

TEXAS HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE INCLUSION OF
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

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Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

May 2011

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Farris, Troy K., Texas high school principals' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Doctor of Education (Educational Administration), May 2011, 85 pp., 4 tables, 9 illustrations, references, 47 titles.

This study examined Texas high school principals' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. School leaders today face increasing demands with the revised state accountability system. For example, students with disabilities are required to take the Texas Assessment Knowledge and Skills Test (TAKS) and on grade level. Hence, one of the strategies of schools has been to mainstream or include special education students in the regular classroom. Inclusion provides the opportunity for students with disabilities to be educated in the general education curriculum with their non-disabled peers.

This study investigated the attitudes of Texas high school principals' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The principals' personal experiences, professional training, and formal training in inclusion were examined. This study was a qualitative study using survey methodology. The Principal's Inclusion Survey developed by Cindy Praisner and G.H. Stainback was distributed electronically to 1211 Texas high schools. With the permissions of Praisner and Stainback, the survey was loaded into Survey Monkey, which is a website for creation of professional online surveys. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The return rate was 395 (32.1%) overall responses.

The results of the study concluded that majority of the principals agreed that inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom was the best placement for the disabilities listed in the survey. However, for the more severe disabilities, the principals favored a more non-inclusive setting. Those disabilities included mental retardation and serious emotional disturbance. For the cognitive disabilities, combinations of an inclusive and non-

inclusive setting were chosen. Also revealed in the study is that principals did not receive inclusion training as part of their formal education, but more emphasis was placed on special education law. The results of the survey indicated more training should be provided for principals in inclusion during their formal training.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many important people who have supported me through the journey for the doctoral program. First, I would like to thank my major professor at the University of North Texas, Dr. Johnetta Hudson, for her patience, motivation, and continual guidance throughout this program. Without Dr. Hudson, I would not have made it. I would also like to thank my committee that provided me with guidance and feedback in the planning, development, and research for this dissertation: Dr. Bertina Combes, Associate Professor of Education; Dr. John Brooks, Senior Lecturer (Continuing), and Dr. Laura Trujillo-Jenks, Assistant Professor of Education at Texas Women's University. I would also like to thank the members of my doctoral cohort, Dr. Shannon Hill, Dr. Linda Muehlberger, Dr. Harry Ryan, Dr. Delesa Styles, Stephanie Phillips, Nat Lunn, and Cora Falk. I learned a lot from each of you. Thank you for serving as a mentor and providing encouragement to me. I would not be where I am today if it were not for my mother, the late Charlye Ola Farris, and my 105 year old grandmother, Roberta Farris, who made it possible for me to be a success. Also thank you to some special friends who constantly encouraged me throughout this journey, Scott Ross, Logan Parrish, and Joshua Loeffler. Thank you to my bosses who would ask me every time they saw me, "How much have you completed?" Dr. Tim Powers, Assistant Superintendent, Wichita Falls ISD and Dr. George Kanzasas, Superintendent Wichita Falls ISD. Thank you to Dr. and Mrs. Charles Olson for editing my dissertation. Thank you to the rest of my family, friends, and co-workers for your continued encouragement and support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

School leaders today face increasing demands with the revised state accountability system. For example, special education students are now required to take a form of the Texas Assessment Knowledge and Skills Test (TAKS) and to be on grade level. Hence, one of the primary goals of schools has been to mainstream or include special education students in regular classrooms. Tomko (1996) states that inclusion is being part of what everyone else is, being welcomed and embraced as a member who belongs. (p. 1) McLeskey and Waldron (2000) state, “Indeed, a central goal of inclusion should be substantive change that transforms and improves education, not simply a change in location for currently existent special education services” (p. 13). This study examined principals’ perceptions regarding inclusion. This chapter discusses the background of the study, problem statement, research questions, overview of the methodology, delimitations, limitations, and definition of key terms.

Background of the Study

Inclusive education is about embracing everyone and making a commitment to provide each student in the community, and each citizen in a democracy, with the inalienable right to belong (Villa & Thousand, 2005). McLeskey and Waldron (2000) define inclusion as having the following components:

- Students with disabilities attend their neighborhood schools or the school they would attend if they were not disabled.
- Each child has an age-appropriate general education classroom.

- Every student is accepted and regarded as a full and valued member of the class and school community.
- Special education supports are provided within the context of the general education classroom.
- All students receive an education that addresses their individual needs.
- A natural proportion of students with disabilities attend any school and classroom.
- No child is excluded on the basis of type and degree of disability.
- The school promotes cooperative/collaborative teaching arrangements.
- There is a building-based planning, problem solving, and ownership of all students and programs. (p. 50)

The primary focus of inclusion is to provide the least restrictive environment (LRE) to special education students. LRE is a legal mandate for provisions of education to students with disabilities. The principal's role, as an instructional leader, is pivotal in creating a school culture that is inclusive. Leaders of schools facilitating inclusive education stress the importance of clarifying for themselves, school personnel, and the community a vision that is based on the assumptions that: (1) all children are capable of learning; (2) all children have the right to an education with their peers in their community; and, (3) the school system is responsible for attempting to address the unique needs of all children in the community (Villa & Thousand, 2005, p. 59). Furthermore, Karten (2005) defines inclusion as two or more teachers working together in a classroom sharing responsibilities for both general and special education students.

The success of inclusion begins with a vision that is developed by the principal and the administrative team. The team gathers input from all of the stakeholders involved in creating an inclusive school. Successful schools involve teachers in planning and decision making,

providing support for students with disabilities in general education classrooms, and achieving positive academic and social outcomes for students with and without disabilities (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000). Once the vision for inclusion has been formulated, the next step is to develop a mission. The team should examine the school district's and the school's mission statement and formulate a mission and objective that supports learning for all students, not just ones with a disability.

Historical Cases

Where did the principle of including students with disabilities into the general education classroom begin? The idea behind inclusion came about in 1954 with the Supreme Court landmark civil rights decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Wright and Wright (2004) affirm that, in *Brown*, school children from four states argued that segregated public schools were inherently unequal and they deprived segregated students of equal protection of the laws required by the Fourteenth Amendment. The Supreme Court found that African-American children had the right to equal educational opportunities and that segregated schools “have no place in the field of public education” (p. 8). Wright and Wright (2004) also noted, after the decision in *Brown*, parents of children with disabilities began to bring lawsuits against their school districts for excluding or segregating children with disabilities. The parents argued that by excluding their children, schools were discriminating against them because of their disabilities.

