the research to compare the characteristics and context of the study's sample to their own school district. Table 1 provides an overview of district and school characteristics and is followed by a narrative description of each.

Table 4.1

Characteristics of Participating Schools in the Three Districts

District and School	Enrollment	Students with Disabilities	Special Education Teachers
District 1	1958	364	23
School 1	157	18	1
School 2	560	103	7
School 3	310	40	2
District 2	3300	550	44.5
School 4	123	15	1
School 5	314	64	5
School 6	340	50	3
District 3	2522	360	27
School 7*	510	60	3.5
School 8*	540	85	5
School 9	540	59	5

*Schools which have a principal and a half-day administrative intern.

District 1

School District 1 has an enrollment of 1,958 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12. In the district, there are three elementary schools that serve kindergarten through grade 7. A fourth elementary school houses those grades and a program for preschoolers who have disabilities. There is one high school that serves students in grades 8 through 12. The average class size in the elementary schools is 22 students.

Of the students enrolled, 364 are identified as students with disabilities who are eligible for special education and related services. In the county there are 23 special education teachers,

including speech therapists. The county has contracts with outside agencies for related services such as physical therapy and occupational therapy and employs a half-time vision specialist.

The administrative structure of the county includes the superintendent, a director of pupil personnel services who administers special education programs among other programs, a director of instruction, a supervisor of maintenance, a supervisor of transportation, a budget analyst, and a payroll specialist. Working under the director of instruction is a coordinator of instruction and two technology specialists. Working under the director of pupil personnel services is a coordinator of gifted education and a school psychologist. Each of the elementary schools has a principal. The high school has a principal and two assistant principals. Table 4.2 details District 1’s enrollment data and employee numbers in each of the three elementary schools that participated in the study.

Table 4.2

Characteristics of Participating Schools in District 1

School	Enrollment	Students with Disabilities	Special Education Teachers
Total District	1958	364	23
School 1	157	18	1
School 2	560	103	7
School 3	310	40	2

School 1

Driving along back county roads, alternating between looking at the map and road signs and paying attention to the beautiful fall foliage, I find myself on a gravel road. Thinking I am surely lost and will be late for the first visit with the school, I am pleasantly surprised when after kicking up clouds of dust, I come to a paved road and turn right. Finally, the right road! After snaking through some curves, I come to the top of an incline. In the distance nestled among rolling hills is School 1. The vision is really beautiful with the red brick building and two yellow buses parked in the front silhouetted against a blue sky and colorful fall trees. In the surrounding community are several homes, a church and cemetery, and the local fire and rescue department.

Principal A is on the phone when I arrive. The secretary greets me warmly and I sit in the office looking through the county handbook as I wait. On the wall beside me is a collage of pictures of the school’s faculty with their children, spouses, and grandchildren. A photo album of

school events and class pictures sits on the table. When I enter the principal's office, I immediately notice her bookshelves. There is a mix on each shelf of children's literature, professional texts, policy and procedure type notebooks, and personal items such as pictures. The office is welcoming, as is the principal.

When touring the building, I get a sense of calm and order. Two classrooms, a science lab, and a technology lab have just been completed. There is one class at each grade level, K through 7. The school as a whole exhibits a current focus on Character Counts education, use of technology to individualize instruction, continuous assessment of student progress, and monitoring of student data to target areas of needed improvement. The special education teacher here works both inclusively and in a resource room to deliver instruction to the 18 students who have mild level disabilities.

School 2

School 2 is located within the small town that is the county seat. It is a two story red brick building with some classes housed in two separate buildings. Sitting behind the school on the hill is the high school, which is currently undergoing renovations and additions. This is the largest elementary school in the county with 560 students in preschool to seventh grade. Upon entering the school, I get a sense of activity and movement. There are many displays of artwork and student academic work on the walls. Principal B is welcoming and very open to discussion of special education and how he supervises instruction. He feels his background as a remedial reading teacher contributes to his ability to supervise teachers as they provide instruction to students with special learning needs.

In general, there is a special education teacher assigned to every two grade levels. Each special education teacher spends at least part of the day teaching in inclusive settings. Several of the students in the county who have moderate to severe disabilities attend school here as opposed to their neighborhood schools due to the availability of a certified teacher here and the small number of students in the county with more severe disabilities. The preschool program for students with disabilities is also located in this school. The principal shares that the school and county are involved in a long range planning initiative to increase capacity to serve students with disabilities.

School 3

School 3 sits just off the highway on a hill. It, too, is involved in a renovation and addition project. Several new classrooms as well as an elevator to the second floor are being added. Behind the school is a trailer annex that houses a few classrooms. This school has 310 students in grades K through 7. There is a sense of energy and activity when I enter the building and this is reflected in the personality of Principal C, who is in his third year as principal.

The two special education teachers share a small, cramped resource room at the time. Once construction is completed, they will be assigned to separate and larger spaces. The teachers work in a mixed delivery system with some services provided to the 40 students with disabilities inclusively and others in the resource room. Principal C shows caring and interest in the students with disabilities in his school. He stops in the resource room to ask one student about an ill family member, provides positive reinforcement for good behavior to another child by allowing him to choose from a bag of collectors coins stashed away in a desk drawer, and drives to a student's home where there is no phone to ask the parents to come in for a child study meeting.

District 2

School District 2 has an enrollment of approximately 3, 300 students. The county has five elementary schools, which serve preschool through fifth graders. There are two middle schools for students in grades 6 through 8 and one high school for students in grades 8 through 12. There are 550 students who are eligible for special education services. The county employs 44.5 special education teachers and contracts with outside providers for related services of physical and occupational therapy. There are special education teachers who serve students with varying disabilities within each school and there are also centralized programs, such as programs for students with mental retardation and programs for students with emotional disturbance, located in certain elementary schools.

The administrative structure of the county includes the superintendent, an assistant superintendent, a director of instruction, a director of special education, a director of transportation and maintenance, and a director of finance. There are five elementary school principals, two middle school principals, one middle school administrative assistant, one high school principal, and three high school assistant principals. Each school has a teacher who is the special education coordinator for the school. Table 4.3 details the enrollment data and numbers of special education teachers at each of the participating elementary schools.

Table 4.3

Characteristics of Participating Schools in District 2

School	Enrollment	Students with Disabilities	Special Education Teachers
Total District	3300	550	44.5
School 4	123	15	1
School 5	314	64	5
School 6	340	50`	3

School 4

Originally built in 1939 as a high school, this two-story red brick building with tall windows and a white frame around the front door sits nestled in the center of a small community. Driving to the school on the road that follows a winding creek, I pass through sparsely populated areas of open farmland and woods. There is a real sense of community and familiarity in this small school. Community members volunteer to run a gardening project on the school grounds and they are helping students to plant spring blooming bulbs by the side entry during my first visit. Across the street is the fire department, “the soul of the community,” according to Principal D.

This principal is a first year principal and is unique in this study in that she is a former special education teacher and former coordinator of preschool special education in the county. There is one class at each grade level, kindergarten through fifth, in this school. The special education teacher provides instruction for students with a range of disabilities and ages, primarily in the resource room.

School 5

School 5 lies on the outskirts of a small city. The school serves the area around the city. Principal E says, “It’s like a donut. We don’t serve the hole.” It is situated between an area of growing restaurants and stores near a major interstate and a neighborhood of older homes. The district administrative offices are located across the parking lot. Behind the school building lays a maze of mobile classrooms linked by a wooden walkway. These portable structures house the overflow of classrooms and students. The school is in the planning stages of a new addition. This school is located close to several colleges; consequently, there are student teachers, tutors, and

volunteers here frequently. On the days that I visit, there is also an administrative intern working with the principal.

The school has 64 students with disabilities, including preschoolers with disabilities, in its enrollment of 314 pupils. There are two resource room teachers who serve a range of students and one teacher who serves children with mental retardation in a more self-contained setting. There is a part time vision specialist as well. Principal E talks easily to me about individual students and their disabilities as he walks the halls each morning during my visits.

School 6

School 6 is a short distance from a small community containing churches, a post office, and several small businesses situated a few miles off a major interstate. The school is undergoing a large construction project. It, too, currently has a series of mobile classrooms behind and beside the building. The school serves 340 students in grades kindergarten through 5. Principal F shares that one focus in the school is the use of technology to meet individual instructional needs of both general and special education students. His office demonstrates an organized work style and reflects his expressed desire to help teachers work more efficiently.

Three special education teachers and a part time speech pathologist provide the 50 students with disabilities in this school services. One teacher works with students with emotional and behavioral disorders in a self-contained setting. Two other teachers work with students who have a range of disabilities primarily through resource room services. They are each assigned to work with three grade levels.

District 3

School District 3 has an enrollment of 2,522 students in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grades. In the district, there are three elementary/middle schools serving grades K-7 and two high schools serving grades 8-12. The average student to teacher ratio is 14:1 in the county. The district lies in a rural mountainous area in the western region of the state.

Of the students enrolled, 360 are identified as students with disabilities who are eligible for special education and related services. There are 27 special education teachers in the county. The director of special education shares that the county practices inclusion as much as possible, taking into account individual student needs and least restrictive environment requirements. The district educates students in their neighborhood schools.

The administrative structure of the county includes a superintendent, an assistant superintendent, a director of special education, a director of vocational education, a gifted education coordinator, a school health coordinator, and a school psychologist. Each elementary school has a principal and currently has an administrative intern who works half day as an administrator and half day as a teacher. Table 4.4 details the enrollment characteristics and numbers of special education teachers in District 3.

Table 4.4

Characteristics of Participating Schools in District 3

School	Enrollment	Students with Disabilities	Special Education Teachers
Total District	2522	360	27
School 7	510	60	3.5
School 8	540	85	5
School 9	540	59	5

School 7

School 7 lies just off the highway. It is a large brick building and was built with the open court concept although this has since been modified with additional walls to separate classroom spaces. There are 510 students in grades K-7. The school attempts to provide a middle school atmosphere for its sixth and seventh graders in one wing of the building. Lower grades are separated into pods. Principal G is in his second year as the school’s principal. The school’s administrative intern is also a special education teacher and the lead teacher for the special education department at the school. This makes for a unique relationship. The intern attends to many of the special education administrative and supervisory duties but keeps the principal fully aware of issues of concern.

There are approximately 60 students with disabilities in the school. Services are provided in inclusive classrooms as well as in the resource room setting, which is a space in the center of the school shared by the four special education teachers. There are several special education assistants who provide additional support in the regular classrooms.

School 8

This school is nestled at the bottom of a hill in the town that is the county seat. It is a two-story building that serves children in preschool through seventh grades. The school appears to be

separated into wings. The sixth and seventh grades are upstairs. The lower halls are grouped by the early grades.

There are 85 special education students within the school body of 540 students. The special education teachers are assigned to grade levels, with one teacher usually working with two to three grade levels. The preschool and Title 1 services are located in a separate building on the school grounds. Services are provided through a variety of configurations including co-teaching by a special educator and a general educator, consultation, and pullout services. At the time of my shadowing of Principal H, he is very busy with special education issues. He attends several eligibility meetings, a meeting with community services agencies, as well as talking with individual students. Though he says he is usually involved with special education issues daily, he reports that the two days were atypical in the number of special education meetings he attended.

School 9

School 9 is located in a small town within the county. The building has recently been renovated and several classrooms were added. Despite this, Principal I reports a need for even more space. Upon entering the school, I get a sense of order and organization. This is reflective of the principal's personality and leadership style. The school has an enrollment of 540 students in grades K-7. Grade levels are grouped within the three-story building.

There are 59 students with disabilities and five special education teachers in the school. The special education teachers are each assigned to work with one or two grade level teams. Services are provided both inclusively and in resource rooms. Principal I shares that he encourages special education teachers to provide their expertise and services to general education students who are in need of extra help as they work in the inclusive settings.

Participant Characteristics

Thirty-four individual teachers, principals, and directors of special education participated in interviews and observations as part of this study. Their backgrounds are varied. Thirteen special educators were interviewed. They teach a variety of children in a range of instructional settings in grades K-5. Their backgrounds and certifications vary greatly. Nine general educators who have students with disabilities in their classes were interviewed. At least one teacher at each grade level was interviewed and they teach a range of subjects. Teachers' years of experience range from one year to 33 years. Specific characteristics including position, certification, and years of experience for each teacher interviewee is detailed in Appendix E.

Two female and seven male elementary school principals were interviewed and observed. Their years of administrative experience range from one to 20. Their backgrounds and areas of certification vary. Specific principal characteristics are detailed in Appendix F. Three directors of special education were interviewed for the study. The reader is referred to Appendix G for a description of their characteristics.

Summary

This prologue has been included to give the reader a sense of the small, rural districts and schools that participated in the study. Although this research is not focused on specific cases, it is important for readers to be aware of the characteristics of the sample in order to assess the transferability and utility of the grounded theory to their particular schools and districts. The three districts come from differing parts of the state of Virginia but share characteristics such as ruralness, enrollments in the range of 1,000 to 3,000, small administrative structures in the central office, and no assistant principals at the elementary levels. The districts are also similar in the make-up of the student body. The racial composition of the districts is predominantly white, with minority populations ranging from two to six percent in the districts. The individual school enrollments vary from 123 to 560 students. Readers are encouraged to keep these shared characteristics and slight variances in mind as they read the grounded theory to follow.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

This research attempted to discover the theory that explains how the supervision of special education instruction occurs in public elementary schools in rural settings. This chapter delineates the findings of the study in the form of a grounded theory that describes and explains how supervision of special education instruction is occurring in public elementary schools in rural settings. First, a brief overview of the grounded theory is provided along with a visual diagram that depicts the framework of the theory. Then, the major categories, their subcategories, and their relationships are described in detail in order to answer the research questions and provide an in-depth understanding of the grounded theory. Figures depicting the theory and vignettes from the collected data are provided to enhance understanding of the theory. Data sources are referenced in the report using codes that identify the type of source (T – interview transcript; O – observation; D – document) followed by numerals that identify the district, participant, and page number of transcripts or field notes.

The Grounded Theory: An Overview

At the outset of this study, supervision of instruction was defined as having the goals of ensuring quality instruction, enhancing learning outcomes for students, and providing on-going professional development for teachers. Data collected in the form of interviews, observations, and documents from nine elementary schools in three rural school districts contributed to the development of the grounded theory. Briefly stated, the grounded theory suggests the following: the instructional supervisor's role is assigned by school board policy to the elementary principal; the principal must negotiate among competing priorities and contextual factors in order to fulfill this role, and; the outcome of this negotiation is dispersal of responsibility. Figure 4.1 depicts the framework for the theory.

Elementary principals are reported to be the designated instructional supervisors in rural schools. Elementary principals must negotiate competing priorities and contextual factors as they attempt to provide instructional supervision for special education in these three districts. Competing priorities exist because the principals are administrators who are responsible for the overall management of the building as well as instructional supervisors who are charged with ensuring quality instruction and positive learning outcomes for all students. Additional competing priorities exist in the provision of special education specifically. Special education is

a highly regulated area within the field of education. Principals in this study often find themselves immersed in aspects of legal compliance and procedural matters as opposed to instructional matters. A third area of competing priorities for principals is the aspect of responsibility for evaluation of teachers in conjunction with the responsibility for supervision of instruction.

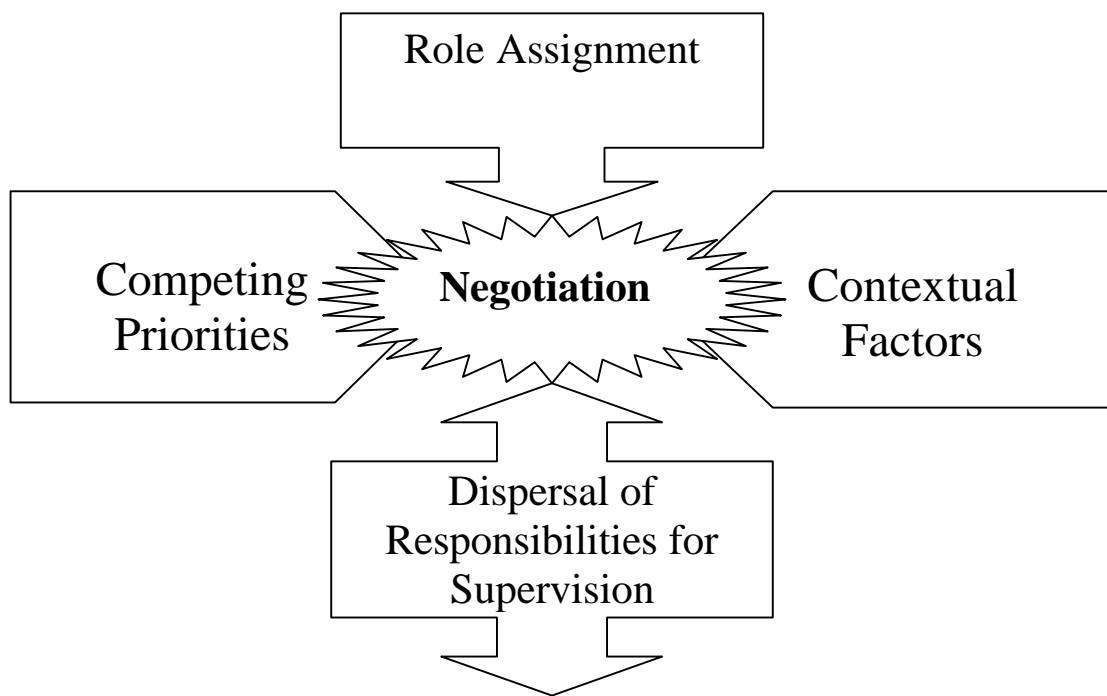


Figure 4.1. Supervision of special education instruction: Negotiation and Dispersal.

As principals in this study negotiate competing priorities, the supervision of special education instruction is also influenced by contextual factors. The contextual factors include systemic conditions such as small administrative structure at the district level, time, size of school, number of special programs with the school, and personal conditions such as individual principal’s knowledge base in special education, the perceived competence of special educators, and the principals’ own definition of special education instruction. As an outcome of this negotiation of competing priorities and contextual factors, responsibility for supervision of special education instruction is also dispersed in varying degrees to two other groups of professionals, directors of special education, and teachers themselves.

Despite the dispersal of responsibility, the principal continues to be the designated supervisor. The nine principals in this study utilize three main processes to address supervision

of instruction for students with disabilities. The processes include: (1) observation and evaluation of teachers; (2) supervision by wandering; and (3) open communication. The observation and evaluation process is directed by school board policy. The supervision by wandering is a daily routine of principals in which they walk through the building and visit classrooms briefly. This process helps principals supervise instruction as well as manage their buildings. Communication about instruction for students with disabilities occurs in informal discussions between principals and teachers as well as through the eligibility, IEP, and triennial meetings. Principals utilize these three processes to supervise all teachers, regardless of their area of expertise. The three processes represent strategies used by principals to provide supervision while negotiating the conditions of competing priorities and contextual factors.

Responsibility for supervision of special education instruction is dispersed to the district's director of special education via collaboration and consultation with the principal and special education teachers. Although much of the director of special education's time is spent in procedural and compliance issues, the director does have a supportive role in instructional supervision. The director often coordinates or provides professional development opportunities for special education teachers, participates in planning of educational services for students with disabilities, and provides personnel and resources that allow instruction for students with disabilities to occur.

Special education teachers often see themselves as having two bosses--a principal and a director of special education. The two are in frequent contact regarding program administration and to a lesser degree, instructional supervision. In each of the three districts studied, the person who directs special education also holds responsibilities for other programs within the district, such as gifted and talented programs, homebound instruction, food services, or guidance programs. This contextual factor limits their ability to provide direct instructional supervision to special education teachers.

The conditions of competing priorities for administrators and contextual factors such as limited time for supervision, small numbers of central office personnel, and limited knowledge of special education instruction by principals, create the need for further dispersal of responsibility for instructional supervision. This is particularly so in regard to on-going development of instructional skills for teachers. Principals and directors in this study frequently refer to relying on the special education teacher as the expert in instructional matters related to

students with disabilities. Teachers in this study report that they interact with their peer teachers more often than with the principal or director of special education when focusing on improvement of instruction and meeting the needs of students with disabilities. There are some formal structures in place, although these are not referred to directly as supervisory positions by the school districts. At the building level, teachers instruct students on a full-time basis but may also serve as team leaders and consultants for other teachers or as special education coordinators at the building level. A second formal structure is the assigning of mentors in order to orient new teachers to their positions and to aid teachers in their development of instructional expertise.

The description above represents a brief overview of the grounded theory that emerged from the data collected in interviews with teachers, principals, and directors as well as through observations and documents in nine rural elementary schools within three districts. Before describing the theory in more depth, I will describe how the sampling of sites and participants proceeded and how saturation of the data was achieved.