Another important court case was *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971), which stated that placement for students with disabilities in a regular education classroom, is preferable to placement in a special education classroom. The PARC ruling held that students with mental retardation had the right to a free and appropriate education. Choate (2000) states the following:

Following this ruling in support of PARC, a series of cases firmly established parental rights as a fair and orderly process to determine (a) if a child has a disability and (b) what kinds of services he or she should receive. Together these two components often are referred to as “due process” and include the “informed consent” of parents in the evaluation and placement of their child. (p. 5)

The passage of Public Law (PL) 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), brought about change in the placement of students with disabilities. The key term in the law is “least restrictive environment.” Beninghof and Singer (1995) state the following:

P.L. 101-476, defines LRE as...to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children...are educated with children who are not handicapped, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from the regular education environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (p. 6)

Inclusion is related to mainstreaming because inclusion places students with disabilities into the general classroom with their non-disabled peers where they are exposed to the general education curriculum. PL 94-142, after many re-authorizations, is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), which guarantees a free and appropriate education to all students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment to the fullest extent possible (Francis, Joseph, & Howard, 2004). Inclusion has not replaced the concept of mainstreaming. However, mainstreaming, a precursor to inclusion, supported placing a student in the general education classroom if the student was prepared to attend that particular general education class. In contrast, inclusion goes further and proposes including all special education

students in the general education classroom giving them access to the general education curriculum. Tomko (2006) listed the following as key components of inclusive education:

- Students are in their home schools' general education classes
- Appropriate supports and services
- “On-going” planning for success
- Active Participation
- All students have a sense of belonging
- Achievement of IEP goals
- Natural proportions
- Classes get ready for students
- Collaboration and team planning
- Diversity is valued through out all environments, activities, and events (pp. 1-3)

Statement of the Problem

Past decades of completed studies have produced a varying understanding for the most appropriate placement for students with disabilities. As Choate (2000) states:

For example, some studies suggest that students with disabilities achieve greater gains, social as well as academic, in general rather than in special education programs.

Comparable findings have been reported on full versus part-time general classroom integration of students with disabilities. In contrast, some investigations reveal no significant differences in performance as a function of classroom setting and report that the instructional strategies, rather than the setting, must affect pupil performance. (p. 14)

The appropriate placements of student with disabilities in the general education classroom will provide the best instructional strategies because the students with disabilities are exposed to the

general education curriculum from a content area teacher. Principals are the visionaries for their campuses and have a desire for higher student achievement. This desire for higher student achievement should be inclusive of students with disabilities.

This study investigated the attitudes of Texas high school principals toward inclusion and their perception of the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom. The principal's personal experiences, professional training, and formal training in inclusion were examined. This study was designed to answer the following specific questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Texas high school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom?
2. What is the relationship between Texas high school principals' perceptions of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom in relation to their personal experiences?
3. What is the relationship between Texas high school principals' perceptions of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom to their professional training?
4. What is the relationship between Texas high school principals' perceptions of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom to their formal training in inclusion?

Significance of the Study

This study investigated high school principals' perceptions of inclusion within certain variables. The variables were principals' attitudes toward inclusion, personal experiences, professional training, and formal training in inclusion. As part of the personal experiences, professional training, and formal training, principals must know the background of inclusion and

the laws governing students with disabilities. There are three federal laws that protect students with disabilities. One of those is the Individuals with Disabilities Act (Reauthorized, 2004), which protects children from birth to age 21 and provides them with a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. The new tenants of the IDEIA provide instruction that is based on scientific research designed to improve the academic performance of children with disabilities. Additionally, the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is a civil rights anti-discriminatory law that is designed to protect people with disabilities from discrimination in public services and provides responsible accommodations if needed. Another law is Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which is a civil rights law that prevents the discrimination of people with disabilities in public and/or private programs. These laws provide the backbone to inclusion. These laws provide students with disabilities the right to a free and appropriate education without being discriminated against because of their disability. Students with disabilities can be educated in the general education classes along side their non-disabled peers, exposing them to the general education curriculum and thus preparing them for the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test needed for graduation.

One study conducted by Hesselbart (2005), *A Study of Principals' Attitudes towards Inclusion – The Impact of Administrator Preparation*, focused on each principal's and assistant principal's attitude toward inclusion and then determined if principals were adequately prepared in their college and university programs to handle inclusion. The results of this study indicated that almost an equal number of principals view inclusion with uncertainty, as do those who view inclusion with positive attitudes. A significant result is that none of the principals believed that inclusion will have a positive effect on both the special needs students and their non-disabled peers. Respondents also believed that while a highly trained special education teacher can be of

great value in the general education classroom, they also believe that a good regular education teacher can do a great deal to help special needs students. Future research on the attitudes of principals and assistant principals in other parts of the country would provide additional useful information. This study took place among principals and assistant principals at all building levels in one rural county in Northwestern Ohio.

Salient skills and techniques that teachers perceive as important to the success of inclusive education were identified by Scheneider (2005). The overwhelming recommendation that teachers mentioned was seeking assistance from other professionals. The next important recommendation that teachers mentioned was about personal characteristics. Scheneider (2005) stated that most of the qualities that teachers noted were inner directed and seemed to focus on developing one's own personal style. Teachers made very strong statements about the necessity of being aware of the diversity of school populations. The researcher stated that it would be interesting to replicate this study with male subjects and perhaps do a comparison of the effects on gender and practice. This study was conducted with general education teachers of Grades Pre-K through 8 in Brooklyn, New York.

As reported by the highlighted studies, administrators play a major role in the successful implementation of an inclusive model. Francis, Joseph, and Howard (2004) stated, "A principal with a positive attitude who models a 'How can we do it attitude?,' rather than asking 'Why do we have to do it ?' will be better able to lead his or her staff to the appropriate problem solving process to make inclusion work" (p. 26). Administrators set the tone for implementing inclusion. When teachers observe the principal's positive attitude about creating inclusion, teachers will be more likely to be on board. Administrators must provide staff development and support in implementing and maintaining an inclusion program. They have to provide feedback and

monitor the progress of creating an inclusive school; hence, inclusion should become the basic philosophy of the school. In order for inclusion to work, the administrator will need to create a teaching environment that will lead to success for all students. Administrators must place time in the schedule for collaboration between general education and special education teachers. In order to create and maintain an inclusive school, administrators must be aware of the principles of inclusion.

The impact of inclusion on students and/or educators is tremendous. Students benefit from the expertise of the general education teacher, as well as the special education teacher. The general education teacher is an expert in his/her field and the special education teacher provides extra support for students in the general education classroom. The teachers have the opportunity to collaborate and learn from each other, so inclusion may provide more opportunities for students to succeed.

Overview of the Methodology

This was a quantitative study using survey methodology. The Principal's Inclusion Survey developed by Cindy Praisner and G.H. Stainback was distributed electronically to 1211 Texas high school principals. With permission of Praisner and Stainback the survey was loaded into Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey is a website for creation of professional online surveys. The participants were able to answer the survey questions online. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, present the data summaries, and examine the variables. Frequency distributions and percentages were computed for each variable of the survey.

Delimitations

The following are delimitations applied to this study denoting possible boundaries and/or ways in which the findings may lack generalizability.

1. The sample population was comprised of high school principals in the state of Texas.
2. The study examined only high school principals in Texas, not middle school or elementary principals.
3. The study was limited due to the lack of schools that practice inclusion.

Limitations

The methodology of this study was limited by the following factors:

1. This survey is dependent upon the principals honestly responding to each item on the survey.
2. Data is dependent on how many surveys are completed.

Definition of Key Terms

- American with Disabilities Act (1990) – Public Law 101-336 which extends civil rights to individuals with disabilities (Yanoff, 2007).
- Disabilities – a limitation (Yanoff, 2007).
- Inclusion – One of the entries in the jargon of special education, inclusion is defined by NASBE (1992) as meaning that “students attend their home school with their age and grade peers...not isolated into special classes or wings with the school. (p. 12) (Benninghof & Singer, 1995).
- Individual education program/plan (IEP) – a program drawn up at a staffing to map out the delivery of special services to a student with special needs (Yanoff, 2007).
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (1975) – Public Law 94-142, with supporting legislation, most currently Public Law 105-17 (1997), mandating the right to an appropriate education for all students regardless of their special needs (Yanoff, 2007).

- Least restrictive environment (LRE) – P.L. 101-476, defines LRE as: to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children... are educated with children who are not handicapped, and that the special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of handicap children from the regular education environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (Beninghof & Singer, 1995).
- Mainstreaming – implies regular classroom placement for all students with handicaps. (p.1) (Beninghof & Singer, 1995).
- Paraprofessional – a person who works with teachers and the students to provide support services (Yanoff, 2007).
- Resource room – a special room in a school where students with special needs go to on a regular basis for extra help with schoolwork (Yanoff, 2007).
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1975) – a section of the act that provides that no otherwise qualified individual with a disability may be discriminated against in such places as school and work (Yanoff, 2007).
- Special education – additional and specialized services given to a student who would not be able to reach his or her potential in school without them (Yanoff, 2007).

Summary

This chapter provided a brief overview of the basis and rationale of this study. The background of the study was discussed, the problem was stated, and the significance and research questions were presented. A brief overview of the methodology was described, as well as the delimitations, limitations, and the definitions of key terms. The studies presented in this

chapter conclude that principals have a positive attitude toward inclusion, teachers need more assistance from professionals, and principals play a major role in successful implementation of inclusion. The next chapter presents a review of the literature to establish the background and rationale for the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the historical and theoretical background related to the study of inclusive schools. In addition, this chapter discusses the current literature and special education law relating to inclusion. Following the historical and theoretical background, the review focuses on the myths and current trends of inclusive schools. Next, special education law will be examined as it relates to a free and appropriate education. Finally, the summary briefly analyzes the literature, highlights previous studies, examines literary deficiencies and distinguishes the significance of the current study.

Historical Foundations

Villa and Thousand (2005) stated that in the late 1700's the physician Benjamin Rush introduced the concept of educating people with disabilities. Public education had its beginnings in the late 1800s and early 1900s due to the efforts of educational leaders of the time, such as Horace Mann (Villa & Thousand, 2005). The first program was the American Asylum for the Education and Instruction for the Deaf and Dumb Persons in Connecticut created by Thomas Gallaudet. Individuals with disabilities were labeled as being mentally retarded and usually confined to such places as the one created by Thomas Gallaudet or other institutions out of the public eye. Students with disabilities started to receive an education in special classes in the public systems between the 1950s and 1960s. Waldron (1996) states,

When considering the history of inclusive trends, attitudes of the nineteenth century are particularly important. Reformers, such as Jean March Gaspard Itard (1775-1838), Edouard Seguin (1812-1880), and Maria Montessori (1870-1952), were pioneers who demonstrated that students with disabilities could be educated. Others such as Thomas

Hopkins Gallaudet (1787-1851) and Samuel Gridley Howe (1801-1876) developed specific methods for intervention. (pp. 9-11)

The work of these individuals paved the way for progress in helping to educate students with disabilities. The early history of special education provided the support for the modern day laws that govern students with disabilities and how students with disabilities are educated in public schools.

Along with these studies, several pieces of legislation were passed that discriminated against students with disabilities. Daniel (1997) reviewed these following rulings:

- Supreme Judicial Court for the State of Massachusetts (1893) – upheld the expulsion from a public school of a child who was “weak” in the mind.
- Supreme Court for the State of Wisconsin (1919) – affirmed a lower court decision authorizing the exclusion from a public school district a child who had the academic and physical ability to benefit from school, but who drooled uncontrollably, had a speech impairment, and exhibited facial contortions.
- Supreme Court for the State of Illinois (1958) – ruled that legislation requiring compulsory education for children and establishing programs for disabled children did not require that a public education be provided for a mentally impaired child.
- North Carolina passed a statute that authorized criminal charges against parents who persisted in forcing the attendance of a disabled child after a school administrator had excluded the child from a public school. (p. 398)

It is clear, after reading this review of cases that children with disabilities were either placed in special facilities or not allowed to attend a public school.

As seen later, this was a violation of disabled students' rights. Before the Civil Rights Movement and anti-discrimination laws were passed, students with disabilities were segregated from their non-disabled peers either in separate schools, institutions, or different classrooms. One individual that had a pivotal role in helping to break down the wall of segregation was Charles Houston. Charles Houston's efforts at the University of Maryland Law School and the University of Missouri Law School resulted in the two schools becoming desegregated institutions in 1936 and 1938. Carter states,

In addition, he encouraged law school graduates to put discriminatory policies and procedures to the constitutional test using the 14th amendment, which led to the conception of the civil rights law. (as cited in Villa & Thousand, 2005, p. 15)

The landmark case that ended segregation in public schools was *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The decision of the Supreme Court was that children could not be segregated in public schooling solely on the basis of race (Waldron, 1996). *Brown v. Board of Education* provided the right to a free and equal education for all students. The National Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) was formed as a result of this case. The primary focus of the ARC is to be an advocate for people with disabilities.

One law that has a major impact on educating students with disabilities is the Education For All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL-94-142), known as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Choate (2000) states the major provisions of PL 94-142 included the mandate for

(1) all children between the ages 5-21, regardless of the nature and severity of their handicap(s), to receive a free, appropriate public education; (2) each child with a handicap to have a specially tailored Individualized Education Program (IEP) based on

his or her unique needs; (3) all children with handicaps to be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE); (4) every student with a handicap to have access to participate in all school activities; and (5) all children and their families be guaranteed the rights to nondiscriminatory testing, confidentiality, and due process. (p. 7)

IDEA was re-authorized in 1990 and recently re-authorized in 2004, becoming IDEIA. The American with Disabilities Act (Public Law 101-336), that was originally passed in 1990, is another law that provides support on educating students with disabilities. This law prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in state and local governments. Karten (2005) states that the American with Disabilities Act provides equal opportunities in the following areas: public accommodation, employment, transportation, telecommunications, and local and state government. These laws provide the framework for inclusion. Both the IDEIA and the American with Disabilities Act provide a free and appropriate educational to all students without discrimination. The purpose of inclusion is to provide students with disabilities an opportunity to be educated in the general education classroom with their non-disabled peers, which is accomplished because of these pieces of legislation.

In 1973, Congress passed the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Section 504 is under the jurisdiction of the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) in the U.S. Department of Education. Section 504 is a Civil Rights Law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in either public and/or private programs and activities that receive federal funding (Karten, 2005). A person can qualify for Section 504 if their disability substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as learning. These federal laws provided the framework for some important court cases that have had an impact on special education. Several other court cases provided legal guidance in reference to providing a free and public education to students with disabilities. One

landmark case was *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Pennsylvania* (1971), which was the vehicle for establishing Pennsylvania's disabled children's substantive rights to a free appropriate public education in the least restrict setting possible (Daniel, 1997). This ruling created a procedural safeguard for parents of disabled children to contest the placement of their disabled child based on the choice decided by the school. Another case is *Mills v. Board of Education* (1972) that extended the ruling of PARC giving the right of a free and public education to disabled students who were mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, and/or physically handicapped.

Least Restrictive Environment

The idea behind the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) was to provide a free and public education to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The term least restrictive environment means that students with disabilities will be educated with their non-disabled peers to the maximum appropriate amount. The concept of least restrictive environment means that schools cannot segregate children with disabilities in separate education settings from their non-disabled peers. Including students who receive special education services into regular classrooms is consistent with this concept.