Discovering the Theory Through Theoretical Sampling and Coding

This section of the report will demonstrate the way in which theoretical sampling proceeded in this study based on categories that emerged in the data and the need to reach saturation of the data. I began with an interview of Director 1 in District 1. At this interview I learned that the principal is designated as the supervisor for special educators within the elementary school setting. This concept was confirmed as I began shadowing principals and interviewing teachers in Schools 2 and 3. Early categories emerged in the data that were similar for both schools, including “principal as supervisor”, “management by walking around”, “support from director “,” supervising procedures”, “communication between principal and teachers”, and “observations and evaluations”. In School 2, additional categories of “mentoring” and “special education coordinator” emerged as being related to supervision. Schools 2 and 3 varied slightly in their size and numbers of special education programs. I noted the differences in size and wanted to sample more schools with similar enrollments in order to compare the data for consistency.

Next, I began the shadowing and interviewing processes in District 2 with Schools 5 and 6, whose enrollments were similar to School 3. Analysis revealed similar coding categories to those seen in the first two schools studied. Additional categories emerged, including a “compliance focus” versus an “instructional focus” and “seeing the teacher as an expert”.

Incidents that matched the earlier category of “management by walking around” appeared again repeatedly in interviews with the teachers and principals and in observations. One principal described it as “supervision by wandering”, which led me to revise the category name. The categories of “special education coordinator” and “mentoring” were investigated more thoroughly here as well. One noticeable difference in School 6 was the principal’s noncompliance with the observation and evaluation policy. This was something I noted and attempted to gain more information about because the observation and evaluation process had emerged as a key process in other schools.

I had an initial contact with School 1, a very small school in District 1, shortly after the visits to Schools 5 and 6. The coding categories previously found were enriched and reconfirmed in the data collected at this school. A variation was noted in the category of “conversations between principals and teachers” here, with more emphasis on instructional issues over compliance issues. In an effort to make comparisons along the variations seen, I sampled another small school, School 4, in District 2. The principals’ strategies for supervision that emerged earlier were consistent with those found in this school.

At this point in the study, I was able to begin to formulate a storyline, an early form of the grounded theory. The categories and relationships between categories in the data were established and detailed. I chose next to sample three elementary schools in District 3 in an attempt to confirm the emerging theory and to determine if the categories and beginning theory would be consistent with that found in additional schools. These schools were of similar size to School 2, one of the initial participating sites. Sampling in these schools allowed me to gain more information specifically in the areas of director as collaborator, mentoring, and special education coordinators. However, no new categories emerged within the data.

During this time, I engaged the nine principals and three directors in formal interviews. I continued to ask the questions on the initial interview protocol, allowing principals and directors to share at length their experiences supervising special education. If, after sharing their perspectives, they had not discussed particular categories that had emerged in teacher interviews, observations, or document review, I questioned the principals and directors about the categories. This provided more detail and perspectives on aspects of the developing theory. The category of “competing priorities” had emerged during observations, but became more complete throughout

these last interviews. At this point, I determined that theoretical saturation had been achieved and proceeded with refinement of the theory.

The sections to follow describe the major categories and subcategories of the theory and demonstrate through discussion of conditions, barriers, strategies and outcomes how the categories relate to one another. Vignettes drawn from the collected data are integrated into the narrative to illustrate aspects of the theory. Additional figures are included to show the grounded theory as it relates to supervision of special education instruction and to add detail regarding categories and subcategories that emerged in the analysis of the collected data.

Role Assignment

As school board policy dictates, principals in elementary schools in the rural districts are designated as the instructional supervisors for their schools (D/2/11). Directors, principals and teachers, in the three districts sampled, report that the principal is the supervisor for special education teachers and special education instruction within their individual school buildings, as well as for all other teachers within the building. Principals are also assigned the responsibility of evaluating teachers and staff in their buildings. In rural elementary schools, principals are typically the sole administrators in the buildings.

A unique configuration in one of the districts studied is the use of administrative interns. The administrative interns in three elementary schools teach classes for half of the day and perform administrative duties under the direction of the principal for the other half of the day. In two situations, the interns teach at the same school in which they are completing the internships. In the third, the teacher teaches at the high school then interns at the elementary school. The school district works in conjunction with the administrative interns, providing the opportunity and release time for them to complete their master's degrees and to get administrator endorsement. It is seen as a mutually beneficial arrangement. The district cooperates in providing the opportunity and training and is potentially building a future applicant pool for administrative positions. The interns can complete their degrees while maintaining full-time employment. Elementary principals receive some assistance in performing administrative and supervisory duties, while sharing their expertise with the interns.

This unique configuration was seen in only one district. Typically, the elementary principal in rural settings has the sole responsibility for administration in the building. This is a role set forth in school board policy and reinforced in districts by a school based management

approach or an expressed philosophy that the principals must be in charge of what happens in their buildings (T/2/02/2; T/3/03/2; T/1/01/9).

Negotiation of Competing Priorities

Consider these images drawn from observations across the nine schools in this study. The principal arrives at school in the morning and reviews his calendar. On his schedule for the day are two teacher observations, an IEP meeting, and a faculty meeting at the end of the day. The day begins with bus duty and quickly proceeds to the following sequence of concerns: two bus behavior referrals; a parent call concerning bullying of her child; a teacher concerned about a student who refuses to complete any work; the cafeteria manager who needs to take two days off to care for an ill husband and cannot find a replacement; the construction site manager who needs to talk about electrical receptor placements; a child sent to the office for harassing girls; lunch duty; the scheduled IEP meeting; a kindergartner who hits his teacher and runs from the room. The principal works with this angry young boy until his grandmother arrives for a conference; the maintenance person points out parts of the parking lot in need of repair after being torn up by snow plowing; bus duty and dismissal; faculty meeting. The day is over. The two scheduled teacher observations never occurred.

How much of this day was spent in direct supervision of instruction? Principals are responsible for supervision but they are also administrators and managers of their buildings (D/2/11). They are involved in nearly every aspect of the school's daily functioning. The theory proposed here suggests that principals must negotiate among competing priorities and contextual factors in order to provide supervision of special education instruction. Used in this context, negotiate implies that the principal must use his or her abilities to deal with or to work through these situations to find a compromise or settlement that allows him or her to successfully accomplish multiple job responsibilities. The following sections describe the competing priorities that principals face within three general areas: (1) management and administration versus supervision; (2) supervising for legal compliance versus instructional improvement in special education; and (3) evaluation of teachers versus supervision of instruction. Principals negotiate these competing priorities in their daily work.

Competing Priorities: Management, Administration, and Supervision

Principals in rural elementary schools are performing management, administrative, and supervisory duties in their daily activities. Harris (1985) distinguishes management,

administration and supervision by their degree of relatedness to instruction and degree of relatedness to pupils. Management duties are indirectly related to instruction and remotely related to pupils. Principals in this study engage in management duties such as meeting with construction engineers to discuss timelines for completion of projects (O/1/C/9), talking with bus drivers about their routes (O/2/E/4), and purchasing leveled reading materials (T/1/A/10).

Administration lies at the mid-point range of direct to indirect relatedness to instruction and at the mid-point range of remote to direct relatedness to pupils. Principals in this study engage in many administrative duties related to special education including distributing SOL guides to special education teachers (T/2/E/10), planning and presenting budget requests to the superintendent (O/2/D/7; O/2/F/8), attending regional meetings on state special education regulations (O/3), and contacting parents to set up child-study meetings (O/1/C/6).

Supervision encompasses those actions directly related to instruction and directly related to pupil learning. Principals in the study engage in supervisory actions such as attending IEP meetings (O/3/H/4), observing classroom instruction (O/1/B/1-2), and demonstrating instructional strategies during faculty meetings (O/1/C/7).

It is perhaps an oversimplification to try to separate management, administrative, and supervisory duties, especially for the rural elementary school principals in this study. They perform duties in each of these categories on a daily basis, going from one focus to another seamlessly. However, it is important to note that these become competing priorities because administrative and management duties often “snowball” (T/1/C/5). They can appear as crisis situations such as broken heating systems on cold winter days or as immediate needs such as securing substitute teachers and aides for personnel who are ill. They can take priority over direct instructional supervision because of deadlines, as in the case of submission and presentation of budget requests to the Superintendent.

Administrative and management duties can be time consuming and may cause supervisory duties to be postponed. As Principal E shares:

I'm not always sure where the time gets to but there is always the food service supervisor wants you to make lunch time the most important part of your day. The transportation director wants you to spend an awful lot of time dealing with transportation and helping to keep his drivers in line. The attendance folks want you working like hell on writing attendance letters and then meeting with those folks who get to a certain level. That

winds up in court. The courts really don't take kindly to you saying you're too busy to go over there at 9:00 in the morning when the court date gets set for. Like I say, I try to get to most of the special education meetings because I think it's important So we have competing time issues . . . (T/2/E/10-11)

Principals desire to be instructional leaders, but are realistic about the competing priorities of administration and management that are inherent in their positions. Especially as the school enrollment and number of teachers increases, principals and teachers acknowledge that direct supervision is more difficult to provide. One special education teacher discusses the lack of constructive criticism and dialogue between special education teachers and principals in the following manner, "It just comes down to a matter of time and if a teacher is doing okay or doing a good job, then you let that go and you spend time on your problem areas" (T/3/18/11).

Competing Priorities: Legal Compliance and Quality Instruction in Special Education

The federal and state regulations pertaining to special education services provide structure and parameters for local practice. Localities have specific procedures that are followed and forms that must be completed. Principals in this study are involved in monitoring and assuring legal compliance with the regulations and corresponding local procedures that govern special education services. The actions involved in assuring legal compliance are both administrative and supervisory in focus. Principals are attentive to issues of legal compliance when dealing with issues regarding specific students with disabilities and when consulting with teachers regarding problematic concerns.

Principal H, in describing his experiences with supervising special education instruction, places a primary emphasis on compliance with the law and the IEP:

First of all you have to be very cognizant of the law and be sure that what you're doing is, you know, what you are supposed to be doing. If the IEP says they are supposed to be in an inclusive setting 45 minutes a day, five days a week, you make sure, first of all, that that's taken care of." (T/3/H/3)

Another principal places the support of teachers and the provision of resources first followed by the assurance of legal compliance (T/1/C/3). For the majority it seems to be a balancing act, trying to supervise and ensure quality instruction to students while monitoring legal compliance. Principals in this study vary in their comfort levels with the regulations and procedures and tend

to collaborate frequently on this aspect of the duties with directors of special education and with special education teachers.

Competing Priorities: Evaluation of Teachers and Supervision of Instruction

Over half of the teachers and principals interviewed in this study mention the observation and evaluation process first when I ask them to describe their experiences related to supervision of special education instruction. Some teachers focus on this process as the exclusive means of supervision. Perhaps this is because the observation and evaluation process is dictated by school board policy with specific forms and procedures. It is, perhaps, a more consistent and concrete form of supervision than other processes such as engagement in frequent discussion or provision of in-services and materials.

For the rural school districts, the evaluation process holds a dual goal. First, it serves as a monitoring function and is used to determine continuing employment (T/2/E/11-12). The process provides documentation for making employment decisions. Second, it is intended to raise the quality of instruction and to help individuals grow in their skills (D/1/7). Some professionals in the field of supervision would argue that the person responsible for supervision and the person responsible for evaluation should be different in order to allow supervision to focus on positive relationships based on trust and motivation (Anderson & Snyder, 1998). However, in rural elementary schools the principal holds the designated role of evaluator of teachers and the role of supervisor of instruction simultaneously and he or she must negotiate these competing priorities on a daily basis.

Summary of Competing Priorities

The data collected in this study through interviews, observations and documents reveal that the elementary principals in rural schools are assigned the role of supervisor of special education instruction. Principals experience competing priorities as they attempt to carry out this assigned role in the three general areas described above. Their days are spent fulfilling duties that are of a management and administrative orientation as well duties that are supervisory in nature. Principals must ensure legal compliance with the regulations for special education services as well as ensure that those services are provided through quality instruction delivered by competent professionals. Principals must evaluate teacher performance and make recommendations for continued employment as well as interact with teachers on a daily basis with a focus on improving instruction in order to assure positive learning outcomes for students.

Figure 4.2 displays the grounded theory framework with the competing priorities just described and foreshadows the contextual factors to be discussed next.

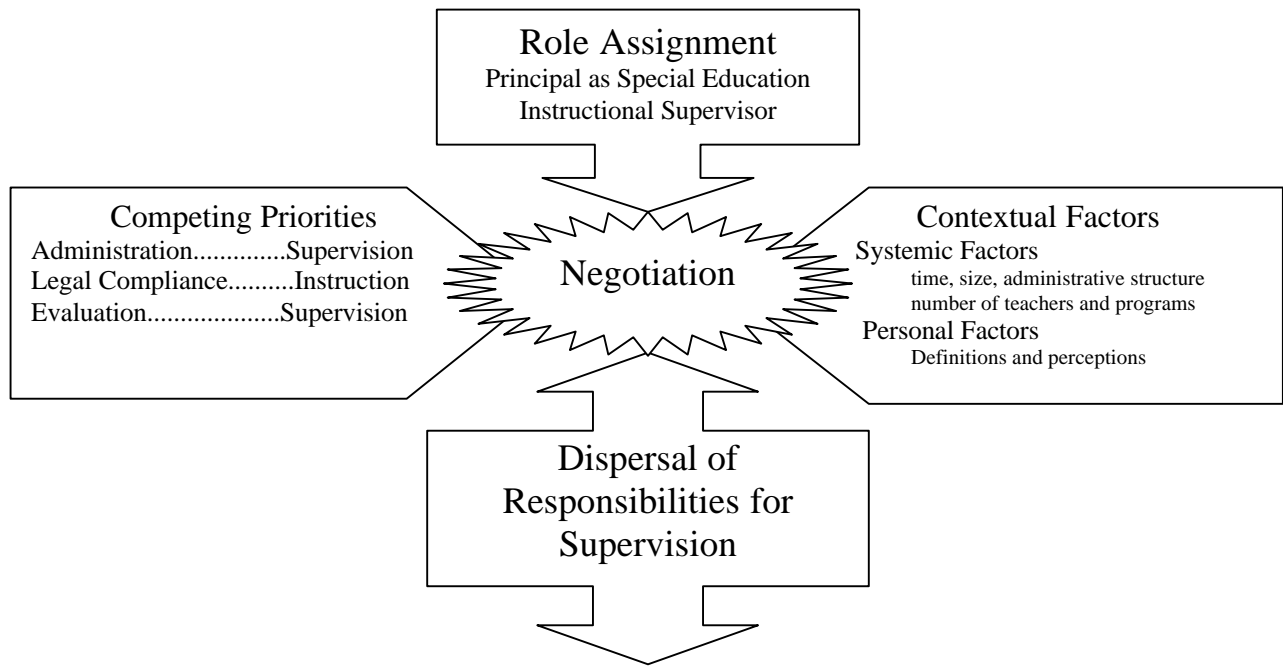


Figure 4.2. Competing Priorities and Contextual Factors.

Managing these competing priorities is part of the reality of the elementary school principal in rural school districts. In addition to competing priorities, there are contextual factors that influence the ability of principals to meet the requirements of supervision of special education instruction. The following sections outline the contextual factors that teachers, principals, and directors allude to in this study.

Contextual Factors

The factors detailed below describe contextual factors or conditions that have the potential to affect the provision of supervision of special education instruction. Some of the contextual factors vary from school to school and from principal to principal. The contextual factors include systemic conditions such as small central office administrative structures, time, enrollment size of school, number of special programs in schools, as well as personal conditions such as definitions of special education, knowledge base of principals, and perceived competence of special education teachers.

Central Office Administrative Structures

As I describe in the Prologue to this Chapter, the central office administrative structure in each of the three districts is small, having few numbers of administrators. Each central office administrator is typically responsible for several programs within the district. The special education director in District 1 shares that his situation is not unique among rural districts in the state when he says, “many of the directors of special education in the state have six to eight other major responsibilities, so it’s really a balancing act for where you direct your energies” (T/1/01/9). Two of the directors in this study have responsibilities for programs other than special education.

The small central office administrative structure limits the number of people who can participate in direct supervision of instruction or who can serve as resources for principals and teachers. Principal H makes the point during one of my observation days. He pulls out the Virginia Educational Directory, which lists each school district and contact numbers for central office personnel and school administrators. He turns to the pages for one of the largest districts in the state and begins naming the many titles listed under special education, including directors, assistant directors, coordinators, supervisors, and instructional specialists. He then reminds me that in his district there is one Director of Special Programs who oversees special education along with a range of other programs (O/3/H/4). In larger districts, there may be a supervisor or instructional specialist who focuses exclusively on instructional services for students with autism or for students with learning disabilities. In the small, rural districts studied here, there is one director who administers all special education programs and there are no other supervisors of special education who can provide assistance to principals and teachers.

Time

Principals and teachers in this study cite time as an inhibiting systemic factor in the provision of supervision of special education instruction. The competing priorities of management and administration, as well as the need to focus on legal compliance with regulations and procedures in special education, limit the time in which principals can spend in direct interaction with teachers about instructional techniques and students with disabilities. One regular education teacher voices her concern about limits of time for focusing on instructional improvement throughout the educational system in the following manner:

The one thing in education that they have taken away and taken away is time. They don't give you any time and I don't care what level you are. I don't care if you are superintendent or the janitor. They don't give you time to do what needs to be done. So, instead of hiring additional personnel to supervise, they just keep piling it on and piling it on and so you get to the point where you only have 24 hours in the day. Part of that time you have to sleep and eat and go to the bathroom you know. So what you start doing is you start cutting out all those things that are not absolutely necessary and you end up with the bare minimum and that's what you are seeing a lot of times. The bare minimum of what education should be. (T/2/19/9)

Principals express that time is a concern for them in complying with the observation and evaluation policies in their districts. As one principal shares, "Sometimes it gets to be the first of June and we haven't done all of the ideal. Time. Pure and simple" (T/2/E/10). Time for classroom observations and conferences with teachers becomes even more limited as the size of the school increases. There is an obvious difference in the time required to spend 30 minutes 2 to 3 times per year observing eight teachers as compared to spending 30 minutes 2 to 3 times per year observing 26 teachers (D/1/2).

Enrollment Size of School

As I detail in the Prologue to Chapter Four, the enrollment sizes of schools in this study vary from 123 students to 560 students. Again, no schools in this study have assistant principals, although three do have half-day administrative interns. All principals in this study were very steadily engaged in their work on the days that I shadowed them, however there is a noticeable difference in the pace and number of issues that a principal must address in the larger enrollment size schools. Principal I, whose school enrollment is on the high end for the schools studied here declares, "I just don't have enough time and there's not enough of me. You know, 550 kids and one person to do it all" (T/3/I/8). Principal D, whose school enrollment is 123 students, is more positive about her ability to spend time in classes observing and interacting with teachers and students. She says, "I'm able to be in and out of there a lot . . . I've got a smaller school and so it's easier for me to get to the classrooms"(T/2/D/9).

Number of Special Programs in Schools

As school enrollment increases, so does the number of students with identified disabilities in the school and subsequently the number of special education teachers in the

school. In two of the districts studied, students from other schools are brought to special programs in a centrally located school. For instance, School 2 houses the district's center-based special education preschool class as well as several students who have moderate and severe disabilities who would normally attend other elementary schools within the district. The small numbers of students with moderate and severe disabilities in the district necessitates this arrangement (T/1/B/10). This creates additional supervisory responsibilities for principals in terms of numbers of teachers, numbers of students, and increased involvement in IEP and Eligibility processes for those students.

Definitions of Special Education Instruction

I asked each participant in this study to define special education instruction. The answers given can be grouped into three general categories. Approximately two thirds of the participants define special education as meeting a child's needs through individualized instruction. Approximately one third of the participants define special education as a support to the general education program or curriculum. A few participants do not differentiate special education instruction from any other type of instruction. "Instruction is instruction. I don't care whether it's gifted. I don't care whether it is special education. I don't care whether it is in between. Instruction is always instruction" (T/2/E/5).

The definitions of special education instruction that individual principals express may influence their supervision of that instruction, with both legal and educational consequences. If a principal takes the position that instruction is instruction and there is no discernable or unique type of instruction for students with disabilities, then he or she may see no need to look for specific types of strategies being implemented during observations or to discuss instructional techniques specifically found to be effective with students with certain disabilities. The resulting supervision may be generic, matching the perception that instruction is instruction. If, however, a principal defines special education instruction as including specific strategies or instructional techniques supported by research as best practices for students with particular disabilities to either progress in the general education curriculum or to achieve personalized goals, then the supervision may have a more legally correct and educationally useful focus.

Knowledge Base of Principals in Relation to Special Education

Principals in this study have a range of background experiences. Four principals were assistant principals before taking jobs as elementary principals. Five of the principals' teaching

experience has been at the high school level. These principals have background in areas such as history, social studies, math, business, and music. Three principals coached high school sports in addition to teaching. Two principals have backgrounds in remedial reading and English at elementary and middle school levels. One has an elementary classroom background as well as a gifted education background. One is a former special education teacher and coordinator.