Daniel (1997) provides several cases that were decided on providing the least restrictive environment for disabled children:

- *Roncker v. Walter* (1983) – the court reviewed a school district's decision to place a disabled student in a special school that was exclusively for mentally retarded children. The court (6th circuit) ultimately endorsed a split setting where the student attended the segregated facility for all academic subjects and regular school for lunch, recess, and P.E. In its decision, the court announced a strong preference for the full

inclusion of a disabled student, yet realized the possibility that students had to be educated in segregated settings because an integrated experience offered either marginal educational benefits or none at all.

- *Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education* (1989) – the court (5th circuit) affirmed a lower court ruling that a student with Down’s syndrome and mental and speech impairments was appropriately placed in resource room for disabled children only. The Fifth Circuit decided that under certain circumstances that the general education classroom may not be the least restrictive environment for some students with severe disabilities and the school district did not violate the LRE portion of IDEA. The Fifth Circuit developed a two-prong test to determine when a school’s LRE is appropriate:
 1. Whether education in the regular classroom can be satisfactorily achieved with the use of supplemental aids and services;
 2. If such an education cannot be achieved and the school district intends to remove the child from the regular education classroom, whether the school has integrated the child to the maximum extent appropriate.
- *Greer v. Rome City School District* (1992) – the court (11th circuit) was concerned about the placement of a child with Down’s syndrome and speech and language impairment. The court used the two-prong test from Daniel R.R. but enlarged its reach by including an assessment of the benefits of a regular classroom placement versus a more segregated classroom. The court in Greer also determined that the “class disruption” factor used in Daniel R.R. included a cost factor. The concern was that if the cost of the educating a disabled child was so great that it would significantly impact the education of other children, then education in the regular

classroom is not appropriate. The court concluded that the school district had not given sufficient consideration to the student's needs and her ability to benefit from a regular classroom setting with the necessary aids and services. As a result, the school district had not met the first prong of the two-prong test in *Daniel R.R.*.

- *Sacramento City Unified School District v. Rachel H* (1994) – The school board had proposed a split placement for a mentally retarded student similar to the placement in *Roncker v. Walter*: the regular classroom for non-academic subjects and the resource room for all academic subjects. The parents objected to the placement arguing that this would disadvantage the child relating to both her academic and social development. The parents withdrew the girl from the school district and placed her in a private school that was solely a general education setting. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit articulated a four-part balancing test to be applied in discerning which setting is the more educationally appropriate:

1. The opportunities for educational benefit in the regular classroom versus a self-contained environment;
2. The opportunities for the development of non-academic skills, such as social skills, communication skills, and self-confidence;
3. The impact of the disabled child's presence in the regular classroom on the education of other students; and
4. Whether the cost of inclusion in a regular classroom would adversely affect the school district funds and services available to other students?

It was decided that the student had progressed academically in the regular education setting in the private school and her social and self-esteem skills had increased. The court

determined that school protests about cost of education for this child were inflated and that students in her regular classroom were not adversely affected by her presence. The court ordered the school district to include the student in a regular education classroom with supplemental services, such as an aide and curriculum modification.

- *Oberti v. Board of Education Clementon School District* (1994) – The student, who suffered from Down’s syndrome, was placed in a special education class because he was a disruption in his regular education classroom by hitting and spitting on the other students. The student also had bathroom problems. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit held that school districts have an obligation first to consider placing a child with consideration of any more restrictive alternatives. The court stated that inclusion was a right and not a privilege for a select few disabled students. The court found that schools could order a more restrictive placement only by showing that the student’s disabilities were so severe that there would be little or no academic benefit in a regular education classroom, that the child’s extremely disruptive behavior deleteriously threatened the education of other students, or that the cost of providing the necessary aids and services was so significant as to have a negative effect on other students. The court found the school district had failed to provide an adequate curriculum plan with the student in mind, had not created a behavioral management plan for teachers to control his behavior, and not considered adequate special education support for the student’s regular education teachers. The court also observed that the educational benefits of the regular classroom compared favorably with to those the student was receiving in the more restrictive special education setting. (pp. 401-404)

These cases provide evidence where the concept of least restrictive environment in inclusive classrooms may not be the most appropriate placement for students with more severe and profound disabilities, and cases where inclusive practices provided academic success for students with disabilities.

Theoretical Foundation

Social constructivist theory serves as a theoretical framework for inclusion of students with disabilities. One important aspect of learning is developing a sense of community. All children disabled or non-disabled are valued members of the school community. Key elements of social constructivism emphasize the influence of social context, the value of culturally relevant and effectively guided social activity, and the contributions that individuals make to their own learning (Mallory & New, 1994). One unique aspect of constructivism is that learners have an active role in their own learning. Mallroy and New (1994) list the following four principals for classroom practice:

- The inclusive classroom functions as a community of learners. Perhaps the most compelling principle to be derived from the social constructivist theory is the right and necessity of young children with disabilities to belong.
- Social relations are the catalyst for learning in the inclusive curriculum. Examples include peer tutoring and peer collaboration.
- Content and context are linked through inclusive curriculum and instruction. Direct instruction is one form of guided participation that is particularly useful for those who work with children with disabilities.
- Processes for feedback and assessment are authentic and emotionally supportive.

- A fourth implication of social constructivist theory is the role of feedback and assessment as contributors to learning. (pp. 329-333)

Inclusion is based on the premise that students with disabilities are educated with their non-disabled peers in the general education classroom. This allows students with disabilities to be part of a community of learners and exposure to the general education curriculum. Social constructivism begins in the early stages of a student's education and continues through their secondary education.

Inclusion Paradigm Shift

Educators traditionally felt that students with disabilities were better served in programs designed specifically for them and in classrooms separate from students who were not receiving special education services. In order to move from special education segregated classrooms to inclusive rooms, a paradigm shift has to take place. Tomko (1996) stated:

Inclusion in school requires a shift in the paradigm, instead of getting the children ready for the regular class, the regular class gets ready for the child. It's not a decision of zero or one hundred percent, but what ever balance that can be achieved to maximize meeting all of the child's needs. (p. 1)

Francis, Joshep and Howard (2004) state, "It was believed that students with disabilities were better taught with their own kind, and that they required special teaching approaches, curriculum and materials" (p. 15). The thinking of educators will have to move from thinking that students with disabilities need to be taught in separate classrooms to what can students with disabilities learn in inclusive classrooms. The focus of inclusion is to provide students with disabilities exposure to the general education curriculum with general education teachers that specialize in a certain subject area. Beninghof and Singer (1995) state that inclusion is all about culture, about

collective values, and philosophies of educators applied to the group of students they are entrusted to serve.