Principal background appears to have an impact on the types of instructional questions teachers feel most comfortable asking of their principals. One special education teacher shares that she feels comfortable going to her principal to talk about teaching reading to students with disabilities because she knows his background is in reading and that he has taught remedial reading classes (T/1/4/4). Another general education teacher reports that she feels her principal has a good understanding of the needs of varying students because of her background in gifted education (T/1/3/6). Special education teachers find that principals with backgrounds in special education can be empathetic to their situations and understand needs of students with disabilities (T/2/17/7; T/2/16/4). However, teachers also find that principals who have been in many different teaching and administrative positions have learned a lot about special education procedures and students along the way. As one special education teacher puts it:

I always feel better when they do have the special ed. background just because they have that experience and they know where we are coming from. Now, at this point, I feel like my principal is familiar enough with it because he has been dealing with it for so long. He's been with different schools doing the special education. Been with it long enough that I would feel pretty comfortable going to him with certain concerns. (T/2/15/5)

Principals without special education backgrounds acknowledge that learning about special education students and instructional strategies requires on-going professional development and a desire to learn. Principal E shares:

When I became an elementary principal . . . I realized that there were at least two things that I needed to know something about that I knew very little about. One of them was special education. One of them was reading . . . I became my own special education coordinator. I probably did that for two or three years because I knew that would force me to learn it. All I had in the building at that time was one LD resource teacher and he was quite good so he taught me a lot about special ed. and about special ed. kids and we interacted probably on a daily basis . . . What that did was let me interact a lot with the

special ed. director who was a good person as I learned to do the coordinator's job and who taught me a lot about special ed. kids. (T/2/E/26)

Principals do participate in professional development and training in special education. During the time of this study, six of the principals attended regional workshops on implementation of new state regulations in special education. Directors in Districts 2 and 3 mention administrative meetings in which issues regarding special education are regularly addressed (T/2/02/22; T/2/03/8). However, this training is usually in the area of policies, regulations, and procedures as opposed to instructional approaches for students with disabilities.

Perceived Competence of Special Education Teachers

Another contextual factor seems to be the perceived competence of special education teachers within a particular school setting in any given year. Principal 8 shares that he is more involved in recent years in special education meetings and monitoring of special education service delivery (O/3/H/4). In this case, when the principal first began working in the school, he found there were four experienced and very competent special education teachers. Principal H felt that he did not have to worry about special education procedures being implemented properly or about the quality of the instruction being delivered. In subsequent years, two of the teachers left. As new teachers were hired, the principal has taken a more active role in the special education process and is monitoring things more closely to assure compliance and quality.

Principals in this study talk about trusting the special education teachers as the experts in disabilities, instructional practices, and in the special education process. One general education teacher shares, "well, I know for a fact that he (principal) would refer me to the special ed. lead teacher because she has the expertise and he would feel more comfortable with me asking her" (T/3/9/6). One special education teacher describes the perceived competence and trust in this way:

I mean this in a good way. The principal, I guess, has so much trust that the other special education teacher and I can figure out what we need to do that he pretty much lets us run the ship So, sometimes it doesn't seem as much as supervisory position as it is almost a collaboration. (T/2/14/3)

Principal's level of trust in the competence of special education teachers as experts in their field may influence the frequency of interactions with the teachers and the closeness of supervision.

Summary of Contextual Factors

Contextual factors are those conditions that may influence the way in which special education instruction is supervised. The factors can be systemic such as central office administrative structures, enrollment size of school, time, and number of special education programs within one school. They can also be personal factors such as the principal's view of what special education instruction should be, the principal's background experience and knowledge base in special education, and the perceived competence of special education teachers. The contextual factors may explain some variations seen in supervision of special education in different schools and with individual teachers.

As principals negotiate the competing priorities and contextual factors, a dispersal of responsibility for supervision of special education instruction occurs. Principals collaborate with directors of special education and they rely on the special education teachers to be experts in the field. The next section of the paper describes this dispersal and the processes that are utilized by principals, directors, and teachers in assuring quality instruction, improving special education instruction, and involving teachers in on-going professional development.

Dispersal of Responsibility for Supervision of Special Education Instruction

Rural elementary principals face competing priorities including management and administration duties in the building, responsibility for legal compliance with special education regulations while ensuring quality instruction, and the need to evaluate teachers while supervising for instructional improvement. Principals negotiate these competing priorities in their daily performance within the school buildings. Meanwhile the systemic and personal factors impact individual principals' ability to negotiate the priorities to varying degrees.

Principals use three main strategies to address supervision of special education instruction while negotiating competing priorities and contextual factors. The strategies include: (1) the observation and evaluation process; (2) supervision by wandering; and (3) open communication. The three strategies are not isolated events, but are conducted in an integrated and interactive fashion that allows the principal to address all of his or her additional responsibilities in addition to supervising instruction.

The three principal supervisory strategies constitute a major portion of the supervision of special education instruction. However, they do not explain fully how supervision of special education instruction occurs. Responsibility for supervision of special education instruction is

also dispersed to the director of special education in the district and to teachers themselves. The director's role is primarily administrative, but the director also plays a supportive role in supervising. He or she provides resources and personnel, assists in planning services for individual students with disabilities, and provides consultation to the principal and teachers on issues of legal compliance and service delivery.

Responsibility for supervision of special education instruction is also dispersed to teachers. Special education teachers are expected to be experts in their fields and principals trust their expertise in instructing students with disabilities. Systems of assigning mentors to new teachers constitute a type of supervision for instructional improvement. Also, teachers who are lead special education teachers or special education building coordinators assist the principals in their administrative and supervisory duties. In the sections to follow, supervisory strategies and processes used by the principal, the director of special education, and teachers will be described more fully.

Principal Supervision

Rural elementary principals utilize three main strategies to accomplish supervision of special education instruction as they negotiate the competing priorities and contextual factors. Foremost appears to be the observation and evaluation process, a process that is mandated by district policy (D/1/6-7; D/2/2-5; D/3/4-10). The other two strategies, supervision by wandering and open communication, are informal means of supervision utilized by principals. The following sections will explain the three main strategies. Figure 4.3 displays the processes used by principals to address the supervision of special education instruction as they negotiate competing priorities and contextual factors. The arrows depict that the three strategies are interactive and not necessarily disjointed or separate activities.

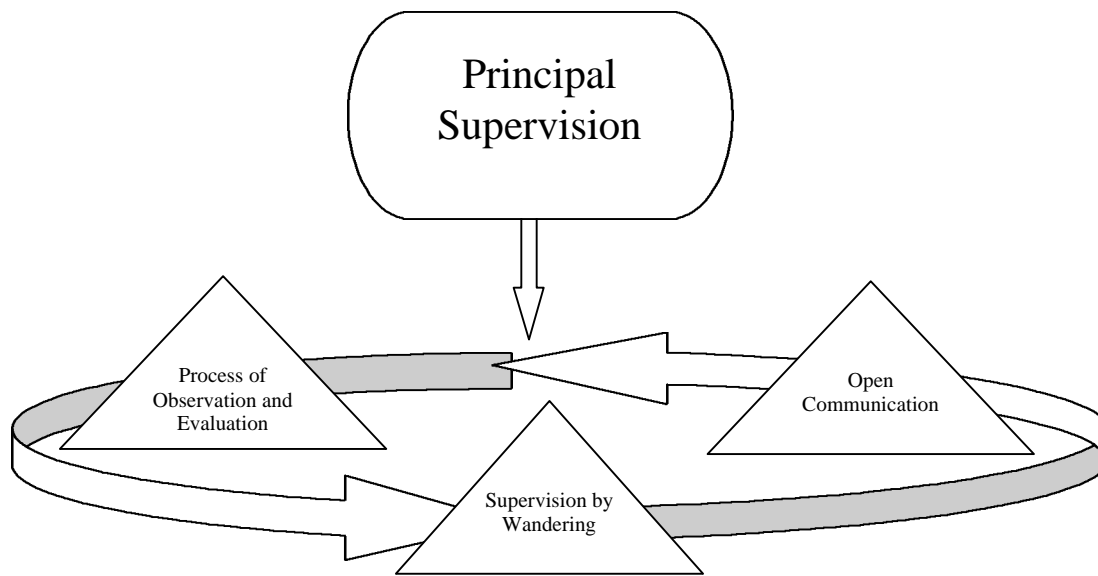


Figure 4.3. Principal Strategies for Supervision of Special Education Instruction.

Observation and Evaluation Process

School board policies mandate the specifics of the observation and evaluation process in each school district (D/1/4-8; D/2/2-5; D/3/4-8). Although each local policy may differ slightly, all are in alignment with the state mandated criteria for teacher evaluation in the Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers, Administrators, and Superintendents (Virginia Department of Education, 2000). In local policy, typically there is a specified process and forms for observation and for evaluation that set out general teaching criteria and performance indicators. Often these are checklists with room for additional comments to be completed by principals.

During each school year in the districts studied, all non-tenured teachers receive full, formative evaluations that include two to three observations that are written up and discussed during post observation conferences. Teachers on continuing contract status typically receive full evaluations every second or third year and partial evaluations yearly. These evaluations also include observations and conferences with the principal and may include a self-evaluation or report of involvement. As one teacher describes:

Basically the supervision that teachers have is from a principal and he comes in and observes. The first time during the year, he'll tell you when he can, what day he wants to

come and you let him know what times are best for you. And after that he comes in unannounced. But those are formal. Those two observations are formal. He makes notes. He gives you a form that shows you what he's marked, what he's written down. You know, how he feels about it, what questions he has, those kinds of things. Every three years maybe- -it is staggered- -but certain teachers go through a full evaluation and that's just a little bit more extensive, a little bit more detailed than the other evaluations you have. But basically, all the other evaluation are done by the principal. (T/3/19/4)

Principals tend to create schedules for making observations, but sticking to these schedules is difficult due to competing priorities and unexpected issues that must be handled as they arise. Principals in this study vary in regard to having pre-observation conferences. For some observations, teachers are given the opportunity to invite the principal in at a specified time for a lesson of their choice. In other instances, teachers are given a broad time frame, such as the next two weeks, in which the principal will be making formal observations. Less frequently, principals hold pre-observation conferences in which teachers describe the lesson they will present or in which the principal will ask the teacher if there is anything specific she or he would like feedback on as a result of the observation.

General criteria for observations. The criteria for observations are dictated by school board policy and are detailed in the observation forms. The criteria are general criteria such as the quality of the teacher's interactions with students, preparation, organization, planning and assessment, classroom climate, subject content and SOLs, lesson delivery, strategies for differentiation, use of technology, and communication skills. Teachers are aware of the criteria and are encouraged to demonstrate these criteria on a daily basis.

The criteria are utilized in observations of all teaching staff, regardless of particular position. Typically, the forms and process do not specifically address issues of instruction for students with disabilities. The same forms and procedures are used to observe and evaluate special education and general education teachers. As one principal relates:

We have a standard form that we use and I use the same form for special education teachers as I do with the regular ed. teacher. I look for the same methodology, the instruction, question and answer, guided practice, independent practice, focused activities, all of them. All of the necessary requirements for good instruction and I expect the same out of the special ed. teachers as I would a regular ed. The form that we go

through is basically planning, organization, professionalism, community relations, communications within the community with parents, and classroom environment. And so it's all the same. (T/3/H/4)

Special education specific criteria. Although special education teachers are observed and evaluated with the same form and criteria, some principals recognize that their jobs may entail a different focus at times. When I ask directly what he looks for when observing a special education teacher, Principal H describes observation of special education teachers in inclusive settings in the following manner:

First of all, I would make notes on what both were doing. If one teacher is up front giving the main gist of the instruction, what was the other teacher doing? Was the other teacher walking around just helping special ed. students, helping all students, helping any student? What was the role of that teacher that was not in charge, so to speak? And then questions I would ask. Do they flip-flop? Do they switch roles? And if so, I would look for the same thing. I still look for the same quality of instruction. That may be a little different if it's having to be geared for special needs students but I would still look for the same characteristics. You know, a focused activity, the questions. Is there a two-way communication? Is there a follow-up? Is there a review? Is there a summary? Is there guided practice? I'd look for the same for both, but in inclusive settings, I would not want one to be sitting in the back doing nothing while the other one was teaching. (T/3/H/10)

When observing special education teachers in resource room settings, principals are aware of general differences in the structure of the classroom. Principal B describes it in the following manner:

That's a little bit more intense. There's really something individual going on that that teacher has. Even if they have two or three students in there at the same time, they can still individualize within that framework and that those kids are on task in that room. (T/1/B/3)

Principals, if they choose to do so, use the observation form and procedure to address the delivery of special education instruction in varied settings and the diverse requirements of a special education teacher's position. However, most general education teachers and some special education teachers report that the observations are generic. As one kindergarten teacher relates,

“generally when we are being observed, to my knowledge, it has very little to do with special ed. You know it’s just the basic, your requirements as an educator” (T/1/9/5).

Post Observation Conferences

Post observation conferences occur along a continuum of formality. The formality ranges from the teacher being asked to read over the observation form and being given the opportunity to make written comments to “catching us as we were running by somewhere” and “showing us what he had written” (T/3/21/5) to a formal discussion of the observation between the principal and teacher. Principals give feedback on the criteria that is included in the form and on other positive aspects or needs for improvement they have noted. Typically, after the post observation conference occurs, the teacher is asked to initial or sign the form. The principal signs the form and then it is filed in the teacher’s employment file and also sent to the central office for review.

General comments in post-observation conferences. When I ask teachers about the comments that principals make during post observation conferences, many are hard pressed to think of specific examples. A few cite such things as a need for improving organization, a need to summarize and close lessons, a need to state goals for the lessons, or a need to include SOL numbers in lesson plans. Most teachers refer vaguely to the principal talking about good things he or she sees and pointing out things that they might improve upon (T/2/11/4; T/3/22/5).

Special education issues in post-observation conferences. Some teachers relate that principals make comments or engage them in discussions related to special education students and instruction. General education teachers are sometimes asked about the progress of a particular student with a disability in their class (T/1/2/5; T/3/22/6) or about the ways in which they are adapting lessons to meet a range of skill levels (T/1/7/3). Special education teachers are sometimes engaged in discussions about scheduling of services, student behavior, and student progress on IEP goals and in the regular education classrooms (T/1/6/5).

Evaluation of Teachers

Each district requires an evaluation of teachers and sets forth a schedule for such evaluations. The purpose of the evaluation complies with the Code of Virginia and with the Board of Education Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teacher, Administrators, and Superintendents (2000). The purposes include the following: “(1) to raise the quality of instruction and educational service to the children of the community; (2) to

raise the standards of the division as a whole; and (3) to aid the individual to grow and improve” (D/1/6).

The observations that principals make of teachers are used as input into the evaluation of teachers. The frequency of formal observations is determined by whether the teacher is non-tenured or on continuing contract status. Though each district varies slightly, there is also some form of self-evaluation or a report of involvement from teachers (D/1/7; D/2/5; D/3/6-7). Evaluation policies require conferences between principals and teachers regarding the evaluations. There is no distinction between the process and forms utilized for special education teachers and general education teachers.

Variation in implementation of policy. Adherence to the evaluation policy and process vary. In one case, a teacher has not received a formal evaluation in three years of employment with the district (T/2/13). This is not the norm. Principals typically try to comply with evaluation policies but some have difficulty completing all required formal observations and post observation conferences within the set timelines.

When the duties of a special education professional vary greatly from the format of the evaluation tools, some principals write a narrative description of that person’s performance in lieu of using the evaluation form. As Principal I describes:

Something like, well for the speech therapist for example. I observed her with a one on one. I can’t use the regular form for that. So I go to the computer and I will just write a brief description of what I observed and comments of that nature. But how can you observe discipline and some of the things they ask for with a regular observation when she has just one child working? (T/3/I/4)

Principals consider, too, the way that special education teachers interact in IEP and Eligibility meetings and in collaborations with general education teachers when evaluating their performance.

Value of the Observation/Evaluation Process

Do observations and post observations impact teachers’ instructional practices? Do teachers value the observations and evaluations? Do principals value the observation and evaluation process? Based on teacher and principal interviews in the nine schools, answers to these questions vary widely.

Continuum of value of observations and evaluations. I asked 14 of the teachers involved in this study if they feel that the observation and evaluation process was valuable to them and if it impacts their teaching practices. The teachers are evenly split on this. Of note, however, the observation and evaluation process is valued more often by beginning and novice teachers than by tenured teachers with greater years of experience. One of the teachers who has the highest number of years of experience shares that the observation and evaluation system had been of greater value to her as a beginning teachers. Now, however, she feels:

As far as evaluations, as far as coming in and observing and looking at my weaknesses or my strengths; well, I already know those. I've been doing this, like I said, this is my 30th year in 4th grade. I know where my weaknesses are and I've tried to address those over the years. (T/322/5)

A special education teacher who has taught for 23 years shares:

I think we've had our time but it was definitely important and yes, I got criticism and yes, it was good, and yes, I didn't know how to do this or how to do that, but I think, you know, I've come around and I know and I can teach other teachers how to. So, I'm not that concerned about that administrative thing at this point in my life. (T/3/23/9)

A second type of response difference to this question appears to relate to the types of disabilities the students have. A teacher of students with moderate and severe disabilities speaks about the lack of input from the observation and evaluation process relating specifically to instructional strategies for her students:

I really feel that there isn't very much supervision here for me. I think that's one of the reasons I feel the job is difficult because I feel like I'm kind of standing alone. The administration can make sure that I'm doing my job, seeing kids, and abiding by the law but as far as actually making sure that I'm doing quality instruction with children with severe disabilities, I don't think they know. (T/1/5/3)

Principals differ in their value of the observation and evaluation process. Those who look upon it positively cite things such as it being a way to document the supervision that is done, a way for them to get to know particular teachers' strengths, and a source of information to use when talking to parents about how teachers are delivering instruction to students. One principal thinks that the impact his observations and feedback have on instruction depends upon the teacher's willingness to receive constructive criticism (T/2/E/20). This same principal shares:

I see an evaluation as not very valuable once you get past the point of whether the person is going to have a job or not. The evaluation I see as being something you do, rendering unto Caesar. What I think special education teachers . . . and everybody else needs is feedback, which is different from an evaluation. (T/2/E/7)

In one school, the principal does not comply regularly with the observation and evaluation policy and procedures. Notably, the three special education teachers interviewed at this school all express a desire for someone to observe their instruction and to provide feedback to them on different strategies they could utilize.

Evaluation for employability versus instructional improvement. At times it is difficult to determine whether teachers and principals are referring to the observations alone or to the evaluation process. This is understandable given the linkage of the two in the evaluation policy. Although most teachers talk about the observation process and evaluation process as one in the same, some principals make a distinction. Evaluation of teachers is seen by some principals as more of a summative determination of employability rather than a process designed to continually improve instruction. The evaluation process is used to determine whether teachers receive continuing contract status. If deficiencies are noted, then improvement plans are created and the teacher's progress is evaluated. The observation and evaluation forms provide documentation. "I'd hate to try to do something to a teacher as far as dismissal, reassignment, what have you, and have no documentation. That'd be difficult." (T/3/I/21). As Principal E related, "with folks like I mentioned, the preschool teacher . . . the EMD teacher . . . and the resource teacher, I will decide in the three years before they get tenure as I put it, whether I want to marry them because divorce is hell. I guess that's a form of supervision too . . ." (T/2/E/8).

Summary of the Observation and Evaluation Process

The observation and evaluation process seems to be a key process that principals use as they supervise special education teachers and instruction for students with disabilities. The process is dictated by school board policy in each rural district. The implementation of the policies by the nine principals varies slightly. This is perhaps related to their view of the importance and impact of the policy on instruction and the competing priorities of management and administration duties. Some principals adhere to the policy's procedures more closely with non-tenured teachers and see the observation and evaluation process as a tool to determine employability. Teachers vary in their opinions about the value of the observations and

evaluations, with the consensus being that it is more valuable for new teachers than for teachers with many years of experience. The observation and evaluation forms and procedures are generic and are utilized with all teachers, regardless of teaching assignment.

Supervision by Wandering

A second process used in the supervision of special education instruction by elementary principals is supervision by wandering. Supervision by wandering is a consistent routine demonstrated by principals in all nine schools studied. I observed this process in my shadowing of each principal and many of them specifically mention this in interviews when I ask them to describe how they supervise special education instruction. They walk down the halls of the school, looking in to some classrooms and walking through others. Principals greet teachers and follow up on issues or answer questions (O/2/D/3). They chat with students about class work, sports, or family members (O/1/C/3). Principals describe this practice in varying ways, including the following:

I practice for special education and any other education in the building what I call supervision by wandering. So most mornings I wander aimlessly, little person lost around the building. And I just look, nothing formal. Look in. What's going on? (T/2/E/5)

When I am out in the school on daily business, I try to observe every class. When I walk down the hall, I don't just walk down the hall. I'll be observing what's going on in the classes around me and I know. I pretty much in 29 years have learned to know when instruction is taking place . . . I'm pretty observant when I go about and I think I always have a pretty good gut feeling about individuals and situations. (T/2/F/6)

Teachers are aware of this practice and that principals make a point to be out in the building and visiting classrooms daily. One special education teacher relates, "Usually it's random. Just happens to be walking down the hall and walking in a classroom just to see what's going on and to see what we're teaching" (T/1/C/5). Why do principals engage in this practice when their time is so constrained? Does it have purpose and if so, is it related to supervision of instruction?