There are three main principles of inclusion. One principle is that all students can learn. Students with disabilities have the ability to learn in the general education classroom with the exposure to the same curriculum as their non-disabled peers. The second principle of inclusion is that students with disabilities can learn from their non-disabled peers. They can receive help through peer tutoring, working in collaborative groups, or peer teaching. The third principle of inclusion is a shared responsibility from the general education teacher and the special education teacher. Along with their knowledge base they bring to the classroom, both the students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers can reap the benefits from having two professional teachers. Sapon-Shevin (2003) state that inclusive classrooms can be places in which students learn to take powerful stances against oppression of many kinds, recognizing their own agency and power to change the world. Sharpe (2001) describes a picture of successful inclusion is the following:

- Kids are clustered in specific classes but distributed across all teachers.
- Students receive instruction supports that maximize their participation in the general education curriculum and their engagement the general population.
- Teachers use a variety of strategies, including curriculum and instructional adaptations, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and layered curriculum. (p. 4)

Co-Teaching Model

The third principle of inclusion is shared responsibility between the general education teacher and the special education teacher. The benefits of co-teaching provide students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers greater exposure to the curriculum, because of the wide

span of knowledge from two educated professionals. Lawton (1999) conclude that students in co-taught classrooms gain the attention of a second teacher, which can especially be helpful for those who may not have been formally identified as having special needs, but who may need additional help. Lawton (1999) states there are three variations to the co-teaching model:

- The first model is the complimentary model where the classroom teacher is responsible for teaching the course content and the special education teacher helps the students who need extra instruction.
- The second model is team teaching where either the classroom teacher or the special education teacher delivers the content, and the other person adds to the information by either paraphrasing or adding information from his or her own knowledge base.
- The third model is the supportive learning approach where one general education teacher delivers the curriculum and the special education teacher works with students who are having difficulty in a small group setting. (p. 2)

Stickney (2003) describes these following characteristics that identify the unique relationship of co-teachers:

- Two or more professionals – A co-teaching relationship may consist of some combination of a special education teacher, general education teacher, and/or related service provider.
- Jointly delivering instruction – In co-teaching, both professionals coordinate and deliver substantive instruction. They plan and use high-involvement strategies to engage all students in the instruction.

- Diverse group of student – Co-teachers provide instruction for a diverse group of students, including those identified with disabilities and other others who are not so identified.
- Shared classroom space – In a co-teaching relationship, the majority of instruction takes place within the general education classroom in contrast to various pullout models, where groups of students receive instruction in an alternative setting. (Friend & Cook, 2003, p. 1)

The co-teaching model provides educational benefits to all of the students in the class. Students without disabilities will get extra help as well as students with disabilities with the help of two teachers in the classroom.

Attitudes Toward Inclusion

The following are studies that have been conducted on attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities. The first set of studies has been conducted since the year 2000 and the later studies were conducted prior to 2000.

Praisner (2003) conducted a study that considered the attitudes of elementary school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities. This study was conducted to provide additional research on principal's attitude toward the inclusive practices. Praisner (2003) states:

Therefore to ensure the success of inclusion, it is important that principals exhibit behaviors that advance the integration, acceptance, and success of students with disabilities in general education classes. (p. 135)

The participants of this study consisted of 408 elementary school principals randomly selected from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The participants represented schools that enrolled

elementary-level students only, kindergarten through 6th grade. Each participant was sent the Principal and Inclusion Survey (PIS). This survey contained 28 questions and was sent to each participant selected. Praisner (2003) asked three research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of elementary school principals toward inclusion of students with severe/profound disabilities in the general education setting?
2. What is the relationship between principals' personal characteristics, training, experience and/or school characteristics and their attitudes toward inclusion?
3. What is the relationship between the principals' perception of appropriate placements for students with different types of disabilities and their attitudes and experiences?

The results of the study indicated that principal's attitudes were positive in 1 out of 5, but most were uncertain about inclusion. The principals that had a more positive attitude toward inclusion were more favorable to place students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

Doyle (2001) conducted a study with nineteen administrators from four mid-sized schools districts entitled *Leadership and Inclusion: Reculturing for Reform*. The purpose of the study was to explore how school administrators perceive the concept of inclusion and what processes do administrators perceive as necessary to achieve inclusion. The methodology used in this was collection and analysis of qualitative text data (Doyle, 2001). The participants for this study were nineteen administrators: fourteen principals, four assistant principals, and one special education administrator. Eight principals were elementary, three middle school, and six high school. Doyle (2001) states the following findings from his study:

1. Education: A continuum of categorized and competing programs. Administrators interviewed in this study described education as a series of categorical programs and/or parts that fall along a broad continuum. (p. 7)

2. Inclusion: Another categorical label and placement option. Those administrators with special education background did not necessarily perceive inclusion as a way of thinking rather than a category either, and the special education administrator interviewed felt that inclusion was an effective model for students with mild disabilities, but students with more severe disabilities should be included in classes such as art, music, and P.E. for socialization purposes. (p. 8)
3. Inclusion: More a mindset of structures than a philosophy. A few administrators described inclusion as a mindset of way of thinking based on a philosophy or set of values. Most administrators describe inclusion as the practice of placing students. (p. 9)
4. Inclusion looks like mainstreaming. The administrator's discussions about inclusion were often on the same lines as mainstreaming. (p. 10)
5. Responsibility for inclusion. Some administrators see that too much responsibility is falling into the hands of the regular education classroom teachers and that they need to collaborate. A few others saw the responsibility as a shared one between regular and special education. (pp. 10-11)

This is just some of the data that was analyzed from the interviews with these administrators.

The overall view of the administrators interviewed in this study was that education is categorically competitive and inclusion is just another category in which to place students. The administrators saw inclusion as placing students with disabilities into general education classrooms that were non-academic classes. The expectation was the students were to adapt to the class and the teachers not make adaptations for the students. They also viewed inclusion as just a restructuring technique not a way to reform education. The process of reforming schools

for inclusion is clearly one of reculturing, that calls for school administrators to embrace the deeper meaning of inclusion, understand the need for beliefs-driven change, and know how to facilitate this in others (Doyle, 2001).

Avissar (2007) conducted a study with school principals in Israel titled, *School Principals and Inclusion: Views, Practices, and Possible Signs of Burnout*. The two questions presented in this study were (1) What are the principal's perceptions of inclusion; (2) What are the principal's practices regarding inclusion? The participants in this study were selected from all 205 elementary schools in the largest school district in Israel. 110 elementary principals were chosen for the study. The instrument that was used a three part questionnaire for principals, which included the school's profile, questions on inclusion, and background information and data on the principals that completed the questionnaire. Avissar (2007) stated the following results from her study:

- Principals stress that the social aspects of inclusion override the physical and academic aspects and they perceive that learners with disabilities are more likely to succeed socially, compared to their potential academic success.
- The results show that principals manifest a clear vision of inclusion and their leadership behaviors promote positive inclusive policies.
- While principals are supportive on inclusive practices in their schools, findings have suggested that their support depends on the severity of the students' disabilities.
- The correlations found between selected demographic variables and inclusive practices have shown that prior experience, tenure, and seniority tend to affect the willingness to practice inclusive measures; mainly with more experience and seniority there is less support for inclusion. (pp. 6-7)

The second part of this study analyzed principal's burnout due to the implementation of inclusive practices. This study consisted of nine female elementary principals and four middle school principals (one male and three females). The participants were interviewed by the researcher and the results of interviews indicated that there was some degree of burnout among these principals in trying to implement and maintain inclusive practices.

Johnson (2009) conducted a study entitled "Special Education: Whose Responsibility is It?" The purpose of the study was to identify the perspectives of special education administrators as compared to the perceptions of beginning building level administrators from looking at the standpoint of students with special needs and special populations of students. The method used in this study was a qualitative research inquiry. The data collected was based on a literature summary base, structured interviews, and researcher-constructed questionnaire. The participants of this study were 146 educational leadership graduate level students and 34 special education administrators. The locations of the participants were spread over three mid-western and/or southern states in suburban or urban settings. The research questions for this study were the following (Johnson, 2009):

1. What are the responsibilities of the building level administrator regarding special needs students, special education, and special programs;
2. What are the responsibilities of the special education administrator regarding special needs students, special education, and special programs;
3. What is your level of knowledge, understanding, and competency in administrating these component parts as noted above? (p. 13)

Johnson (2009) stated these results of her study:

- Aspiring principal's knowledge levels were generally at a median level of three on a 1 to 5 scale potentially indicating an average knowledge level. This average level of understanding, as self-identified by the beginning administrators occur in the instructional responsibility is for the students with the most severe learning needs.
- The legislative mandates in this area alone comprise thousands of printed pages, which must be vigilantly followed lest schools districts and individual administrators (principals and special education directors) feel the bite of failure and dismissal. (p. 17)

The researcher also discussed that university and school district training programs need to ensure that adequate preparation and ongoing learning opportunities for school principals and those aspiring to become administrators is in place in the arena of special services and how to better serve students with special needs.

A study conducted by Rea, McLaughlin, and Walther-Thomas (2002) was "Outcomes for Students with Learning Disabilities in Inclusive and Pullout Programs," which investigated the relationship between placement in inclusive pullout special education programs and academic and behavior outcomes for students with learning disabilities (LD). The participants in this study were all students with a learning disability in the 8th grade in a suburban school district in the southeast. The researchers examined child records, IEPs, special education eligibility records, individual student evaluation reports, class schedules, attendance records, discipline records, and student scholastic records (Rea, McLaughlin, and Walther-Thomas 2002). According to Rea, McLaughlin, and Walther-Thomas (2002), these following were results of the study they conducted:

1. Students with LD served in inclusive classrooms achieve higher course grades in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, than students with LD in pullout programs.
2. Students with LD achieved higher scores on language and mathematics ITBS subtests than did students with LD in pullout programs.
3. Students with LD served in inclusive classrooms demonstrated comparable scores to those in pullout programs on reading, writing, and mathematics subtests of a state proficiency test.
4. Students with LD in inclusive classrooms did not experience more in-school or out-of-school suspensions than did students in pullout programs. (pp. 212-219)

The overall results indicated the students with learning disabilities in general education classrooms achieved higher than those students that have received services in pullout programs.

Idol (2006) studied a program evaluation of eight schools toward the inclusion of special education students in general education. The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the degree of inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes in four elementary and four secondary schools; the similarities and differences in how special education were offered; and the ways in which students with disabilities were supported in the least restrictive environment. (p. 77) Idol (2006) states that there are several indicators when trying to understand what happens with a school faculty in the process, the indicators are:

- The types of disabilities of the students in special education attending the schools;
- The amount of time that students in special education actually spent learning in the general education program;
- The number and types of support personnel available and how they are used;

- The number and types of referrals for special education testing;
- The attitudes of all staff toward one another, toward collaboration, toward students with special education needs, and toward inclusion;
- Staff perceptions of their skills in making instructional and curricular modifications, as well as their skills in student discipline and classroom management;
- Staff perceptions of the impact of inclusion on other students. (pp. 78-79)

The findings of this study concluded that including students with disabilities into the general education class is strongly supported by the school personnel that were interviewed in this study.

Harris (2009) conducted a study on elementary school assistant principals' attitudes toward inclusion of special needs students in the general education setting. Harris (2009) stated the purpose of the study was to examine the elementary school assistant principals' attitudes and recommended instructional arrangement related to the inclusion of special needs students in the general education setting; these are the six questions that guided the study:

1. Are the attitudes of the elementary assistant principals more positive or negative in relation to the inclusion of special education students in the general education setting?
2. Is there a relationship between the elementary school assistant principals' knowledge of special education law and their attitudes toward inclusion?
3. Which instructional arrangement does the elementary school assistant principal recommend for students with autism?
4. Which instructional arrangement does the elementary school assistant principal recommend for students with serious emotional disturbance?
5. Which instructional arrangement does the elementary school assistant principal recommend for students with specific learning disabilities?

6. Which instructional arrangements does the elementary school assistant principal recommend for students with mental retardation? (p. 1)

Harris (2009) reported these following results of the study she conducted:

When recommending the appropriate instructional arrangement for student with disabilities, the elementary school assistant principals' recommendations varied. The elementary school assistant principals recommended that students with autism, mental retardation, and serious emotional disturbance be placed in more restrictive settings for all of most of the school day; however, for students with specific learning disabilities, the elementary school assistant principals recommend that the students receive regular classroom instruction support and resources. (p. 1)

Brown (2007) investigated the attitudes of administrators toward inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education and factors influencing their attitudes. The researcher used the Schools Principals' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education questionnaire (PATIE). The data was collected from 55 school administrators employed in the Rankin County School District during the 2005-2006 school year. Brown (2007) concluded these results:

Female administrators perceived that regular teachers are trained adequately to cope with students with disabilities, and regardless of whether parents of regular students object to inclusion; the practice of inclusion should be supported. Middle school administrators tended to agree that special needs students belong in special schools where all their needs can be met, and they benefit academically from inclusion in the regular classrooms.

Administrators with fewer years of administrative experience tended to agree more with the inclusion of students

with disabilities. Furthermore, administrators with fewer years of regular education teaching experience tended to disagree that regular teachers are not trained adequately to cope with students with disabilities. (p. 1)

Hsu (2010) conducted a study with school personnel in Yun-Lin County, a rural school district of Taiwan, to identify and compare the attitudes of school administrators, regular education teachers, and special education teachers. Hsu (2010) states these following major findings from the study:

1. Educators had positive attitudes toward the concept of inclusion and the social benefits of inclusion; however, educators had reservations on the application of inclusion and had less positive attitudes toward academic benefits of inclusion.
2. Educators disagreed that self-contained classrooms, would have negative impact on students with disabilities.
3. Educators' perceptions of appropriate educational placements for students with disabilities differed depending on the severity of the disability. The greater the severity, the more segregated the environment should be. Educator's responses indicated that the less restrictive environment was an appropriate placement for students with mild disabilities and the more restrictive environment was most appropriate for students with moderate to severe disabilities.
4. The results of strategies used to support inclusion were mixed, particularly among educators, and were difficult to interpret.
5. The results of this study indicated that background variables such as age, years of service and education were not highly correlated with attitudes, or perceptions regarding the inclusion of student with disabilities. (pp. 1-2)

Ramirez (2006) studied elementary principals' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting. In addition to focusing on the attitudes of elementary principals, the study also examined how demographic information and experiences affected principal's attitudes toward inclusion, and how the effect of the perceptions on the appropriateness of the placement of student's disability. Ramirez (2006) concluded these following results:

- Demographic factors, training, and experience did not have a statistically significant affect on principals' attitudes toward inclusion.
- Principals' special education teaching experience had a statistically significant affect on principal's attitudes toward inclusion.
- Overall attitudes toward inclusion showed a more favorable attitude toward inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom.