Multiple Purposes

Based on the data collected through interviews and shadowing of principals, this supervision by wandering appears to have several purposes. Some of the reasons principals do this are tied to management. Walking through halls and peering into classrooms serves a

monitoring function. Principals “make sure that teachers are in the classrooms and that children are being supervised. That’s up front. I expect my teachers . . . are in the classroom and that students are being supervised . . . and that the students are controlled” (T/3/I/4). Principals also wander the halls to ensure safety, checking doors and restrooms, talking to visitors in the halls (T/1/A/7; O/1/A /2). They wander to make their presence known to students, a sort of discipline by proximity. As one principal shares, “Especially in the upper grades, it helps with discipline because they know I’m there” (T/3/H/20). Another principal echoes those sentiments. “There is less potential for problems if students know I am here in the building” (T/3/I/4).

Other purposes for supervision by wandering relate to instructional supervision. Principals use this process to build their awareness of what is happening in classrooms in terms of instructional techniques and content. Principal C shares his reasons for walking the halls in terms of gaining an awareness of student engagement in learning:

But what I like to do in the morning after the school settles down a little, I like to float around the building. Walk in and spend five minutes in the room or spend 15 minutes in a room if something is going on and I want to sit and watch for a while. I do that more frequently so I may have been in a room 25, 30 times, not counting the formal visits, and I can pick up from that. You can wander through and walk around. If they are throwing pencils and goofing off and chit-chatting about the TV show last night, well, they’re not engaged. But if they’re in there and they’re writing and they’ll say, especially the younger kids, “look what I did here. Look what I’ve written here.” I was in kindergarten today and they were reading to me and I get 10 different kids coming over and reading to me. Well, they’re learning how to read and they’re proud of it and want to show it off, and I could see something academic was going on there. (T/1/C/7)

Supervision by wandering also contributes to the system of evaluation of teachers. Principals desire to be fair in their evaluations. Frequent observations and contacts can contribute to the summative evaluations and give the principal more credibility when concerns are raised. As Principal I shares

With the teachers, they know, hey, when I talk to them about what’s going on, I’ve a pretty good idea because I’m in their classrooms every day. You know, they can’t say, ‘but you’re only in there that one day and that’s not normally the way it is every day’. Sometime or another I’m in there every day. Some days are better than others. So, you

know, when you talk about what's going on in the classroom with them, they know you've got a lot of things to compare, to base it on because you are in there. And so if I sit down with a teacher and say, you know, things are not going real well, they can't say, 'well, that was just one bad day'. Well, I've been in there every day. Was every day a bad day? (T/3/H/20)

Other principals express the need to have frequent informal observations in order to have an accurate sense of the daily teaching that goes on. Principals are aware that some teachers get nervous about formal observations and that others teach in a different manner when they know someone is coming to observe. As principal E puts it:

Sometimes when I am invited, the teacher will make the mistake of trying to impress me and she will forget about the kids. I don't usually see that on drop by's because with drop by's I'm in there 15, 30 minutes at the most. They didn't know I was coming so that's actually more real. I try to give them at least one chance to do a dog and pony show. And that's a danger in a dog and pony show that they are so busy trying to impress me that they forget about the kids. (T/2/E/9)

Principal C feels that the formal observation may be overrated. He shares his need to make frequent visits in the following way:

I mean, you could walk in to my classroom and I could kick in to a super lecture. I can talk. I was adequate. I knew what my subject matter was and I could go in to super teacher. The Socratic system with questions and I can get questions and answers and debates going and I could look good for 30 minutes. Then as soon as you walk out the door, I could put the video in and go right back to plan B . . . You've got to use a lot of things. You've got to feel for them. If you've got all your tentacles out, you can pick up on it. (T/1/C/19)

Supervision by wandering also helps principals to get to know the students with disabilities in their schools, to see first hand how they are learning in the classroom settings, and to talk with teachers about their progress. Principals interact with students and get involved in lessons (O/1/C/3; O/2/D/3). This enables them to talk with parents with authority when there are concerns about students' performance and progress in classes. For example, Principal E shares the following:

The particular thing I asked the EMD teacher was to invite me to her reading with the

two kids who are just beginning to take off and develop some things in their word banks. I want to see how she is doing that. I want to see how the kids are responding to what she is doing. (T/2/E/8)

Also, knowing students and how they perform in classes allows principals to give input into eligibility and IEP discussions about particular students (O/1/C/9).

Another purpose of this supervision by wandering is to give principals a feel for teacher styles of interacting with students. Knowing this allows the principal to match individual student characteristics and needs with appropriate teachers when planning caseload assignments and class rosters (T/2/E/12-13). Teachers and principals report that principals have input into this type of decision-making. Principal E sees this as central to his supervision:

I see one of the most important things that I do as matching kids with the teacher who will give them the very best chance to be successful. So I agonize over that in May and June, you know, trying to know the kids, trying to know the teachers, trying to know their personalities, trying to know their learning styles, trying to know their teaching styles, so that when I put the two of them together good things happen. If I miss it with a special needs child, it's even worse than when I miss it for another child. It's just a nightmare and it's a nightmare for everybody. (T/2/E/13)

Summary of Supervision by Wandering

Supervision by wandering is a process used by principals to supervise special education instruction and teachers who deliver that instruction. Supervision by wandering is used to some degree by every principal in the study. The time spent in this process varies depending upon other administrative duties principals need to perform, but each principal expresses a desire and attempts to be in classrooms daily. Time spent in each classroom varies as well, ranging from simply glancing in the doors, greeting teachers and students, pausing to listen to instruction or student discussions, to observing a portion of a lesson.

Purposes for the supervision by wandering include management aspects as well as instructional supervision aspects. Supervision by wandering allows principals to have an awareness of instruction occurring in the classrooms, provides a connection to children and some understanding of how their disabilities are impacting their learning, contributes to the evaluations of teachers, and enables the principals to be aware of teacher styles of interaction with students. Supervision by wandering appears to be a bridge connecting the other two processes of

supervision, observation/evaluation and open communication, used by principals to supervise special education instruction.

Open Communication

Communication between principals and teachers is a third process in the supervision of special education instruction. Throughout the observation and evaluation process and during supervising by wandering, principals in this study engage in frequent communication with special education teachers and general education teachers about students and their instructional needs. Daily, teachers approach the principal with concerns. Principals communicate with teachers to build a philosophy of shared responsibility for all children (T/1/B/3) and to provide emotional support to teachers who work with challenging students (T/1/C/9). To a varying degree principals communicate with teachers, parents, and other school personnel about students with disabilities during child study, eligibility, and IEP meetings.

Conversations Between Principals and General Educators

General education teachers express that their principals are receptive. As one third grade teacher describes, “He’s involved in everything. He is so easy going and you feel that you could go in and he doesn’t say hurry up, I’m busy. He says, come on in and sit down. What’s on your mind?” (T/3/17/9).

Through analysis of the collected interview data, four main topics of conversation related to special education occurring between the principal and general education teachers emerge. First, teachers and principals discuss individual student progress in the SOL curriculum and the implementation of accommodations and modifications within the regular classrooms. One third grade teacher shares:

I know in one of the students we had an IEP meeting in the spring and we talked about the student had struggled a lot last year and didn’t feel good about himself and we came up with maybe we could have an alternative grading scale. (Principal D) wasn’t here last year. And when we had our first conference with her that was one thing I said, that I needed some help on how do we do this grading scale. So, once school started, we called the parents. What we had talked about at first, we called the parents in and told them our ideas. (T/2/15/3)

Second, issues of discipline of students with disabilities are a major focus of communication (O/3/G/4). “Of course, we take discipline problems to him as well” (T/1/9/3).

Principals discipline students with disabilities while keeping in mind regulations for discipline and manifestation hearings. The third topic of conversation includes scheduling of classes and activities. “They probably come to me with more of ‘can I change my schedule because I think that (the special education teacher) and I need a longer span of time to do my math now?’” (T/1/A/14). Finally, general education teachers and principals discuss needed curriculum materials.

Conversations Between Principals and Special Educators

Conversations between special education teachers and principals tend to focus more on programmatic issues or compliance issues. This may be a result of the competing priority referred to earlier--the focus on legal compliance versus instructional improvement in the supervision of special education instruction. The contextual factor of principal background knowledge and experience appears to play a role here, too. With Principal D, who is a former special educator, and with Principal A, who is a former gifted educator, teachers related more examples that were directly linked to instructional techniques and approaches. For example, Principal A shares:

Here is an example that happened this morning. (The special education teacher) was administering a spelling test first thing this morning to fifth graders. Her concern she brought to me was not the teacher’s design, but the teacher’s design as appropriate to her LD children I was walking down the hall attending to morning duties and she asked me to come in and just read over it with her and make some recommendations.

Immediately I saw some differentiation that could and should be made so I shared with her. She agreed that it was multi-task and there was too much, too quickly for an LD student to embrace, knowing the students she was referring to. So I made my recommendations. (T/1/A/4)

Principal D, a former special education teacher, can empathize with the resource room teacher’s challenges:

There’s lots of different levels of instruction going on in there at one time and I have some concerns about that and the teacher and I talk about how that’s going and trying to deal with students who have difficulty learning anyway in certain environments and how that works in that environment. Neither one of us feels like it’s where we would like it to be so we get together now and then and try to figure out what might help. (T/2/D/3)

Other topics of conversation between principals and special education teachers include discipline of students with disabilities, motivation of children to complete work, parental concerns, scheduling, collaborating with general education teachers, transportation of students, and needed materials.

Communication and Principal Involvement in Special Education Meetings

Principals in this study are involved in communication about students with disabilities during IEP and Eligibility and Triennial Meetings when they are in attendance. However, individual principals vary widely in their attendance to and role in these meetings. This seems to be a result of competing priorities of administration and supervision as well as being influenced by the contextual factors of principal knowledge base in special education, perceived competence of special education teachers, and an interest on the part of the principal.

Principal attendance at special education meetings ranges along a continuum from infrequent to occasionally to frequently to always in attendance. The nine principals in this study are fairly equally distributed along this continuum. Some attend only when there are particularly challenging student needs or there is an expected rift between parents' and teachers' views of what should occur for a particular student. A few attend every meeting possible in order to be fully aware of individual student needs and family and teacher concerns in their buildings.

The level of involvement of principals in special education meetings also ranges along a continuum. Principals may listen only, provide input, ask clarifying questions, or direct meetings. Again, the principals in this study vary in their involvement based on the type of meeting, the focus of concerns, and the principals' knowledge about a particular child or situation.

Summary of Open Communication

Principals engage teachers in communication about special education. Teachers engage principals as well. Topics of conversation include programmatic and procedural issues for special education and, to a lesser extent, instructional approaches and needs of students with disabilities. Principal background experience seems to play a role in determining what types of issues teachers will discuss with their principals. Principals also communicate with teachers to build a shared philosophy and to provide emotional support. Communication regarding students with disabilities and their instructional needs also occurs in child study meetings, IEP meetings

and Eligibility meetings. Principal attendance and involvement in these meetings varies due to competing priorities and contextual factors.

Communication also occurs between directors of special education and principals and teachers. As described in the framework for the grounded theory, responsibility for supervision of special education instruction is dispersed to two other groups of professionals in addition to the principal. Communication with the director of special education is a primary means of dispersal of responsibility for supervision of special education instruction. The next section addresses the roles of the director of special education in supervising instruction.

Supervision from the Director of Special Education: Collaboration and Consultation

Directors of special education in rural public school settings play a supportive role in the supervision of special education instruction. Much of their energy and time is spent on legal compliance issues and coordination of programs, however directors do play a role in providing staff development, developing educational plans for students, and providing resources that support the delivery of instruction. Much of the support that directors provide comes in the form of dialogue with principals and with special education teachers. The sections to follow describe in detail the collaborative and consultative role of the director based on interviews with three directors, nine principals, and 23 teachers.

Roles of the Director

The three directors who participated in this study hold differing titles including Director of Special Services, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, and Director of Special Education. Each of the three directors is responsible for other programs besides special education. These may include gifted education, homebound instruction, home schooling coordination, lunch services, guidance services, psychological services, or health services. In regard to his role in supervision of special education services, one director shares the following:

My role is more of a coordinator. Coordinating services for students. Helping develop educational plans. Coordinating some staff development, although the most of that is done within the school. I meet with teachers Keeping abreast of the legislation and what's happening in special ed. and trying to keep the new initiatives going. Meeting with principals on special education issues. (T/1/01/3)

Another director echoes the role in providing information to principals who are the primary instructional supervisors. “We have monthly administrative meetings. Usually there is something that we talk about that is related to special ed.” (T/3/03/8).

Two of the directors in this study have been in their positions for an extended time. One sees a change in her role in instructional supervision over the years:

I think I was much more involved (with instructional supervision) at one time and that was because principals just really didn’t know what a special education teacher was supposed to be doing. You know, ‘I can’t evaluate this person.’ So, I think that our principals have really grown and they’re much more relaxed and comfortable with knowing that a good teacher is a good teacher and they can spot good instruction whether it comes from a special ed. teacher or a French teacher or a Physics teacher. (T/3/03/9)

Principals in all three districts are responsible for evaluation of special education teachers but will, on occasion, call the directors of special education for their input on teachers’ performance, especially with itinerants or with teachers who are having difficulties in meeting job expectations.

Another supportive role of the director is to provide or coordinate professional development opportunities for special education teachers. Director 3 makes sure that special education teachers are given the opportunity to attend special education conferences and workshops specifically related to teaching students with disabilities in addition to attending general education training in curriculum.

My role is to make sure that all special education teachers are fully involved in the curricular changes within the school and within the state; that they go to every SOL training opportunity that regular ed. teachers are given the opportunity to attend; that they receive copies of the SOLs; that they receive copies of the curriculum guides; that they are knowledgeable especially if they’re teaching third, fourth and fifth grade of every grade level they have and that they know that the SOL curriculum is the curriculum in the state of Virginia for all kids. (T/3/03/14)

Directors play a supportive role in allocating personnel to schools based on special education caseloads and individual needs. They provide extra funds for purchasing instructional materials when possible. They provide assistance with the “big things” such as securing an FM system for a child with a hearing impairment (T/2/11/3).

Communication, Collaboration, and Occasional Conflict

Teachers, principals and directors cite the need for communication regarding services for students with disabilities. This communication occurs through special education in-service meetings, administrative meetings between principals and central office staff, discussion at IEP, Eligibility and Triennial meetings, and through phone calls and emails. There is an underlying chain of command. In most cases, principals want questions and concerns brought to them by teachers first and if issues can't be resolved at the building level, then the principal will call or ask the teacher to call the director of special education. However, the role of special education coordinator at the building level adds another link to the chain of command. Sometimes the coordinator or lead teacher is in direct contact with the director and does not feel a need to discuss certain issues with principals. These issues are typically paperwork and process oriented and may circumvent some of the direct interaction of principals and teachers or of other teachers and directors.

Problems do occur sometimes as teachers feel they are working under two supervisors and are receiving different directions. As one special education teacher shares:

Supervision here . . . that I've experienced is confusing. I think that's a good term to use. I work in an elementary school and therefore I am supervised by the principal. But, I am also supervised by our director of special education depending upon what's going on and we have had instances where the supervisor has told me one thing and the principal has told me something else and we need; we get together. All of us have to get together and all of us decide what it is I am supposed to do And that has to do with there are times when legal issues come up that the principal may not be schooled in or as aware of what's going on in the state or what's legal and then we go to the central office supervisor and he helps to clarify and he helps us to come up with the answers that are appropriate and so it's; I have two bosses, which is very interesting. (T/1/4/2)

In most instances, principals and directors have fostered close working relationships that enhance the provision of special education instruction at the building level. Directors recognize the direct administrative and supervisory responsibility held by principals for what happens in their buildings and try to support that through consultation and collaboration. Principals recognize the directors are sources of expert advice in the area of special education programs and procedures and turn to directors with questions. Topics of collaborative discussion between

principals and directors that I observed or heard discussed during this study include regulations not used on a daily basis, hiring of special education personnel, eligibility process, teacher endorsement and professional development, supervising itinerant instructors, parental concerns or demands, behavior issues, alternate placements, alternate assessment, SOL testing, federal review, and forms and paperwork.

Infrequently, there are tensions between principals and directors that must be negotiated. The tensions may arise from differing points of view. As one special education teacher describes the advocacy nature of the director:

At times there have been conflicts because the principals get overwhelmed with behavioral issues at times. They also become overwhelmed with being accountable with test scores for special education children at their building level. But, I think that the special education director does the right thing by pushing for the best thing for each child and that each child is an individual and not only considering what's best for the school, what's best for the scores, or what's best for a teacher, but to say what's best for an individual child and that's what we need to do. (T/3/18/12)

One principal describes sources of tension as being differing points of view or scope:

No matter what system, you go at it from different points of view. As a building administrator, we have a lot of concerns that the director of special education may have had a concept of at one time. But we develop tunnel vision and that special ed. director's got his little scope but the principal is out here and he's got this scope. (T/1/C/8)

Some sources of conflict that required negotiation that I saw or heard discussed in this study include administration of testing accommodations, approaches to working with children with severe emotional disturbances, "married programs" with entanglement of special and general education funds, numbers of special education personnel needed, eligibility decisions and process, confidentiality of discussions, compliance versus meeting student needs, and differences in philosophy of special education service delivery.

Summary of Supervision from the Director of Special Education

As described above, the primary responsibilities of the directors of special education in the three rural districts are administrative in nature. Directors do play a role in instructional supervision through collaboration and communication with principals and teachers. They provide professional development opportunities for special education staff. They participate in meetings

focused on planning for the education of individual students with disabilities. They also provide instructional materials and personnel to support the delivery of instruction to students with disabilities.

In the same way in which responsibility for supervision is dispersed to a director who has expertise in special education administration, responsibility for supervision of special education instruction is dispersed to teachers. The next section describes the concept of trusting the teacher as the special education expert as it emerged through the data collection and analysis and discusses how this results in informal peer supervision and support.

Teachers as Supervisors: Trusting the Teacher as Special Education Expert

Principals in this study express the view that teachers are professionals and experts in their areas of teaching. Because of the assigned responsibility of evaluation of all teachers, principals monitor special education teachers' performance but they also trust these teachers to be experts in the area of disabilities and instruction for students with disabilities. Principal F shares:

I pretty much give them the freedom to do what they need to do. If it is something that is questionable or they need to know, they come and we sit and we chat about it and then go from there. But I am that way with special ed. and everything. The people in the classroom, in my mind, are the experts in what they are doing. (T/2/F/18)

This view leads to the delegation of some responsibility for supervision to lead teachers or to teachers themselves. The assignment of a special education coordinator or lead teacher is one means of dispersal of responsibility.

The use of teacher mentors for new special education teachers is a second means of dispersal of responsibility. Teachers in this study consistently express that they rely first on their teacher peers for information and discussion about instructional improvement. These aspects are discussed in the sections that follow.

Special Education Coordinator Roles

In each of the seven schools that have more than one special education teacher there is a lead special education teacher or coordinator who carries out responsibilities that are administrative and supervisory in nature in addition to their teaching responsibilities. In an attempt to gather data about this position and its role in supervision, I purposefully interviewed six special education teachers who also hold the position of special education coordinator or lead

teacher in their schools. In District 1, the director shares that this role has evolved based on need at the elementary level:

Well, we need somebody we can call in each school. The principals have so many responsibilities and we find it's easiest to have somebody in the school that we can call to coordinate the testing and the IEP meetings and whatever needs to be done with special ed. in that school. We can call that person and they can set it up. They can divvy up responsibilities for evaluation and all that. It just works really well and that's really just kind of evolved. (T/1/01/14)

In District 2, the special education coordinator at the building level is an assigned role and the coordinator receives a stipend for the extra duties he or she performs. In District 3, principals choose their special education coordinators, typically based on the teacher's level of experience. In this district, there is no compensation for the extra duties.

As with the principal and the director of special education, many of the responsibilities of the special education coordinator at the building level involve management and administrative aspects. Special education coordinators often chair child study committees, handle referrals for evaluation, coordinate the gathering of eligibility components, help with assigning caseloads and scheduling, and complete required paperwork. The coordinators may serve as liaisons for sharing information between special education teachers and principals or between special education teachers and directors. The coordinators may serve as the principal's designee in IEP or eligibility meetings.

The aspect of the special education coordinator's role that is supervisory is seen in their talking with other special education teachers about students with disabilities and instructional techniques that may be useful. Some coordinators help to train new teachers on writing IEPs, conducting IEP meetings, and interpreting educational testing results (T/2/13/4). The coordinator is a source of information and instructional ideas for new teachers (T/2/14/6).

Mentoring New Teachers

Teachers, principals, and directors in each district mention mentoring of new teachers as a means to focus on continual improvement of instruction. The districts do not define this formally as supervision but it fits the goals of supervision in terms of focus on instructional improvement and professional development for teachers. The teachers frequently respond with

talk of mentoring when I ask to whom they would go to if they had a question about instructional techniques for students with particular disabilities.

Districts vary in their structure and implementation of mentoring. In an informal discussion with the coordinator of instruction, I learn that at the time of this study District 1 is organizing training for mentors in each school. The system works informally now, with principals asking certain teachers to mentor new teachers when they are hired. District 2 has no formal mentoring system in place. The special education coordinators at each building are encouraged by principals and directors to give guidance to new special education teachers. Although teachers and the special education director have discussed this as a need to the new superintendent, no plan for implementing a formal system is yet evident (T/2/14/5; T/2/02/5).

District 3 has the most formal mentoring structure of the three districts studied. The district has provided training in mentoring for teachers in each building over the past 10 years (T/3/03/24). When a new teacher is hired, a trained mentor is assigned to him or her. For a special education teacher, the mentor may or may not be another special education teacher. The mentor is responsible for orienting the new teacher to the building, the faculty, and procedures. They are also there to answer questions the new teacher may have about class management or instruction. One fourth grade teacher who is a mentor for a new special education teacher describes sharing of instructional materials and ideas:

Then as we got into instruction, you know, as we did things in the classroom that; a lot of times, she is doing the same things with those kids she has in resource as we are doing in here. You know, she may take longer to do that. She may have to do much more differentiation but we're all kind of on the same page sometimes with what we are doing and so, you know, as I had activities and worksheets and whatever I felt like she could take and differentiate for them, I tried to send it her way some. (T/3/22/5)

Teachers in District 3 who serve as mentors receive recertification points for doing so. Limits to mentoring systems, as expressed by teachers in this study, include: (1) a lack of release time to make observations of the new teacher providing instruction and to give feedback; (2) lack of joint planning time; and, (3) lack of opportunity to be mentored by someone with expertise in the area of emotional and behavioral disabilities and in the area of moderate and severe disabilities due to limited numbers of such teachers in rural districts.

Peer Support

Special education and general education teachers report going to one another for assistance with content area information and with instructional approaches for students with disabilities. Principals encourage these interactions. As one teacher of students with emotional and behavioral disorders shares:

In general, I think he (principal) sends people to me for that information because that is my area of expertise. One of the things I like about our principal is that he does delegate. He does allow me to work with the teachers. If they have a question about a particular disability, they can come and ask. They don't always do that but generally, if there is a question about what is Attention Deficit Disorder--that is a very often asked question--then he'll send the teachers to me. Then, I'll give them sources on the computer like the NICHY website or I will provide the information that they need. I have books here that I provide for them so that they can help to facilitate better learning for the students in the classroom. (T/1/9/6)

This peer support flows in both directions, from special education teacher to general education teachers and vice versa. The same teacher of students with emotional and behavioral disorders often goes to the general education teachers for help in understanding content areas and correlating her instruction to the SOLs (T/1/9/5). A fourth grade teacher who has 6 students with disabilities out of 18 students in his classroom shares, "the best resource that I have is working with the two LD teachers because they know special ed." (T/2/11/6).

Eight of the special education teachers in this study provide at least some special education instructional services in the general education classrooms in conjunction with the classroom teachers. Although lack of joint planning time is often cited as a limiting condition, special education and general education teachers do appear to communicate about subject matter and instructional approaches more often with their peers than with their supervising principals.

Summary of Teachers as Supervisors

Special education directors and principals rely upon special education teachers to be experts in the instruction of students with disabilities. Principals fulfill their responsibility to monitor teachers' performance through the evaluation system, but tend to defer to the special educators as experts in their fields. Principals and directors encourage special education and general education teachers to use their collective knowledge of students with disabilities,

curriculum, and instruction to solve problems and to provide quality instruction to all students. Some responsibility for supervision of the professional growth of new teachers is dispersed to special education coordinators at the building level and to mentors. This occurs differently in each district and varies in the level of formality. Limits to the use of teachers as sources of instructional supervision or support include lack of time for planning and discussion, lack of opportunity to observe one another, and limited numbers of special education teacher with the same areas of expertise in rural districts.

Summary of Supervision of Special Education Instruction

The grounded theory emerged from analysis of interview, observation, and document data collected from nine elementary schools in three rural school districts. A central process that emerged from the data is a negotiation of competing priorities and contextual factors. Competing priorities include management and administrative duties versus supervisory duties, supervision for legal compliance in special education versus supervision for quality instruction, and evaluation versus supervision. Contextual factors include systemic and personal factors that may influence the supervision provided to special education teachers. Systemic factors include time, school enrollment size, central office administrative structures, and numbers of special education teachers and programs within a school. Personal factors include definitions of special education, the background experience and knowledge base of principals related to special education, and the perceived competence of special education teachers.

The outcome of this negotiation among competing priorities and contextual factors is a dispersal of responsibility for supervision of instruction to three groups of professionals. The principal is the designated supervisor and utilizes three main strategies to address supervision: (1) observation and evaluation of teachers; (2) supervision by wandering; and, (3) open communication. The director of special education plays a minimal role in supervision via communication and collaboration with principals and teachers regarding professional development, educational planning for individual students, and provision of personnel and materials. Responsibility is further dispersed to teachers themselves. Teachers in the roles of special education coordinators and mentors for new teachers provide their peers with assistance in focusing on improvement of instruction for students with disabilities and on-going professional learning.

Figure 4.4 depicts the grounded theory along with the processes used in supervision of special education instruction in a visual format. A discussion of the theory, conclusions, implications for practitioners, and implications for future research will be presented in Chapter 5.

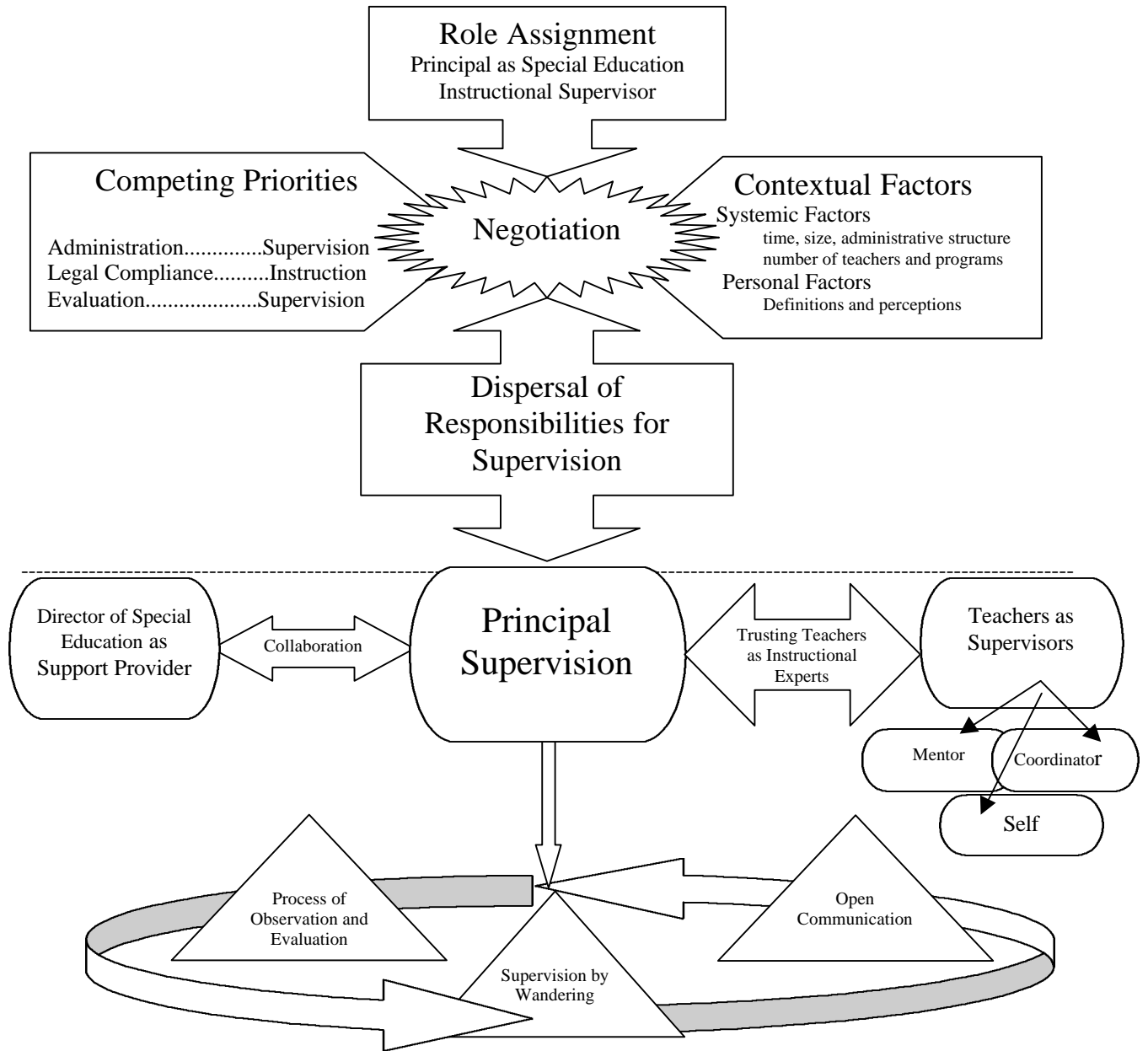


Figure 4.4. Supervision of Special Education Instruction: Negotiation and Dispersal of Responsibility.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to develop a grounded theory that describes and explains how the supervision of special education instruction occurs in public elementary schools in rural settings. The study involved collection of data through interviews of special education and general education teachers, principals, and directors of special education, and through observations and documents. Nine elementary schools within three rural districts participated in the study. Data analysis began with the collection of the first piece of data and continued throughout the study until the final report was completed. The research resulted in a grounded theory that identifies major categories and subcategories in the data, central processes, influencing conditions and barriers, as well as strategies and outcomes related to supervision of special education instruction. Relationships between categories, subcategories, processes, and conditions were explained.

In this Chapter, I summarize the findings in terms of the theory and discuss my interpretations of them. Then, I describe conclusions drawn from the study and implications of this study for practitioners and for researchers. Finally, I provide personal reflections on the research process.

Discussion and Conclusions

To reiterate briefly, the grounded theory that emerged from this study is as follows: the instructional supervisor's role is assigned by school board policy to the elementary principal; the principal must negotiate among competing priorities and contextual factors while attempting to fulfill this role; and the outcome of this negotiation is dispersal of responsibility for supervision of special education to the principal, to the director of special education, and to teachers themselves. Principals, as the primary supervisors, utilize three strategies to address supervision: (1) the observation/evaluation process; (2) supervision by wandering; and (3) open communication. Directors communicate and collaborate with teachers and principals as they provide supports for instruction and facilitate professional development. Teachers provide support and mentoring to their peers as they focus on instructional improvement and positive outcomes for students with disabilities.

Role Assignment

In rural districts, the role of supervisor is assigned to principals by means of school board policy and reflects a shared belief that the principal is the supervisor for all teachers and instructional programs within the elementary school. This finding is in line with the research studies reviewed in Chapter 2, which revealed that the school principal often has sole responsibility for supervision of special education instruction (Breton & Donaldson, 1991; Franks-Randall, 1998; Johnson, 1987). This finding also comports with the results of my survey project of directors of special education in Virginia, in which 49 of 94 responding directors reported that the principal is the supervisor. All but 5 of the remaining 94 directors reported that the principal shares the role of supervisor (Bays, 2000).

Is this role assignment a logical choice? When one considers the administrative structures of rural districts, it may appear to be. The rural districts in this study have very small numbers of central office personnel who are often responsible for administration of several programs within the district. It is not realistic to think that the special education director could have direct contact with all special education teachers in the district to the extent that would satisfy most conceptions of appropriate supervision. There were no mid-level special education supervisors as one might expect to find in larger size districts. The elementary building principal, among other administrators in the district, has the greater opportunity for day-to-day interaction with special education teachers.

However, when one considers the knowledge base of principals in regard to best practices for students with a range of disabilities, the role assignment does not appear to be so logical. Only one principal out of nine in this study had background experience and training in instructional practices for students with disabilities. Special education directors, who in two of three cases in this study are former special education teachers, would appear to have the greater amount of knowledge about how disabilities impact learning and about how specific instructional approaches are effective in mediating that impact.

If the role assignment were solely based on knowledge of instructional practices for students with disabilities, then the special education teacher would appear to be the most logical choice for providing supervision to other special education teachers. Teachers in this study certainly reflect this in their actions. Teachers indicated that they go to their teacher peers first when they need to discuss instructional techniques or concerns related to students with

disabilities. Districts appear to recognize this aspect through the use of informal and formal mentoring programs for new teachers.

Administrator training, in compliance with certification requirements in the state of Virginia, provides principals with knowledge of supervision theory, practice, and personnel management that should prepare them with general strategies for the supervision of all teachers. However, given the expressed desire by some special education teachers in this study to receive specific feedback and suggestions related to instructional strategies for students with disabilities, this generic knowledge of supervisory practices by the elementary principal may not suffice. This finding is in line with Clouse's (1993) study finding that most of the special education teachers interviewed preferred program or disability specific supervision over generic models of supervision.

Negotiation of Competing Priorities and Contextual Factors

As evidenced by the data collected in this study, there are three main areas of competing priorities that face principals in their role as supervisor of special education instruction: (1) management and administration versus supervision; (2) legal compliance versus instructional improvement in supervising special education; and (3) evaluating teachers while supervising instruction. The principal has a complex and demanding job. The elementary principals in the districts studied were the sole administrators at the building level. There were no assistant principals in the nine schools.

Management, administration, and supervision. In regard to the area of management, administration, and supervision, principals perform duties in these three areas daily. Separation of these functions is an artificial activity for these principals. They move from one type of duty to another constantly throughout their day. The areas become competing priorities, however, when management and administration duties snowball and appear as crises that need to be handled immediately. Many things vie for the attention of the principal. Despite the three strategies principals utilize as means to provide supervision, it appears in this study that supervision of special education in the form of direct interaction between principals and general and special education teachers about instructional improvement, positive learning outcomes for students with disabilities, and professional development for teachers happens at a minimal level. Administrative and management issues take more of the principals' time and energies and detract from the principals' ability to provide consistent direct supervision.

Legal compliance and instruction. Principals in this study must negotiate between the competing priorities of monitoring for legal compliance and supervising for instructional improvement in the area of special education. Local school districts must comply with state and federal regulations pertaining to the delivery of special education and related services. Legal compliance is a reality of modern day special education. As seen in this study, principal interactions with directors of special education and with special education teachers often revolve around the regulated processes and procedures related to identification, placement, and coordination of services to students with disabilities. Although the principals in this study were being provided professional development opportunities in the area of special education, the focus of the opportunities was compliance. Six of the principals were observed attending state regulations training. Directors referred to providing training for principals during administrative meetings, but these interactions usually dealt with compliance issues as well. Principals in one district did discuss the opportunity to take a course with their teachers on differentiated instruction for all students and to participate in long range planning initiatives related to special education, but this type of focused activity was not the norm across the districts. It appears that legal compliance, like management and administrative issues, can absorb much more of the principals' energy and time than do interactions with teachers about instruction for students with disabilities.

Evaluation and supervision. The third area of competing priorities is the evaluation of teachers versus the supervision of instruction. The elementary school principals in this study both supervised instruction and evaluated teachers. Much debate about the compatibility of the nature of supervision and the nature of evaluation appears in professional literature (Anderson & Snyder, 1998; Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Tell, 2001). Some would argue that they are separate functions while others argue that evaluation is a component of supervision. In the elementary schools studied here, both teachers and principals frequently discussed evaluation of teachers through observation and conferences when I asked them to describe their experiences with supervision of special education instruction. In many cases, it appears that the evaluation of teachers equals supervision in the minds of principals and teachers. Evaluation, as a mandated policy and procedure, takes precedence.

Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) address the goals of supervision as being two-fold, including quality control and professional development. They describe the 80/20 Quality Rule:

“When more than 20 percent of supervisory time and money is expended in evaluation for quality control or less than 80 percent of supervisory time and money is expended in professional improvement, quality schooling suffers” (pp. 221-222). Although this study did not investigate the percent of money allocated to evaluation or to professional development in the districts, a review of observation and interview data indicates that much of the principals’ supervisory energies and time are spent in evaluation for quality control. The supervision of special education instruction provided by principals in this study was characterized more by the evaluation process and procedures than by focused effort and attention on development of the instructional skills needed by special education teachers instructing students with disabilities.

The criteria used in evaluation of special education teachers were the same as the criteria used in evaluation of all teachers. Certainly, there are competencies that all teachers should exhibit. However, the generic evaluation criteria used for observing instruction ignore the technical aspects of special education instruction. Generic criteria do not help principals evaluate the teachers’ use of research-based strategies and techniques that are effective with students with particular disabilities.

Systemic contextual factors. The systemic contextual factors represent some of the conditions that cause supervision of special education in rural schools to be conducted as it is and may serve as barriers to creating changes in the current supervisory practices. The reality is that there is one director of special education in the district and one principal in each of the elementary schools. There are no other central office supervisors of special education who can offer their support and expertise as may be found in larger districts. All principals in this study cite time as an inhibiting factor in their ability to provide direct supervision. Principals can choose to focus their efforts on certain aspects and manage their time only to a degree due to the issues that often arise needing immediate attention.

In schools with the smallest enrollment sizes, teachers gave more specific examples of interactions with their principals about instruction for students with disabilities. However, drawing an explanatory conclusion about the relationship between the size of school and topics of supervisory interactions is limited in this study. The two principals of the smallest schools had special education and gifted education backgrounds. Many teachers express that the teaching background of the principal influences the types of issues they may discuss with the principal.

Personal contextual factors. Personal factors such as definitions of special education instruction, background knowledge related to special education, and the perceived competence of teachers may influence supervision practices. These factors are subject to change, as school personnel are involved in professional development opportunities and gain experience. Every participant in this study exhibited an openness to learning and growth, so these personal factors are not static. Also, as new special educators and general educators are hired in a school, the level of supervision provided may vary. Teacher participants in this study talked about their past experiences with supervision, and these experiences seem to vary slightly depending upon such personal factors in their principals.

Dispersal of Responsibility

A major process identified in the grounded theory was dispersal of responsibility for special education instruction. This is a rational outcome of the negotiation of competing priorities and contextual factors that exist for the principal, as well as for the rural school district as a whole. The dispersal occurs formally and informally and taps the knowledge and expertise of three groups of professionals: principals, directors, and teachers. The strategies utilized by the professionals in rural school districts provide some supervision for special education instruction, however, many participants in this study express that supervision is limited, generic in nature, and not necessarily valued.

Principal strategies. Principals in this study utilize three strategies to address supervision of special education instruction, including observation/evaluation of teachers, supervision by wandering, and open communication. The first strategy appears to serve more of a monitoring or quality assurance function. The observation and evaluation process is directed by local school board policy, which is guided by state policy. The same forms and procedures are used for all teachers. The criteria in the forms for observations and evaluations do not directly address instruction of students with disabilities. Principals and teachers varied when asked whether they found this process valuable and whether it impacted teachers' instruction. Teachers who did consider the process valuable found it more so for new teachers than for those with tenure.

Across the schools, the structure of the observation and evaluation process tended to be a truncated clinical supervision model, with an observation and post observation conference and occasionally a pre-observation conference. A few principals made reference to working more intensely with non-tenured teachers than tenured ones throughout the observation and evaluation

process, but it was not possible to pinpoint any other specific models or approaches to classroom supervision being consistently utilized by principals. Evaluation, as a component of supervision, is mandated in the three districts and principals must spend time engaged in this activity, but as currently formulated, its impact on instruction and positive outcomes for students with disabilities is questionable. In the districts studied, evaluation seems only weakly linked to professional development.

Supervision by wandering is a tool that principals use to address the competing priorities of management, administration, and supervision. Walking the halls, dropping in on classes, talking with teachers and with students allows them to monitor instruction on a surface level only and allows for brief interactions with teachers. Principals see this as an important part of their day and feel it contributes to their ability to provide leadership. I saw this strategy used by every principal and heard it discussed by many teachers and principals as a form of supervision. Two principals referred to this as management by walking around and management by wandering around. Peters and Waterman (1984) and Peters and Austin (1985) write about the use of this strategy in the business world. They call it MBWA, Management By Wandering Around, “the technology of the obvious”, and claim that it is what makes leadership effective in any well-run school or business (1985, p.10). The principals in this study would agree with this assertion. I suggest that it is the strategy that allows them to meet their many responsibilities as adequately as possible given competing priorities and limiting contextual factors.