Attitudes Toward Inclusion Studies Prior to 2000

Espin, Deno, Albayrak-Kaymak (1998) conducted a study titled, "Individualized Education Programs in Resource and Inclusive Settings: How Individualized are They?" In this study, individualized education plans (IEPs) were examined for students with learning disabilities, mildly mentally handicapped, and emotional disturbed students in resource and inclusive classroom settings. This study examined a consistency between the student's IEP, disability level, student's disability, and student's classroom reading program. The IEPs used in this study were collected from 12 schools for 108 students with mild disabilities. The information the researchers were looking for in the IEPs were the number of minutes per week students were receiving special education services, objectives both long and short, and the

information used to develop the for areas of the IEP. Espin, Deno, Albayrak-Kaymak (1998) study answered these four questions:

1. Do consistent differences exist between the written IEPs for students in the resource room and in inclusive programs?
2. Do components of the IEP vary in relation to student ability level, and does this relation differ for students in resource and inclusive programs?
3. Do components of the IEP vary in relation to student disability category, and does this relationship differ for students in resource and inclusive programs?
4. Do components of the IEP vary in relation to the type of reading program delivered to students, and does this relationship differ for students in resource and inclusive programs? (p. 168)

The results of the study indicated that students in the resource classroom had more individually designed programs compared to the students in the inclusive classroom. The students in the resource room had more long-term objectives written in their IEPs that met the needs of the students. The students in inclusive classroom had more generally written goals that were tailored for their non-disabled peers. Students in the resource room spent 1.5 more time receiving services compared to the students in inclusive classrooms. The researches did conclude that the ability level of disabled students in the resource room and the inclusive room were equal in ability. The results of the study indicated that the students ability level and the number of service minutes recommended on the IEP was greater for students that were in the resource classroom compared to those in the inclusive classroom. This study revealed that IEPs planned by inclusive teachers contained few long-range goals than those in IEPs of teachers in the resource classroom. One unique result revealed in this study was that the greatest amount of time in reading

instruction was given to students in inclusive programs with the highest recommended level of service intensity.

Ingram (1997) conducted a study entitled “Leadership Behaviors of Principals in Inclusive Educational Settings.” This study compared two types of leadership styles: transformational and transactional. Transformational leadership is defined as changing the attitudes of others by making a commitment to the organization’s purpose, goals, and objectives. Transactional leadership is defined as provide extrinsic rewards for service provided to an organization. Ingram (1997) states:

The study explored the leadership behavior of principals in schools with educated moderate and severely disabled students in regular education classrooms on a full-time basis to determine the impact of leadership behavior on teacher motivation to exert effort beyond expectation towards achievement of expected goals (p. 414).

This study used 44 public school teachers who work in K-12 schools who participated in the Michigan Inclusive Education Project. The instrumentation used was the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form 5R (MLQ) which contained 80 questions with a 5-point Likert-type scale (Ingram, 1997). The results of the study provided a comparison of transformational and transactional leadership of principals in schools with severe and moderate disabled students in their schools. Ingram (1997) states these following results from his study:

1. The transformational leadership mean and the transactional leadership mean was statistically significant.
2. These results provided evidence to support the hypothesis that principals who are perceived to exhibit highly transformational behaviors have a greater impact on

teacher' motivation to exert effort than principals who are perceived to exhibit highly transactional behaviors. (p. 420)

Nadyne Guzmán conducted a study entitled, “Leadership for Successful Inclusive Schools.” The purpose of the study was to determine what principal behaviors are common among principals of schools identified as successful in implementing inclusive programs for students with disabilities (Guzmán, 1997). Participants in this study were selected from three districts in an urban county of Colorado based on there differences in their size and family income levels. The schools that were identified through the use of telephone survey interviews with central school district office staff, superintendents, classroom teachers, special education teachers, and parents. In addition, interviews were conducted with principals of the six schools selected for the study. Guzmán (1997) stated these results from the study:

Each principal had established a system of communication that allowed staff members to disagree with policies and practices and make recommendations for changes.

1. Each principal was actively involved in the IEP development process.
2. Each principal was personally involved in dialogue with the parents of students with disabilities.
3. Each principal worked with staff to agree collaboratively on a building philosophy of inclusion.
4. Each principal established policies for addressing specific discipline issues arising from students with disabilities.
5. Each principal had followed a personal plan of professional development that included associated with inclusion.

6. Each principal demonstrated skills in data gathering: listening, observation, and interpretation.
7. Each principal demonstrated skills in problems solving: assessing needs, planning action collaboratively, timely implementation, gathering feedback, and evaluating results. (pp. 445-447)

“Understanding Principals’ Attitudes towards Inclusive Schooling” was a study conducted by Jeff Bailey and Diana du Plessis. The purpose of the study was to obtain a comprehensive understanding of principals’ attitudes toward inclusion. The study was conducted by interviewing principals from private and public schools in Queensland. Also used in this study, was a survey sent to all of the state schools in Queensland where 200 responses were received. The principals used in this study included principals in pre-school, primary, special schools, and high schools. The following are the results from the study conducted (Bailey and du Plessis, 1997):

- Over one-third of the principals believed that the strongest argument in support of inclusion is the benefit to the included child with a disability.
- Over half of the responses accounted for the notion that the student’s inclusion experience was beneficial to their development, and respected their rights.
- Nearly all of the responses placed inclusion in a positive light except for three, which focused on the financial savings exclusion would produce, and two, which asserted that inclusion, could not work.
- Nearly half of the concerns related to inadequate resources and support for classroom teachers.

- Inclusion is good for students with disabilities, but not necessarily for their peers without disabilities. (pp. 434-437)

“Full Inclusion for Students with Learning Disabilities: Too Much of a Good Thing” was a research project conducted by Naomi Zigmond and Janice Baker. The participants in this study consisted of five elementary schools that had implemented full inclusion for students who were learning disabled for several years. The schools selected were in Pennsylvania, Kansas, and Washington State. Zigmond and Baker (1996) state these as the results of their research study:

- Accommodations for the whole class – many teachers described how they already altered an activity, an assignment, or a test based on their perceptions of the needs of the children with LD in their classes.
- Reducing workload – a second strategy that we found in these full inclusion classrooms was a conscious reduction of the workload for students with LD.
- Accommodations for a specific content – very few accommodations were focused on the needs of a particular child with LD.
- Focused instruction on skills or strategies – many of the teachers we talked to were surprised at how difficult it was for the students with LD who were integrated into their classes to learn what they were being asked to learn.
- Peer-partners – the most available “personnel” for extra instruction were classroom peers.
- Small group instruction
- Individualized instruction. (pp. 29-31)

“Teachers’ Experiences with Inclusive Classrooms: Implications for Special Education Reform” was a study conducted by Kathleen Minke, George G. Bear, Sandra Deemer, and

Shaunna Griffin from the University of Delaware. The purpose of this study was to survey teachers' attitudes about teaching student with mild disabilities who were full integrated into a regular education classroom for the entire school day. The participants in this study were teachers from a suburban school district in the mid-Atlantic region. The special education students are integrated in classrooms with their non-disabled peers. The classes are taught by a regular education and special education teachers jointly. Three hundred twenty teachers responded to questionnaires. Minke, Bear, Deemer, and Griffin (1996) report these findings on their study:

- Most teachers in this sample did not see traditional classrooms as appropriate for meeting the needs of children with mild disabilities.
- Regular classroom teachers without access to specific protected resources held more negative attitudes toward integration than did their counterparts in classrooms with such resources.
- Both regular education and special educators in the inclusive classroom reported higher levels of personal efficacy than regular teachers in traditional classrooms.
- Regular education teachers in traditional classrooms regarded themselves as less competent in both teaching and behavior management than either of the two groups.
- Special education teachers perceived themselves as being better trained, more effective, and using different methods than regular teachers.
- Teachers from all groups in this study tended to rate their adaptations for low-achieving students as highly desirable. Teachers working in traditional classrooms described these adaptations as less feasible and reported that they use them less frequently. (pp. 178-180)

Summary

Inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms with their non-disabled peers is a result of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Specifically written in IDEA is the term “least restrict environment.” Wright and Wright (2004) define least restrictive environment as “to the maximum extent appropriate children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are non-disabled” (p. 43). History has proven that inclusion was not being practiced in the early years of public education. In fact, children with disabilities were not permitted to attend public school with their non-disabled peers. Disabled children were either taught in the home or placed in special facilities. When children with disabilities were allowed to attend public school, they were often placed in segregated classrooms with other disabled children. One landmark case that helped the movement of inclusion was *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) that ended segregation for blacks. This case opened the door to laws that would eventually protect the rights of students with disabilities.