The third supervisory strategy used by principals is open communication. This involves communication with teachers through the observation and evaluation process and communication while supervising by wandering around, but it also involves communication in special education specific functions. Principals have opportunities to communicate with teachers, directors, and parents about student’s disabilities and their impact on learning and instruction during child study meetings, IEP meetings, and Eligibility meetings and whenever teachers bring concerns up. Attendance at meetings is not consistent across the principals in this study, however. Some only attend when there are contentious issues that need to be addressed or when teachers request them to be in attendance. Communication, of course, also occurs regarding the more management and administrative aspects of special education, too. Principal experience and training impact communication in regard to special education issues. Eight of the principals in this study made it clear that they were not experts in the area of special education and rely upon

the special education teachers to be knowledgeable of disabilities and instructional strategies to use with children with disabilities. Having an open door policy and being receptive to communication are helpful strategies, but alone they are not sufficient for effective supervision.

As explained in Chapter 2, Farley (1991) identified 30 competencies in five areas that are important for effective principal instructional supervision related to special education. These areas included communication, staff development, systematic evaluation of teachers, collaboration, and instructional programming. By comparing the findings of my study with the competencies identified by Farley, it is evident that the rural elementary principals are attempting to communicate with teachers through the three strategies of observation/evaluation, supervision by wandering, and open communication. Principals did communicate their beliefs and goals for special education programs within their schools. The area of staff development does not seem to be consistently addressed in the rural district's studied or through the three key strategies principals utilized. There were few instances of systematic staff development for teachers related to instructional strategies for students with disabilities. Teachers mentioned going to workshops or conferences and principals and directors supported this, but there did not seem to be a coordinated or comprehensive approach to staff development related to special education. Principals are engaged in evaluation of teachers, however, as stated earlier, this evaluation process has limitations and does not specifically address special education instructional techniques. Principals in this study do encourage collaborative teaching by special education and general education teachers. Principals promote collaboration by arranging for general educators to be involved in IEP meetings as well. The competencies in the area of instructional programming seemed to be the least attended to by principals in the districts studied. There were few examples of principals helping teachers to modify instruction to meet individual needs or to use various research-based strategies to improve special education instruction or to plan appropriate learning objectives for students with disabilities. It appears that only a portion of the competencies that have been identified by the literature as important in principal supervision of special education are currently being fulfilled.

Directors as supervisors. Directors of special education play a minor role in instructional supervision. Most of their efforts are focused on program administration and on implementation and compliance with regulations governing special education. They contribute to supervision of instruction mainly through providing professional development opportunities, participating in

planning programs and services for students, and allocating personnel and materials that support instruction.

This finding supports Swan's (1998) assertions that collaboration between building level leaders and special education leaders is essential in the provision of special education to students with disabilities. Principals and directors in the districts studied do collaborate and communicate in supervising special education programs. Some tensions and sources of conflict were seen and discussed, however. Differing points of view and not following the chain of command impacted the communication at times. Some teachers felt as if they had two bosses and were uncomfortable when directions differed. It would appear that principals and directors need to have frequent discussions regarding special education programs, procedures, and individual students in order to avoid such tensions. This finding lends support to Frohoff and Lindle's (1998) findings of role ambiguity for principals and directors.

Teachers as supervisors. As stated before, principals and directors rely upon special education teachers to be experts in their fields. This is admirable and desirable. Teachers want to be treated as professionals and as experts. However, the concerns of the new teachers interviewed here warrant attention. Especially for new teachers who are working toward state endorsements, they have much to learn and need supervision and feedback related to instructing students with disabilities. Principals especially deferred to the teachers' expertise when working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders and students with moderate and severe disabilities. Supports and specific feedback for teachers in these areas appeared to be limited.

Special and general education teachers relate that they go to their building level special education coordinator or lead teacher with questions that are of a procedural and compliance nature as well as for instructional ideas to use with particular students. The coordinator role seems to add an additional layer of leadership for special education instruction. The potential for the coordinator to provide consistent instructional supervision has definite limits, however. The coordinators typically have a full caseload of students and their responsibilities involve a significant amount of paperwork. This may limit their time for consulting with other teachers about instructional issues.

Mentoring is used in these rural districts as a means to orient new teachers and to provide support and professional development. One district had an established program with mentor training. One district was developing a mentor system and the third district had no formal system

in place. The teachers interviewed in this study repeatedly mentioned interaction with teacher peers as helpful and desirable. There appears to be much potential for collegial supervision processes in the districts, at least in terms of teachers being receptive to the idea of learning from peers. This finding is supportive of the call for collegial supervision models espoused by Glatthorn (1990) and Sullivan and Glanz (2000). However, even in the system that had a formal mentoring program in place, teachers cited lack of time to observe one another and to discuss instructional issues. Rural districts would need to provide more structure and organizational supports in order for the mentoring that is occurring to meet more of the supervisory needs of special education teachers.

Implications for Practice

In this section, I provide recommendations for rural school districts based upon the grounded theory that was developed through this research. First, given that the principal is the primary supervisor of special education instruction in rural elementary schools, administrator preparation programs should broaden the opportunities for learning in the areas of disability characteristics, impacts of disability on learning, and instructional approaches that reflect research based best practices for students with particular disabilities. Education in the legal aspects of special education is important for administrators, but it is not sufficient to allow principals as supervisors to give consistent, helpful assistance to teachers regarding instruction for students with disabilities. Rural school districts should ascertain the level and types of training in special education that prospective administrators have. When gaps are noted, professional development opportunities in the area of special education instruction should be provided for principals.

Second, directors of special education and principals should broaden their collaborative efforts to provide on-going professional development opportunities for special education teachers. Principals and teachers could be engaged jointly in learning about research based instructional strategies to utilize with students with particular disabilities. The director of special education is in a position to be aware of instructional practices and of staff development needs throughout the district. Districts in this study exhibited varying levels of site-based management and some individual schools created their own staff development plans. In cases such as this, the director of special education needs to play an active role in identifying and promoting the staff development needs of special education teachers and administrators. District wide opportunities

as well as school-based opportunities should be planned that increase educators' use of best practices for students with disabilities.

Third, rural school districts need to clearly link their observation and evaluation tools and processes to the professional development of teachers and to the improvement of instruction in order to provide positive learning outcomes for students. Inclusion of specific criteria in evaluation tools that address providing instruction and accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities could promote more productive interactions among teachers and principals about special education instruction.

School districts that are engaging in a revision of their supervision and evaluation policies and procedures need to consider the conditions, barriers, and strategies that mold practices, as identified in this study. This may guide rural school districts in decision-making about who should be responsible for particular aspects of supervision and what organizational structures need to be considered or implemented to allow supervision to have a positive impact on the instruction of students with disabilities and on professional learning for educators.

Fourth, the supervision process should be differentiated to meet the needs of teachers at varying stages of their careers and varying degrees of professional competence as determined by evaluation. Tenured teachers in this study did not particularly value the observation and evaluation process. Other options such as involvement in action research, portfolio development, or coaching of peers would allow for a continuing focus on improvement of instruction and for on-going professional learning. Contextual factors such as time were identified as limiting conditions in the supervision and evaluation processes. Strategies to minimize the impact of these conditions should be utilized. For instance, classroom instruction could be videotaped and later reviewed and discussed jointly by principals and teachers. This could reduce the time needed for principals to make classroom visits and will provide a valuable tool that facilitates discussion and reflection on teaching practices.

Fifth, if collegial forms of supervision are to be utilized in rural elementary schools, organizational structures that support them need to be put into place. If teachers are to be mentors, training in supervisory processes will be helpful. Release time from teaching for both the mentor and the mentee will allow for observation of classroom instruction and modeling of strategies, and will promote focused discussion related to instruction for students with disabilities.

Supports for rural teachers and principals working with students who have significant disabilities are important. In the rural schools studied, these teachers often felt isolated. Supports can be enhanced through linkages to professional organizations, increased and joint participation in training, and use of electronic means to gather knowledge about instructional approaches and to communicate with peers teaching similar students in other schools.

Finally, the expressed view that the teachers are the experts in special education warrants consideration. This implies that teachers must be highly skilled and knowledgeable about disabilities, their impact on students, and instructional strategies. In most cases, teachers in this study were teaching students with a range of disabling conditions. Many of the teachers were certified in several areas of disability, while others were working toward additional endorsements. Teachers will need to be well trained in multiple categories of disability and will need to engage in continual professional development in order to stay abreast of current research and instructional approaches.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides a grounded theory that describes how the supervision of special education instruction occurs in rural elementary schools. Its key findings point to a necessary negotiation of competing priorities and contextual factors and a resulting dispersal of responsibilities across a range of educational professionals. Future researchers are encouraged to replicate this study in order to test the theory's applicability to other rural districts. Similar studies could be conducted with urban schools to identify the theory that explains supervision of special education instruction there and to compare and contrast its components to the theory that explains such supervision in rural districts. Thorough knowledge of differing practices and influencing factors identified through such research could contribute to effective planning and implementation of supervision in schools.

Future research is also needed to determine how supervision of special education instruction occurs at different levels of schools. This study addressed elementary schools only. Using the grounded theory methodology, future studies of middle schools and of high schools could produce detailed descriptions of how supervision of special education occurs at those levels.

Case studies of individual schools may be able to explain more specifically how principals negotiate the competing priorities and contextual factors. Such studies could explain

more thoroughly the variations seen in principals' practices. Future studies could investigate in more detail how principals manage their time in order to provide supervision while also managing their buildings and completing administrative tasks.

Future research may also need to investigate the roles and responsibilities of building level special education coordinators and mentors in order to more fully understand their contributions to supervision, beyond the information provided by this report. One district in this study had an established formal mentoring system. An investigation or evaluation of such a program could add insight into the impact of such a program on instruction, on student outcomes, and on professional development for new special education teachers.

Personal Reflections on the Research Process

Reflecting on the process involved in this study, I can identify some aspects that I would recommend for future researchers who might want to conduct a similar study. First, the method of gaining entry into the field is important. I had hoped that by sending letters to the directors of special education in the state that I would get volunteers who were interested in participating in the study. This was not a productive approach in this study. Second, I would adjust the pace with which I conducted interviews. Because I chose to complete the transcriptions myself, I found that there were times that I needed to slow down and reschedule interviews and observations so that I would have time to complete open coding of the transcripts, identify emerging categories, and allow those to direct further theoretical sampling. Third, I would spend more time in the initial few weeks of the data collection and coding engaged in memoing. Again, the pace and excitement of collecting data and transcribing could have easily taken over. I had to slow down the pace of data collection in order to spend more time on initial analysis and memoing. Memoing was an important process in analysis and in refinement of the theory. Fourth, if I were to conduct this study again, I probably would not ask participants to complete journals of supervisory interactions. I did not find that these contributed much additional data. They did reinforce concepts and categories that emerged through interview and observation data, but made minimal contributions to new categories and was a time consuming task for participants.

Concluding Statements

The grounded theory identified through this study shows that supervision of special education is currently the primary responsibility of the school principal. Despite principals' concern for effective instructional practices and positive learning outcomes for students, the

competing priorities and contextual factors often limit the amount and quality of instructional supervision that principals can provide. While acknowledging that principals have demanding and complex responsibilities, it is evident through this study that instructional supervision of special education is currently limited. Instructional supervision is provided in a generic fashion that does not fully address the delivery of specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. The negotiation of competing priorities and contextual factors results in a dispersal of responsibility to directors and to teachers who have knowledge of disabilities, their impact on learning, and effective instructional strategies. This results in supervision that is fragmented and inconsistent. In this era of accountability, it is imperative that supervision be provided to ensure quality special education instruction that leads to positive educational outcomes for students with disabilities and on-going professional development for educators.

EPILOGUE

Personal Reflections on the Study

As referred to in the opening chapter of this report, I have personally been in the position of being supervised and of supervising others who were delivering special education instruction to students with disabilities. The supervision that I received as a beginning teacher was intermittent and was not always specifically related to instruction for students with disabilities. During my third year as an educator I moved from an urban school system to a rural school system. I began teaching in a small school that had less than 150 students in kindergarten through sixth grades. I was the only special education teacher assigned to this school. A preschool special education teacher was assigned as my mentor. Because she traveled throughout the county to provide services to children in their homes, it was difficult to schedule times to meet and discuss concerns that I had. Although I found her suggestions helpful, I was frustrated by the lack of time for contact with her. The school principal was very interested in instruction and meeting the needs of students with disabilities and she was very supportive, but the supervision she provided was generic in nature.

Throughout this study, I heard experiences related by special education teachers that were quite similar to my own in terms of supervision. Investigating the perceptions and actions of those in supervisory positions provided me with a greater understanding of the supervisory process as it exists within the broader context of the entire school functioning. In this epilogue, I would like to reveal some of my concerns with current practices.

Principals' Knowledge of Special Education

The dispersal of responsibility for supervision of special education instruction seen in this study is at once a logical system and a concern to me. No one person can be expected to be expert in all areas. To expect principals, as the primary instructional supervisors, to be experts in special education instructional techniques is not realistic. However, I think that principals can become more knowledgeable about the impact of disabilities on student learning and about specific research-based instructional techniques through collaborative professional development with teachers. This professional development should come from state level entities such as training and technical assistance centers or through comprehensive personnel development systems under IDEA in addition to local school district opportunities. Universities should provide future administrators with coursework and field experiences, increasing their knowledge

of learners with exceptionalities and research-based instructional techniques in addition to increasing their knowledge of regulations and legal procedures.

Directors' Refocused on Instructional Improvement

The limited role of the director of special education in regard to the supervision of special education instruction was made clear in this study. Although I think that directors of special education should play a more active role in instructional supervision, the current organizational responsibilities placed upon rural directors do not allow adequate time for supervision. Directors typically have expertise in special education and are in the position to provide resources related to current and research-based instructional techniques for students with disabilities. I would hope that directors' responsibilities might be refocused, allowing them to play a more active role in providing and organizing professional development for teachers and principals related to supporting the academic learning and social growth of students with disabilities.

Teachers' Collegial Support

One of the implications for practice suggested in Chapter 5 was for organizational supports to be implemented for collegial forms of supervision. If supervisory responsibility is dispersed to teachers in the form of mentoring or peer review, adequate release time and opportunities for observing and talking to peers needs to be built into the workday. Training in supervisory or mentoring processes needs to be provided for mentors. Careful pairing of beginning special educators with experienced special educators needs to be done in order to maximize the benefits of peer support. Simply assigning a mentor to a new teacher and directing that person to be available for questions does not constitute collegial supervision. Without organizational supports, there is little chance that mentoring will be consistent or result in continual improvement of instruction.

Dispersal or Distribution of Responsibility

Dispersal is a term that I chose to describe how supervision of special education occurs after considering several other terms, including apportion, distribute, share, defer, and partition. I chose to use dispersal because it means to scatter or spread widely. That is what is happening to supervisory responsibility in the districts studied. It was only after the dissertation had been completed that the full import of this choice became clear to me. While reading a description of a longitudinal study of school leadership being conducted in elementary schools in Chicago by Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001), I began to reflect upon this choice of terms more

fully. Spillane and his colleagues use a distributed perspective in their study to investigate the practices of leading classroom instruction. They see instructional leadership as being stretched over schools' social and situational contexts and as being distributed among administrators, teachers, and others. When I read this article, it seemed to mesh well with the results of my study. Through further discussion with my dissertation committee, I came to the conclusion that choosing the term dispersal rather than distribution was appropriate in my case. The dispersal of supervisory responsibility by the principals in the present study is occurring in ways that are not fully planned out; this creates the possibility for supervision simply to be ignored. However, if supervisory responsibility were dispersed in a planned manner or distributed purposefully so that the collaborative expertise within the school system might be fully utilized, there would be great potential for supervision to have a stronger impact on instructional practices used with students with disabilities.

How Policies Shape Practice

In this study, it was evident that the state and local level policies related to the evaluation of teachers were defining the practice of supervision. Without inclusion of specific criteria in evaluation protocols related to instructional techniques, accommodations, and modifications for students with disabilities, principals who are conducting observations and evaluations run the risk of not providing the specific feedback that special education teachers desire. As currently implemented, the evaluation forms and criteria are generic and do not help teachers and administrators focus on the technical aspects of special education instruction.

The nine principals in this study typically had participated in few courses related to special education in their university coursework. Several had no such courses. State level leadership licensure policies have the potential to define leadership preparation programs. Consequently, there should be requirements for supervisors and administrators to participate in training related not only to the legal aspects of special education but also to its instructional mission. Throughout this study, I was concerned by the focus of principals and directors on special education's procedural and compliance issues as opposed to their focus on special education as an instructional event. We should consider carefully how our federal, state, and local policies and implementation tools shape supervisory practice.

In conclusion, I suggest that supervisory responsibility has been dispersed among groups of professionals. This study reveals that supervision of special education instruction in rural

elementary schools is occurring in a generic fashion that provides only limited focus on the improvement of instruction for students with disabilities. Supervisory responsibility is dispersed among groups of professionals. In an era that combines shortages of qualified special educators with accountability for positive results for all students, it is harder than ever to negotiate competing priorities and contextual factors. The challenge is great- -but the need to do so is greater.

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Appendix A

Appendix A

Supervision of Special Education Instruction Studies

Author/Year	Purpose	Definition of Supervision	Methodology/ Sample	Results
Breton, W. A. & Donaldson, G. A., Jr. (1991).	To investigate the perceptions of resource room teachers about the frequency, utility, and style of supervision they receive.	Supervision includes three domains: formal observation, consultation regarding classroom performance, and consultation regarding other professional nonteaching duties.	<p>Methodology: 73 item mail survey; Part I – teachers rated the frequency and utility for 3 domains of supervision for 5 possible primary supervisors; Part II – using modified Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire (Sistrunk, 1981) teachers identified supervisory style (directive, collaborative, nondirective) of primary supervisor related to 4 main activities (instruction, coordination- organizational processes, evaluation of students, professional development).</p> <p>Sample: 580 public school special education resource room teachers in Maine.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 57% of teachers report receiving supervision in any of domains studied. • Primary supervisors reported to be principal (39%) and special education director (53%). • 26% of teachers are never supervised related to their teaching performance. • 8% never formally observed by any supervisor; 45% never observed by principals. • Highest degree of contact among those receiving supervision was for consultation on nonteaching duties. • Despite low frequency of supervisory contacts, teachers perceive them to be useful. • Formal observation is the least frequent and least useful type of supervision. • Teachers do not find supervision by one type of administrator more useful than others. • Supervisory styles reported include 74% nondirective, 14% collegial, 6% directive, and 6% no dominant style.
Clouse, T. L. (1993).	To investigate special education teachers' and supervisors' perceptions about program and generic models of supervision.	<p>Program supervision requires supervisors to have expertise and state certification in program areas that they supervise. Generic supervision assigns a supervisor based on geography rather than experience or certification.</p> <p>Both refer to supervision in special education only.</p>	<p>Methodology: In-depth interviews with qualitative content analysis and descriptive statistical analysis.</p> <p>Sample: 20 special education teachers and 6 special education supervisor/administrators in Pennsylvania.</p>	<p>From Teacher Interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program supervision is more effective and beneficial to teachers than generic supervision. Only 3 teachers prefer generic. • Program supervision is especially advantageous for younger, less experienced special education teachers. • Teachers desire observations, feedback, and consultation from supervisors. • Teachers in both program and generic supervision models rate supervisors on average as somewhat helpful. • Specific program expertise allows for smoother communication between teachers and supervisors. • Though program supervision is more preferred, all teachers can identify potential benefits of generic model, including better knowledge of school and district wide issues and more inclusion in school wide activities. • In both models, lack of time and organizational skills on part of supervisors are perceived as weaknesses. • Younger and less experienced teachers need and have more contacts with supervisors in both models than did older/ more experienced teachers. <p>From Supervisor Interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 out of 6 prefer program supervision model. • Program supervision is perceived as particularly important for speech, vision, and hearing teachers. • Program models are perceived as important for lessening teacher isolation, easing communication, and providing program continuity across sites. • Generic increases supervisor accessibility, cross training, creates less travel and cost.

Author/Year	Purpose	Definition of Supervision	Methodology/ Sample	Results
Farley, M. M. (1991).	To validate a conceptual framework for effective supervision of special education programs by investigating perceptions of teachers and principals. To describe the extent, importance, and barriers of principal instructional supervision of special education programs.	Supervision not explicitly defined, but explained through the conceptual framework. As conceived, supervision involves: communicating a shared vision for special education; supporting and involving teachers in decision-making; assuring appropriate staff development; assuring integration; encouraging collaboration and consultation; encouraging pre-referral and classroom interventions; assisting with curriculum and instructional programming; monitoring and evaluating student progress; and evaluating staff.	Methodology: Mail survey, analyzed with descriptive statistics and ANOVA A conceptual framework for principal instructional supervision for special education programs was developed through literature review. The survey asked participants to rate behaviors for "Importance" and "Current Practice" using a Likert-type scale. Behaviors were grouped in five areas: communication; staff development; systematic evaluation of teachers; collaboration; and instructional programming. Part II asked for frequency rates for constraints to supervision. Part III asked for demographics. Sample: Simple random sample of 617 principals, 763 special education teachers and 763 general education teachers from Virginia.	Major findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both special and general education teachers believe that principals are not demonstrating many of the behaviors that characterize effective instructional supervision. Principals and teachers felt that all behaviors on the framework were important for effective supervision. For most practices, principals perceive the use of supervisory practices to be higher than do teachers. More special education teachers than general education teachers felt they were not receiving effective instructional supervision from principals. Teachers perceive that principals provide little supervision in the area of instructional programming. Lack of time was the only barriers principals identified as preventing effective instructional supervision.
Fidler, D. A. (1986)	To identify and compare skills, knowledge, and values necessary for effective supervision as perceived by special education supervisors and teachers. To identify aspects of preservice training that supervisors perceive as beneficial.	Supervision is direct contact with teachers or other professional staff on a regular basis for the purpose of improving instructional programs. Supervisory performance includes knowledge, skills, and values that facilitate the coordinating of teacher or staff needs with the overall goals of the educational program. In this study, the focus was on the process, not technical or content knowledge of special education.	Methodology: Interviews and surveys. Sample: 12 supervisors of special education and 36 teachers whom they supervised in Illinois. The supervisor's spent a minimum of 50% of their time in direct contact with teachers and held a range of job titles including consultant to teachers, principal, supervisor of teacher consultants, and assistant superintendent. Surveys included demographics section and 14 items. Supervisors rated each item on their own level of effectiveness, the degree of importance of the skills for effective supervision, and the level of pre-service training they had received on the skill. Teachers rated each item on their supervisor's effectiveness and the importance of the skill. Teachers were also asked in an open-ended question to describe an ideal supervisor.	Major findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content analysis revealed five roles, fifteen skills, six knowledge areas, and five value areas. All were considered importance, but differed in intensity. The most important role perceived by supervisors and teachers was that of being supportive for both personal and professional growth. Skills receiving the highest ratings in importance were communication, style flexibility, conflict resolution, building rapport, and teaming. Areas of knowledge rated highest were personalities (by supervisors) and technical skills (by teachers). Honesty was the value rated most importantly. 11 of 12 supervisors felt their training had not been adequate in the knowledge, skills, and values they deemed important. Their most frequent recommendations for improvement in training included focus on interpersonal skills and having practicum experiences.

Author/ Year	Purpose	Definition of Supervision	Methodology/ Sample	Results
Franks-Randall, C. A. (1998).	To obtain perceptions of special and regular education teachers about what supervisory behaviors are employed with teachers in school districts practicing inclusion.	Supervision exists to provide for growth in the effectiveness of instruction, to improve the worth or experiences afforded to learners, and to contribute to increasing the quality of learner performance. By its very nature it should foster the development of teacher skills, abilities, and attitudes, which in turn directly influence student learning.	<p>Methodology: Mail survey, quantitative data analysis (descriptive and t-test)</p> <p>The survey included items that reflected best practices in supervision derived from a literature review. It included 16 forced choice items and 1 open ended item as well as a demographics section. The instrument was field tested at one school site and with an expert panel.</p> <p>Sample: The nationwide sample of school districts that use collaboration and inclusion which had been included in the National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCERI) 1995 study on inclusive education was used in this study. Names of school superintendents and contact information were taken from the NCERI sample. Each superintendent was sent a letter, a copy of the survey, and was called on the phone to determine interest in participation. 15 school districts participated and 481 of the 625 surveys mailed to special and general educators in these districts were returned.</p>	<p>Major Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the majority, principals or assistant principals were responsible for evaluation of these teachers. The majority is evaluated by the same person who provides classroom observations. Little differences were found in responses between groups (regular/special, elementary/secondary, duration of collaboration teams, or level of disabling condition) <p>3 Categories of questions were analyzed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervisory Practices – team building and fostering collaboration by supervisor does exist; little evidence of link between supervision and staff development and the impact of supervision of teaching strategies; use of peer supervision was infrequent. Supervisory Programs – aspects of four types of supervision models were evident, though none was completely implemented (summative evaluation, informal peer coaching, clinical supervision, cognitive coaching) School Culture – trust and collegiality are evident; special educators felt summative evaluation was used to control them; teams have little control over the supervisory process Most common weakness – lack of time, lack of reflection and modeling of practices
Frohoff, K. H. & Lindle, J. C. (1998, October).	To analyze the roles of special education directors and school principals in Kentucky and to determine potential areas for role conflict.	Supervision appeared to be a subcomponent of a broader term, special education administration. Though not directly defined as supervision, this study did assess areas such as personnel management, fostering collaboration, curriculum and instruction.	<p>Methodology: Mail survey and collection of job descriptions.</p> <p>The survey contained 74 items grouped in six sections of supervisory roles and responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative Functions, Outcomes, Competencies Kentucky Education Reform Act National Special Education Reform Issues Administrator Preparation in Special Education Sources Utilized for Gaining Information on Special Education Issues Role Definition and Role Conflict <p>Sample: random sample of 180 principals and 180 special education directors from Kentucky received the survey; random sample of 20 school divisions provided the job descriptions for principals and special education directors.</p>	<p>Areas of role conflict:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personnel management (hiring, assigning, evaluation, coordinating consultation between general and special education) – special ed. directors felt this to be a shared responsibility; majority of principals felt it was theirs alone Professional development – 77% of directors and 58% of principals think this is the special education directors responsibility Curriculum & instruction – 48% of directors said shared role, 33% of directors said principals role; 57% of principals feel this is their role alone Developing relationships with general educ. – 58% of directors see this as shared role; 63% of principals see this as sole role. Student assessment – 81% of spec. directors see this as their sole responsibility; 50% of principals see it as shared <p>Other findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% of principals feel unprepared to work with special education teachers Majority of principals felt unprepared to work with special education students Majority of principals and directors felt unprepared to deal with curriculum Significant ambiguity over roles and responsibilities <p>Findings from job description analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No consistency across the 20 districts in job titles, qualifications, job experience, and responsibilities for directors.

Author/Year	Purpose	Definition of Supervision	Methodology/Sample	Results
Johnson, E. L. (1987).	<p>To examine the perceptions of secondary school principals of their roles as evaluators and supervisors of special education staff.</p> <p>To examine what extent the perceptions related to a range of demographic variables.</p>	<p>Supervision is defined as instructional supervision including: 1) a planned program for the improvement of instruction 2) all efforts of a school official toward providing leadership to teachers in the improvement of instruction 3) a program of in-service education and cooperative group development 4) the efforts to stimulate, coordinate, and guide the continued growth of teachers, individually and collectively 5) assistance in the development of a better teaching-learning situation and 6) a means of maintaining existing programs of instruction as well as improving them. Supervisors are seen as change agents as well as educational auditors.</p>	<p>Methodology: Elite interviews used to gather information to develop a questionnaire. Mail survey. Analysis with descriptive statistics.</p> <p>The survey had 5 parts: demographics, evaluation, supervision, general perceptions, and training.</p> <p>Sample: For elite interviews, 18 experts/ key informants with a national and state perspective were interviewed. For the survey the total population of Maine secondary public school principals (97) was mailed a survey. 55 principals returned the survey.</p>	<p>Findings for supervision components of study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 92.7% of principals perceived themselves to have the sole or shared responsibility for instructional supervision of special education • Of 6 supervisory functions, 45.1% felt staffing for instruction was most important, 39.3% felt developing curriculum was most important, 33.3 % felt both relating to the public and organizing for instruction was most important • Knowledge and skill in generic supervisory areas was more helpful than special education specific knowledge. • 75% felt it would be useful to have further training in special education, specifically in handicapping conditions, methods and materials, discipline, and emotional disturbance. • 53% felt training in supervisory skills would be helpful • 45% felt principals do not have the needed competencies to supervise special education staff • Over half the principals indicated using the special education director or other special education teachers as resources to improve the performance of their special education staff. • 76.5% felt supervising special education staff was different in aspects from supervising general staff • Only 21% used clinical supervision process • Supervision was subsumed into the evaluation process

Author/Year	Purpose	Definition of Supervision	Methodology/Sample	Results
Johnson, V. L. & Burrello, L. C. (1988).	To assess what special education administrators consider the most important factors to attend to in ensuring a successful and quality programs. To assess differences in critical success factors identified by single or multiple district administrators, and by setting (urban or rural).	Supervision not discreetly defined. Success factors included pertain to personal and organizational achievements in the areas of consultative/ support, program effectiveness, problem solving, community relations, personnel, planning/ decision-making, and leadership.	Methodology: use of Rockart's (1979, 1982) process for identifying Critical Success Factors; Mail survey Sample: special education administrators in Indiana and in Massachusetts 15 administrators (of either single districts or intermediate units) in Indiana were interviewed to find factors most relevant to personal and organizational success and to define program effectiveness. Sorting of responses revealed 30 items, grouped by personal/organizational and 7 general themes, that were included in a survey. Interviewees then were asked to rank the importance of these factors. A pilot study of the survey was conducted with 20 directors and supervisors from Massachusetts. The revised survey was sent to 83 directors in the state of Indiana. Statistical analysis and ranking of CSFs were conducted.	The 5 most highly ranked CSFs by Indiana directors all dealt with program effectiveness as opposed to access or program quantity. These included instructional effectiveness and student growth; special education as part of regular education and total school; leadership skills and credibility of supervisors; reasonable and consistent procedures; problem-solving abilities of supervisors. Other factors with strong agreement included being supportive to teachers, community relations, and communications with principals. Both the Massachusetts and Indiana samples agree that outcomes for special education should be instructional effectiveness and integration with regular education. Community relations and parent involvement were stronger factors for urban districts than for rural districts.
Quigney, T. A. (1992).	To investigate differences in perception of the importance of specific competencies related to the supervision of special education among special education supervisors, special education teachers, and principals, as they relate to the role function of both the supervisor and the principal.	Supervision not explicitly defined. Study addressed supervisory and administrative duties in regard to special education.	Methodology: Mail Survey Sample: Survey sent to 200 special education supervisors, 200 principals, and 313 special education teachers in Ohio. Surveys were returned by 92 special education supervisors/administrators, 95 principals, and 116 special education teachers. Questionnaire included 78 competencies for supervision of special education, divided into six categories: laws/regulations, program operation, curriculum and instruction, personnel management, staff development, and family involvement/community relations. Each competency was to be rated for importance on two scales, one for principal and one for special education supervisor. A demographics section was included.	Major Findings: For the role of supervisor of special education - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All competencies received rating of at least "of some importance". Most received ratings of "considerable importance". For the role of principal - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The largest percentage of mean ratings fell between "of some importance" and "of considerable importance", but this showed less importance for some competencies than for the director. Subset rankings suggested how these shared roles could be effectively fulfilled. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the supervisor: 1) law/regulations 2) family/ community relations 3) staff development 4) program operations 5) curriculum and instruction 6) personnel management For the principal: 1) staff development 2) personnel management 3) law/regulations 4) family/ community relations 5) curriculum and instruction 6) program operations Some significant differences exist in perceptions by the 3 groups surveyed.

Author/Year	Purpose	Definition of Supervision	Methodology/Sample	Results
White, D. M. (1993).	<p>To investigate the involvement of selected elementary principals in the supervision of site special education programs by gathering perceptions of special and general education teachers and the principals.</p> <p>To investigate the principals' attitudes toward this role.</p>	<p>Supervision of special education was defined to include the following broad areas of responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Implementation of special education legislation *Interaction with parents, family, community agencies about special needs students *Integration of handicapped and nonhandicapped students *Providing general education strategies for accommodation of students with special needs *Supervision of all students *Management/supervision of special education programs *Facilitate collaboration between special and general education staff 	<p>Methodology: Survey and in-depth interviews</p> <p>Sample: 6 elementary schools in an urban district in Phoenix, Arizona; 6 principals and 104 general education teachers and 11 special education teachers completed questionnaires; in-depth interviews were made with the principals and special education teachers</p>	<p>Major Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All perceive principals to be involved in implementation of special education legislation. • More special education teachers (63.5%) than general education teachers (34.1%) report that principals provide training experiences on integration of special and general education. • 34.8% of general education teachers report that principals are involved in providing teachers with strategies to accommodate and individualize general education curriculum for students. • Teachers differ (72.7% of sped. / 30.2% of general) on whether the principal communicates high expectations for achievement of special education students. • Most special education teachers report minimal and inconsistent principal supervision and feel that their programs were not a priority for the principal. Principals report involvement in all supervisory aspects for special education and equal priority with other programs. • Principals are not involved in curriculum and instruction decisions, but provide collaborative planning time for teachers and feel that district staff is available for supervisory assistance to special education teachers.

Appendix B

Appendix B

Letter to Directors Soliciting Participants

September 14, 2000

Dear Director,

Thank you for your help last spring in completing the survey project, *Current Practices in the Supervision of Special Education Teachers and Individualized Instruction in Virginia Public School Districts*. Enclosed you will find a summary report of the survey which was completed by 94 of your colleagues across the state. I hope that you will find this information useful and relevant to your district's efforts at ensuring the provision of quality special education instruction to students with disabilities.

As part of my dissertation work at Virginia Tech this year, I will be studying the supervision of special education instruction in more detail and extending the work started through this survey project. I will be investigating the supervision provided in rural school districts and particularly within elementary schools. This will be done using interviews of directors, principals, and teachers, as well as through observations and analysis of documents. In the next few weeks, I will be calling directors of special education in rural districts across Virginia to explain the proposed research in more detail and to secure participants for the study.

I encourage you to contact me if you have questions about the summary report or would be interested in participating in my dissertation research.

Sincerely,

Debora Bays
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Blacksburg, VA 24061
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Appendix C

Appendix C

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent for Participants of Investigative Projects

Title of Project Supervision of Special Education Instruction in Rural Public School
Districts: A Grounded Theory Study

Investigator(s) Debora A. Bays, Jean B. Crockett (faculty advisor)

I. The Purpose of this Research/Project

The purpose of this research is to develop a grounded theory about the supervision of special education instruction in rural public elementary schools. The theory will describe and explain the process of supervision of special education instruction including the factors and conditions that influence the process. At a minimum, three school districts will be involved, resulting in at least 30 interviews.

II. Procedures

The procedures for this study include interviews, observations, and collection of school documents. Interviews will be made with directors of special education, instructional supervisors, principals, special education teachers, and general education teachers at three elementary schools within your district. Your interview will take place at the school site during school hours or at a time and place that is more convenient for you. Interviews will last between 30 and 60 minutes and will be tape-recorded, then transcribed at a later point in time.

Observations will be made within the school district at three elementary schools. Formal observations (shadowing) will be made with the school principal or the instructional supervisor. Observations may be made of conferences between supervisors and teachers, classroom teaching, staff development sessions, etc. Choices for observations that are relevant to supervision of special education instruction will be made at each school site and will only be conducted with the permission of subjects.

The principal (or other instructional supervisor) and two teachers within each school district will be asked to keep a journal that records any supervisory interactions related to special education for 10 school days. Following the 10 days, the researcher will pick up the journal and talk briefly with subjects about this process.

You may be requested to provide other documents, such as policies, memos, records of supervisory conferences, etc. related to the supervision of special education instruction. If the document has personal relevance to you, your permission for use will be requested.

III. Risks

There are no risks to you as a subject in this study. One potential discomfort to subjects in this study is discussing their personal experiences related to supervision while still working in settings in which they are interacting with teachers/supervisors. This discomfort should be relieved by the assurances of confidentiality.

IV. Benefits of this Project

The benefits of this study include an improved understanding of the process of supervision of special education instruction on the part of participants, other school supervisors and teachers, and researchers. The study will potentially lead to further discussion among school personnel about current practices and methods to improve supervision. At the conclusion of the research project, you may contact the investigator for a summary of the research results.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

Your identity as a subject in this study will be held confidential. A made-up name will replace your name, the name of your school, and the name of your school district in any reports of the information collected through interviews, observations, and documents. Fictional names will be given to all participants. Only the investigators will be able to identify you individually with data collected.

Audiotapes of interviews will be made. The tapes will remain in the primary investigator's possession except when being transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. At all other times the audiotapes will be stored in the investigators home or office. Tapes will be destroyed one year following the completion of the study.

VI. Compensation

No monetary compensation is connected to participation in this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer any questions during interviews, not to participate in observations, or not to provide personally relevant school documents at any time you choose without penalty.

VIII. Approval of Research

This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, by the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, and by the school district.

IX. Subject’s Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:

- ◆ to participate in a tape-recorded interview lasting between 30 and 60 minutes
- ◆ to be observed by the investigator during situations related to the supervision of special education instruction
- ◆ to provide general school documents identified as pertaining to the supervision of special education instruction

X. Subject’s Permission

I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this project.

If I participate, I may withdraw at any time without penalty. I agree to abide by the rules of this project.

Signature Date

Should I have any questions about this research or its conduct, I may contact:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| Debora A. Bays, Investigator | (540) 231-9717 |
| Jean B. Crockett, Faculty Advisor | (540) 231-4546 |
| David B. Moore, IRB Research Division | (540) 231-5281 |

Subjects must be given a complete copy (or duplicate original) of the signed Informed Consent.

Appendix D

Appendix D

Participating District and School Characteristics

District/ School	Configuration	Enrollment	# Students with Disabilities	# Special Education Teachers
District 1		1958	364	23
School 1	k-7	157	18	1
School 2	Pk-7	560	103	7
School 3	k-7	310	40	2
District 2		3300	550	44 1/2
School 4	k-5	123	15	1
School 5	Pk-5	314	64	5
School 6	k-5	340	50	3
District 3		2522	360	27
School 7	k-7	510	60	3 1/2
School 8	Pk-7	540	85	5
School 9	k-7	540	59	5

Appendix E

Appendix E

Participating Teacher Characteristics

School Teacher	Position (grades/subjects/number of students)	Certification	Years teaching	Years at current school
District 1				
School 1 – Teacher 1	Special Education, k-7, LD, OHI, ED, DD; resource and inclusion	K-5, LD	4	4
School 1 – Teacher 2	Kindergarten, 22 students – 1 OHI, 2DD	NK-4, ED	15	15
School 2 – Teacher 3	Special Education, k-7, ED, MR, OHI, 10 students; resource and inclusion	ED, MR	6	6
School 2 – Teacher 4	Special Education, k-4, MR, MD, Autism, DD, 5 students; resource and inclusion	MR	3	3
School 2 – Teacher 5	Special Education, 6 th & 7 th , LD, OHI, ED, 17 students; inclusion and resource	PE, NK-4, LD	23	6
School 2 – Teacher 6	2 nd 22 students – 3 MR, 2 DD	NK-8	16	8
School 3 – Teacher 7	Special Education, k-7, LD, OHI, MR, DD, 17 students; inclusion and resource	HI, LD, sign language interpreter	14	11
School 3 – Teacher 8	1 st , 19 students – 1 DD	NK-4	10	10
School 3 – Teacher 9	5 th , 23 students – 3 LD	K-5	4	4
District 2:				
School 4 – Teacher 10	4 th , 18 students – 6 LD, 1 EMD	K-8	10	3
School 4 – Teacher 11	Special Education, k-5, LD, DD, Autism, HI, VI, OHI, ED, 17 students; resource and inclusion	Library Science, K-4, LD	15	3
School 5 – Teacher 12	Special Education, K-5, ED, DD, OHI, 4 students; self-contained	Provisional (in master's program for ED)	1	1
School 5 – Teacher 13	Special Education, 4-5, LD, MR, 16 students; resource	K-12, math, reading (in master's for LD/MR)	16	3
School 5 – Teacher 14	Special Education, k-3, LD, DD, 12 students; resource	K-4, MR, LD, preschool	14	4
School 6 – Teacher 15	3 rd , 24 students – 1MR, 2 LD, 1OHI	K-8	25	19
School 6 – Teacher 16	Special Education, K-5, HI, ED, OHI, MR, DD, LD, 14 students; resource	LD, MR	18	11
District 3:				
School 7 – Teacher 17	4 th /5 th , math & science: 4th – 21 students – 1LD, 2OHI; 5th – 26 students – 2LD	K-7	30	18
School 7 – Teacher 18	Special Education, 5 th , LD, ED, OHI, 9 students; resource	NK-7, ED, LD, MR	16	10
School 8 – Teacher 19	4th, 25 students – 2 MR, 3 LD, 2 OHI	1-8, gifted, science	33	30
School 8 – Teacher 20	Special Education, 3 rd / 4 th , MR, OHI, LD, SLI, 13 students; resource and inclusion	EMH, LD, MR	23	8
School 9 – Teacher 21	Special Education, 4 th / 5 th , MR, MD, ED, LD, SLI, 16 students; resource and inclusion	K-5, LD, ED, (in master's program for MR)	20	8
School 9 – Teacher 22	4 th /5 th , language arts and social studies; Fourth – 25 students – 1MD; Fifth – 15 students – none with disabilities	K-5, gifted	31	24

Appendix F

Appendix F

Participating Principal Characteristics

School Principal	Certification	Previous experience	Years as administrator	Years in current position
Principal A	k-7, Gifted Education, Administration	Elementary teacher; Gifted education coordinator	20	3
Principal B	English, Reading, Administration – elem., high	14 yrs teaching – Title 1 Reading, English, remedial reading; grades 4 – 8; 2 yrs Assistant Principal – high school	7	5
Principal C	Social Studies, 6-12; Administration- all levels	22 yrs teaching – social studies, economics, sociology; grades 6-12	7	5
Principal D	Psychology, sociology, MR, early childhood special ed., Supervision, Administration	9 yrs teaching in special ed.; preschool special ed. coordinator; 17 yrs nurse	1	1
Principal E	Mathematics, Administration- all levels	10 yrs teaching – high school math; 4 yrs high school assistant principal & athletic director	11	7
Principal F	Basic Business, Language Arts, Administration – elem., high	2 yrs assistant principal – high school; 9 yrs teaching marketing and distribution; coaching	18	7
Principal G	K-8, Reading Specialist, Administration	1 yr teaching – 3 rd ; 3 yrs teaching Title 1 reading, 24 yrs teaching 6 th /7 th language arts and civics	2	2
Principal H	History, Administration and Supervision – elem., middle, high	14 yrs teaching and coaching; 8 yrs Assistant Principal	16	8
Principal I	Music k-12; Administration – elem., secondary; Supervision- k-8	17 yrs teaching Music and Band Director	20	14

Appendix G

Appendix G

Participating Special Education Director Characteristics

Director/ District	Certification	Previous Experience	Years Experience in Education	Years in Current Position
Director 01	History & Social Studies; Visiting Teacher; General Supervisor; Special Education Supervisor; Gifted Education	Teacher- high school history & social studies; Supervises various programs	36	28
Director 02	Learning Disabilities; Mental Retardation; Special Education Supervisor	Teacher k-12, LD, MR, ED; Teacher preschool handicapped	21	4
Director 03	Learning Disabilities; Mental Retardation; Emotional Disturbance; Gifted Education; Supervision	Teacher- MR, LD, ED	30	20

Appendix H

Appendix H

Documents Collected

District 1

D/F/1	List of special education staff in the division
D/F/2	Division membership report and Dec. 1 child count
D/F/3	Organizational Chart
D/F/4	Evaluation of Instructional Programs – policy
D/F/5	Supervision of the Evaluation Process – policy
D/F/6	Evaluation of Professional Staff – policy
D/F/7	Evaluation of Professional Staff – policy
D/F/8	Professional Employee Evaluation form and Effective Teaching Performance criteria and indicators
D/F/9	Administrative Employee Evaluation and performance indicators
D/F/10	Basic Instructional Program – policy
D/F/11	Instructional Goals and Objectives – policy
D/F/12	Professional Staff Development – policy
D/F/13	Programs for Students with Disabilities – policy
D/F/14	2000-2001 Calendar and Student-Parent Handbook for division
D/F/15	copy of website pages for the division
D/F/16	School 1 – copy of website pages
D/F/17	School 2 – copy of website pages
D/F/18	School 3 – copy of website pages
D/F/19	Web page – “School System Provides Services for Children with Disabling Conditions”
D/F/20	Copy of lesson plans and modifications that kindergarten teacher provides for one student
D/F/21	Student Handbook – School 3
D/F/22	Supervision Journal – regular teacher, school 2
D/F/23	Supervision Journal – special education teacher, school 2

District 2

D/R/1	Copy of DOE web page for school demographics
D/R/2	Teacher Observation and Evaluation Handbook – policy
D/R/3	Informal Teacher Observation Form
D/R/4	Formal Teacher Observation Form
D/R/5	Year-End Teacher Evaluation Form
D/R/6	2000-2001 Student/Parent Elementary Handbook
D/R/7	Supervision of the Evaluation Process – policy
D/R/8	Evaluation of Professional Staff – policy
D/R/9	Professional Staff Development – policy
D/R/10	Professional Staff Development Opportunities – policy
D/R/11	School Building Administration – policy

D/R/12 Instructional Goals And Objectives – policy
D/R/13 Programs for Students with Disabilities – policy
D/R/14 School 1 copy of website
D/R/15 School 1 School Performance Report Card
D/R/16 Parent Questionnaire for federal review process
D/R/17 School 2 Student Handbook
D/R/18 Copy of letter from principal to Central Office regarding preschool program
D/R/19 School 2 Faculty Meeting Agenda
D/R/20 School 3 Student Academic Referral form
D/R/21 School 3 Student Behavior Referral form
D/R/22 School 3 2001-2002 Budget
D/R/23 Supervision journal – special education teacher, School 2
D/R/24 Supervision journal – regular teacher, School 2
D/R/25 Supervision journal – principal, School 2

District 3

D/G/1 Informational Brochure about the division
D/G/2 Informational Brochure about special education in the division
D/G/3 Informational Brochure about early childhood special education in the division
D/G/4 Evaluation Schedule and Procedures – draft of policy
D/G/5 Summative Evaluation form
D/G/6 Professional Employee Checklist (evaluation form)
D/G/7 Annual Involvement Report form
D/G/8 Teacher Observation Report form
D/G/9 Individual Improvement Plan form
D/G/10 Performance Evaluation – Teacher Assistant form
D/G/11 School 1 2000-2001 Parent-Student Handbook
D/G/12 School 1, Agenda for Lead Teachers meeting with Principal
D/G/13 School 2 2000-2001 Parent-Student Handbook
D/G/14 School 2 school personnel list

Appendix I

Appendix I1

Interview Protocol – Principals/Directors

Interviewee _____

Date _____

Location _____

Demographics:

Years in education _____ Years of experience in current school/district _____

Certification areas _____

Current position/setting _____

Number of children with disabilities served in school _____

Types of disabilities in school _____

Types of instructional settings for children with disabilities in school _____

Suggested initial question guide.

How would you define special education instruction?

Describe your experiences related to the supervision of special education instruction for students with disabilities.

Who supervises special education instruction?

How do you supervise special education instruction? What do you do?

Appendix I2

Interview Protocol - Teachers

Interviewee _____

Date _____

Location _____

Demographics:

Years of experience in education _____ Years of experience in current school _____

Certification areas _____

Current position/setting _____

Number of children with disabilities served _____

Suggested initial question guide.

How would you define special education instruction?

Describe your experiences related to the supervision of special education instruction for students with disabilities.

Who supervises special education instruction?

How is the supervision of special education instruction conducted?

Appendix J

Appendix J

Supervision Journal Directions

Teacher,

Please keep a log of each interaction you have with your supervisor(s) on issues related to special education instruction for 10 school days. Please record the date, who was involved in the interaction (principal, director, coordinator . . .), what topics were discussed, and actions planned or taken. You do not need to identify colleagues by name in order that confidentiality may be maintained.

I will pick up the journal from you once completed. Thank you for taking the time to do this as part of the study.

Principal,

Please keep a log of each interaction you have on issues related to special education for 10 school days. Please record the date, who was involved in the interaction (such as 1st grade teacher, LD teacher, parent, student . . .), what topics were discussed, and actions planned or taken. You do not need to identify students or teachers by name in order that confidentiality may be maintained.

I will pick up the journal from you once completed. Thank you for taking the time to do this as part of the study.

Appendix K

Appendix K

Contact Summary Form
(Interviews & Observations)

Contact type:
Interview
Observation

Site: _____
With whom?: _____
Contact Date: _____
Today's Date: _____

1. What were the main issues or themes that struck me in this contact?
2. Summarize the information I got (or failed to get) on each of the target questions for this contact.
3. Anything else that struck me as salient, interesting, illuminating, or important in this contact?
4. What new or remaining target questions do I have in considering the next contacts to be made?

FILE WITH TRANSCRIPT AND/OR IN MEMO BINDER

Appendix L

Appendix L1

Data Source Matrix for Major Categories

Data Source	Major Categories – frequency of occurrence											
	Competing Priorities	Dispersal of Responsibility	Principal Supervision	Observation and Evaluation	Supervision by Wandering	Open Communication	Director as Collaborator	Compliance vs. Instructional Focus	Teacher as Instructional Expert	Mentoring for New Teachers	Special Education Coordinators	Defining Special Educ. Instruction
Interviews: *												
Gen. Teachers	1	2	8	8	5	7	1	3	7	2	2	9
Sp. Ed. Teachers	4	10	11	7	6	11	12	9	6	5	6	13
Principals	4	3	9	8	6	9	1	1	6	2	6	9
Directors	1	2	3	2	0	3	3	3	2	1	1	3
Observations	9	4	9	1	9	9	6	9			5	
Documents			3	19							1	

*For interview data, frequency of response in major categories represents the responses to the questions on the initial interview protocol only. As the study progressed, I asked more specific questions related to the emerging categories, but did not include those responses here in an effort to display the information that interviewees shared in response to the general open-ended questions.

Appendix L2

Data Source Matrix for Major Categories in Principal and Director Interviews

<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Major Categories</u>											
	Competing Priorities	Dispersal of Responsibility	Principal Supervision	Observation and Evaluation	Supervision by Wandering	Open Communication	Director as Collaborator	Compliance vs. Instructional Focus	Teacher as Instructional Expert	Mentoring for New Teachers	Special Education Coordinators	Defining Special Educ. Instruction
Interviews:												
Director A	X	X	X				X	X	X			X
Director B		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X
Director C			X	X			X	X				X
Principal A			X	X	X	X				X		X
Principal B			X			X				X		X
Principal C	X		X	X	X	X			X		X	X
Principal D			X	X	X	X						X
Principal E	X		X	X	X	X			X		X	X
Principal F	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Principal G		X	X	X		X			X		X	X
Principal H	X	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X
Principal I			X	X		X		X				X

*For interview data, frequency of response in major categories represents the responses to the questions on the initial interview protocol only. As the study progressed, I asked more specific questions related to the emerging categories, but did not include those responses here in an effort to display the information that interviewees shared in response to the general open-ended questions.

Appendix L3

Data Source Matrix for Major Categories in Teacher Interviews

<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Major Categories</u>											
	Competing Priorities	Dispersal of Responsibility	Principal Supervision	Observation and Evaluation	Supervision by Wandering	Open Communication	Director as Collaborator	Compliance vs. Instructional Focus	Teacher as Instructional Expert	Mentoring for New Teachers	Special Education Coordinators	Defining Special Educ. Instruction
Interviews:												
Teacher 1		X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X
Teacher 2	X		X	X		X		X	X			X
Teacher 3		X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X
Teacher 4		X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X
Teacher 5		X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X
Teacher 6						X			X			X
Teacher 7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X
Teacher 8			X	X	X	X			X			X
Teacher 9		X	X	X	X	X			X			X
Teacher 10		X	X	X	X	X		X	X			X
Teacher 11			X		X	X	X					X
Teacher 12	X	X				X	X		X		X	X
Teacher 13	X					X	X		X	X	X	X

Data Source Matrix for Major Categories in Teacher Interviews (continued)

<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Major Categories</u>											
	Competing Priorities	Dispersal of Responsibility	Principal Supervision	Observation and Evaluation	Supervision by Wandering	Open Communication	Director as Collaborator	Compliance vs. Instructional Focus	Teacher as Instructional Expert	Mentoring for New Teachers	Special Education Coordinators	Defining Special Educ. Instruction
Interviews:												
Teacher 14		X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Teacher 15			X	X		X						X
Teacher 16			X	X	X		X	X				X
Teacher 17		X	X	X		X	X		X		X	X
Teacher 18		X	X	X		X	X			X	X	X
Teacher 19			X	X	X					X		X
Teacher 20	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X		X
Teacher 21		X	X			X	X	X	X			X
Teacher 22			X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X

*For interview data, frequency of response in major categories represents the responses to the questions on the initial interview protocol only. As the study progressed, I asked more specific questions related to the emerging categories, but did not include those responses here in an effort to display the information that interviewees shared in response to the general open-ended questions.

Appendix M

Appendix M

Index of Coding Categories

Dispersal of Supervisory Responsibility

Principal Supervision

Observation and Evaluation Process

Principal Observations

- General Criteria

- Special Education Specific Criteria

- Observation in Varied Settings

Generic Observation and Evaluation

Post Observation Conferences

- Process

- General Comments

- Special Education Instructional Issues Addressed

Evaluations

- Process

- Implementation of Policy

- Evaluation for Employability

Value of Observation and Evaluation

- No Value

- Rendering to Caesar

- Valuable to teachers

- Varying Comfort Levels

Supervision by Wandering

Process

Purposes

- Awareness of School Activities

- Credibility in Evaluation

- Daily Observation of Instruction

- Credibility in Communications with Teachers

- Encourage Teachers

- Ask Teachers Questions

- Basis for Teacher Feedback

- Giving Teachers Access and Time to principal

- Discuss Individual Students

- Show Interest

- Basis for Matching Students and Teachers

- Talking to kids

- Observing kids

- Ensure Safety

- Discipline by Proximity

Open Communication

- Limited focus on Instructional Deliver

- Topics between Principal and General Teacher

- Topics between Principal and Special Education Teacher
- Additional Roles of Principals
 - Resource Provider
 - Building a Philosophy
 - Discipline
 - Scheduling and Assigning Caseloads
 - Involvement in Special Education Meetings
 - Monitoring Lesson Plans
 - Providing Emotional Support to Teachers
 - Problem Solving
 - Laissez Faire Supervision
- Supervising New Teachers
 - Frequent Discussion
 - Differentiated Supervision
 - Provision of Time and Professional Development
 - Orientation to Process and Procedures
 - Frequent Observations
- Director As Supervisor
- Role of Director
 - Procedural and Compliance
 - Coordination of Staff Development
 - Participation in Special Education Meetings
 - Observing in Classrooms If Asked
 - Wearing Many Hats
 - Providing Resources
- Two Bosses – Collaboration or Conflict
 - Chain of Command
 - Collaboration
 - Topics of Discussion
 - Administrator Instructional Meetings
 - Conflict
 - Point of View - Individual versus Whole School
 - Authority
 - Conflict Examples
- Resources for Instructional Improvement
 - T/TAC
 - In-service, Workshops, Conferences, University Classes
 - Money for Materials
 - Inside the District Sources
- Teachers as Supervisors
- Special Education Coordinator
 - Roles
- Mentoring
 - Mentoring New Teachers
 - Desire for Mentoring
 - Mentor Training

Limits to Mentoring

Peer Support

Special Ed. Teacher as Resource to General Ed. Teacher

General Ed. Teacher as Content Resource to Special Ed. Teacher

Special Ed. Teachers Supporting One Another

Limits to Peer Support

Teacher as Instructional Expert

Special Education Teacher as Expert

Disabilities

Instructional Techniques

Procedural Compliance

Teachers As Professionals

Trusting yet Monitoring

A Good Special Education Teacher

Qualities – patience, knowledge of instruction for students with disability, positive attitudes, supportive in regular classes, people skills, communication skills, detail oriented, organized, know law, able to deal with paperwork, has time, persistent in instruction, caring, able to deal with stress, love for kids, selflessness, able to deal with parents

What is Special Education Instruction?

Individualized Instruction

A Support of the Regular Program

Instruction is Instruction

Principal Background

Background and Experience

Lack of Knowledge and Training in Special Education

Procedural Knowledge Only

Willingness to Get Answers and Resources

Varying Interest

Impact on Observation/Evaluation Process

Lack of Specialized Knowledge – ED, SPH, SLI, MR

Conditions Affecting Supervision

Competing Priorities

Lack of Time

Small Numbers of Central Office Staff

Limited Funds for Resources

Limited Joint Planning for Teachers

Vita

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EDUCATION

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (August, 1997 – present)

Major: Administration and Supervision of Special Education Department of
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Degree: expected Ph.D. completion date – May, 2001

Radford University, Radford, VA (1997)

Major: Special Education – Specific Learning Disability
Degree: Master of Science
Honors: Award for Outstanding Achievement in Graduate Learning Disabilities.

Radford University, Radford, VA (1990)

Majors: Early Education; Special Education – Mental Retardation
Degree: Bachelor of Science
Honors: Cum Laude Graduate

UNIVERSITY TEACHING/RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant (July 1998 – present)

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University – Blacksburg, VA
Administration and Supervision of Special Education
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Teaching/Research Assistant (Spring, 2000)

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University – Blacksburg, VA
Teaching assistant, Graduate Instruction
Jean B. Crockett, Ph.D., Supervision of Special Education Teachers and Programs

NK-6 EXPERIENCE

Head Teacher, Grades K-6

Fairview Elementary School, Galax, VA
August, 1996 – June, 1998

Elementary Classroom Teacher, Grade 1

Fairview Elementary School, Galax, VA
August, 1997 – June, 1998

Special Education Teacher, Multi-categorical, Grades K -6
Fairview Elementary School, Galax, VA
August, 1992 – August, 1997

Special Education Teacher; Developmentally Delays
Lakeview Elementary School, Portsmouth, VA
August 1990 – June 1992

Pre-School Teacher, Ages 18 to 24 months
KinderCare, Virginia Beach, VA
1990

INTERNSHIPS

Administrative Intern - Principal
Burlington Elementary School, Roanoke, VA
February – May 2000

Administrative Intern – Director/Supervisor Of Special Education
Pupil Personnel Services Department, Roanoke County Schools Administrative Offices,
Roanoke, VA
September – December 1999

Research Intern
Very Special Arts, Washington, DC
July – August 1999

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATES

Commonwealth Of Virginia Postgraduate Professional License
General Supervisor
Emotional Disturbance K-12
Mental Retardation K-12
Specific Learning Disabilities K-12
Early Education NK-4

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Refereed Presentations

Bays, D. A. (2001). *Supervision of special education teachers and instruction: Survey of Virginia public schools*. Presentation at the Council for Exceptional Children 2001 Annual Convention, Kansas City, Missouri, April 18-21, 2001.

Presentations And Workshops

Bays, D. A. (2000). *Introduction to special education*. Invited panel presentation for Psychological Foundations of Education for Pre-Service Teachers, EDCI 4124, Virginia Tech, November 9.

Bays, D. A. (2000). *Social learning theory*. Guest Lecturer, Psychological Foundations of Education, EDCI 3154, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, September 21.

Bays, D. A. (2000). *Supervision of special education instruction: Development of a research prospectus*. Presentation for doctoral students, Research Issues in Special Education, EDSE 6614, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, September 11.

Bays, D. A. (2000). *Special education and the school counselor*. Invited presentation, Seminar in School Counseling, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, July 12.

Bays, D. A. (2000). *Development and implementation of a survey research instrument*. Presentation to masters/doctoral students, Survey Research, EDRE 6794, April 25.

Bays, D. A. (2000). *Supervision of special education instruction: A profile of practices in Virginia*. Roundtable presentation, Graduate Student Research Day, College of Human Resources and Education, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, April 13.

Bays, D. A. (2000). *Teacher Attrition and Retention*. Guest Lecturer, Supervision of Special Education Teachers and Programs: EDSE 6234, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, March 20.

Bays, D. A. (1997). *Ideas for Implementing New VA SOLs for First Grade*. Staff Development Training for Public School First Grade Teachers, Grayson County, VA, May.

Bays, D. A. (1994). *Introduction to Assistive Technology*. Staff Development Training for Special Educators, Fairview Elementary School, Galax, VA, November.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- 1999-Present *President*, New River Valley Chapter, Council for Exceptional Children
1999-2000 *Member*, CHRE Graduate Research Day Planning Committee, Virginia Tech
1999 *Moderator*, Excellence in Education Conference, College of Human Resources and Education, Virginia Tech, November 5
1999 *Member*, Graduate Assistant Seminar Planning Committee, Administration and Supervision of Special Education, Virginia Tech, Spring Semester
1998-1999 *Vice President*, New River Valley Chapter, Council for Exceptional Children
1997-1998 *Teacher Mentor*, Commonwealth Special Education Endorsement Program: A Distance Learning Approach, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA
1992-1998 *Chair*, *Child Study Committee*, Fairview Elementary School, Galax, VA
1997-1998 *Member*, *Curriculum Committee – Technology*, Grayson County Public Schools
1992-1998 *Member*, *School Improvement Plan Committee*, Fairview Elementary, Galax, VA
1996-1998 *Member*, *Elementary Teacher Advisory Committee*, Grayson County Public Schools
1995-1997 *School Representative*, Grayson County Education Association
1990-1992 *Member*, *School Improvement Team*, Lakeview Elementary, Portsmouth, VA
1991-1992 *Treasurer*, *Parent/Teacher Association*, Lakeview Elementary, Portsmouth, VA

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Council for Exceptional Children; Council for Administrators of Special Education;
Division for Research; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development;
American Educational Research Association; Phi Kappa Phi