Inclusion is grounded in the social constructivist theory where the inclusive classroom serves as a community of learners. Several studies have been conducted to examine the concept of inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom in America and other countries. Some studies analyzed the attitudes of principals and teachers. Other studies examined students with disabilities individual education plans, test data, and other academic data. The results indicated that students with disabilities that were integrated into the general education classroom achieved at a higher level than those students with disabilities that were educated in special classes or pullout programs. Other concerns in the studies were available

resources and training for general education teachers and lack of experience of general education teachers in traditional classrooms.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology and research methods that were used in my study on principals' attitudes toward inclusion. The significance of the study is to determine if Texas high school principals' perceptions of including students with disabilities in the general education classroom is positive and do principals make decisions that have a positive effect on student achievement. The difference between my study and other studies is I focused on Texas high school perceptions of inclusion of students with disabilities, where as other studies focused on elementary administrators, teachers, and support personal from various states and countries. My goal with this study is to provide evidence that principals' positive attitudes toward inclusion has provided higher achievement for students with disabilities compared to their disabled peers in non-inclusive schools. In addition, what kind of formal training needs to be provided for principals while pursuing their degrees in relation to the concept of inclusion?

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research method that was used to gather data from a population of Texas high school principals. Specifically this chapter discusses the research perspective, research questions, research context, participants in the study, instrumentation and data collection, and data analysis. Also included is a brief explanation of the survey instrument that was utilized to collect data. The chapter concludes with a summary of the overall methodology for the study.

Research Perspective

This was a quantitative study that utilized survey methodology to collect data. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. This type of research method describes characteristics of a selected population by directly examining selected samples of that population (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005).

Research Questions

This study endeavored to answer the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Texas high school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom?
2. What is the relationship between Texas high school principals' perception of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom in relation to their personal experiences?
3. What is the relationship between Texas high school principals' perception of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom to their professional training?

4. What is the relationship between Texas high school principals' perception of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom and to their formal training in inclusion?

Research Context

The study took place in 1211 public high schools in the state of Texas. The school districts in the state of Texas are divided into 20 regions. In addition, Texas high schools are also classified by the University Interscholastic League (UIL) based on the school's enrollment. Those classifications are IA, IIA, IIA, IVA, and VA. The high schools vary according to population and ethnicity. The study was conducted from June through August of 2010.

The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (P.L. 94-142) is the federal law that was enacted in 1975, which provided provisions for free and appropriate education for all children. Beninghof and Singer (1995) state that this federal law enacted in 1975, includes provisions for free and appropriate education for all students with disabilities, an organization of planning and placement teams, a design of individualized education programs (IEPS), and the concept of least restrictive environment (LRE). The Individual with Disabilities Education Act provided the foundation for which the concept of inclusion is founded. Inclusion provides accessibility to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities, thus allowing these students to be educated with their non-disabled peers.

Participants

The participants in this study included public high school principals in the state of Texas. The list of high school principals was developed through a database from the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals (TASSP), which contains the email addresses of secondary administrators. In the spring of 2010, there were 1211 current independent public

Texas high school principals. Each of the high school principals was emailed the survey through TASSP. I chose high school principals because I am a high school administrator who works in an inclusive school.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

This study examined Texas high school principals' perceptions of the inclusion of special education students into general education classrooms. A survey was utilized to collect this data. The survey was distributed through a survey web site, entitled Survey Monkey. The participants were emailed a letter stating the purpose of the survey, asking their permission to use the data provided, and a link to the survey through the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals (TASSP). For purposes of confidentiality, the survey did not contain questions identifying the school or the school's principal. A copy of the survey and the letter sent to the principals is located in the appendix A. The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) approved this study.

The instrument used in this study is a questionnaire entitled, Principals and Inclusion Survey (PIS), developed by Dr. Cindy Praisner (2003) from a previous study. Dr. Praisner created Sections I, II and IV of the questionnaire. Section III of the questionnaire was adapted by Dr. G.H. Stainback (1986) from the Autism Attitude Scale for teachers. Permission to use sections was granted by an email from Dr. Praisner for Sections I, II, and IV of the questionnaire. Permission to use section III of this survey was granted by email from Dr. Stainback for section III of the questionnaire. The communications can be found in appendix B.

The validity of The Principals and Inclusion Survey (PIS) was determined by the original authors, Dr. Cindy Praisner (2003), Sections I, II, and IV and Dr. G.H. Stainback (1986), Section III, and is explained in the discussion of each section. A reliability measure was not computed

for the entire survey due to the variety of question types and amount of different information collected within it (Praisner, 2003).

Section I of the Principals and Inclusion Survey is designed to elicit demographic information of each high school. This section was modified to provide more detailed understanding of each school's demographics. The modifications include a question to determine if the high school is an IA, IIA, IIIA, IVA, or VA high school.

Section II of the PIS is designed to gather information on the high school principal's training and experience. Question 2 in the section was changed from "Years as an elementary principal" to "Years as a high school principal." To ensure validity of this section, the content chosen for the questions was based on review of the literature to identify those factors related to personal characteristics, training, and experience that might relate to an educators' professional attitudes toward inclusion. Variables that showed a positive, negative, or inconsistent relationship with principal's attitudes toward inclusion were chosen for incorporation in the survey. To specifically address the validity for this section, the questionnaire items were presented to a panel of four university professors with experience in the area of integration of students with disabilities and/or educational administration. They reviewed, analyzed, and evaluated the questions to assure the potential content validity of the questions for measuring the variables that may relate to the attitudes of elementary principals. In addition, to improve the clarity and assess the content validity of the survey instrument, the survey was piloted with nine individuals in school leadership positions. Responses formats varied between fill in the blank and closed format responses categories in which the respondent chose the most appropriate response. Question 13 was presented as a chart in which the respondent's choice was scored by giving values to the types of experiences as follows: -2 for negative experience, -1 for somewhat

negative experience, 0 for no experience, 1 for somewhat positive experience, and 2 for positive experience. The total possible score range was from -22 to 22.

Section III is designed to gain information on the high school principal's attitudes toward inclusion of students with special needs. Stainback (1986) addressed the question of validity by presenting the questionnaire to a panel of five administrators with experience in the integration of students with severe and profound disabilities into general education environments. The five administrators reviewed, analyzed, and evaluated the questions to assure the potential content validity of the questions for measuring the attitudes of superintendents. In addition, Stainback (1986) conducted an analysis of reliability by computing a Person product-moment correlation coefficient with a split half correction factor. The reliability coefficient was 0.899 for this section.

Section IV of the PIS was designed to measure principals' perceptions about the most appropriate placement for students with disabilities. The validity of this section was considered excellent because the items were based upon all of the possibilities of placement and identification currently available in Pennsylvania through special education services as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Regulations (34 CFR Part 300).

The survey was placed on <http://www.surveymonkey.com/>. An email was sent, on my behalf, to the 1211 independent high school principals in Texas from the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals (TASSP) giving them a description of the study, requesting their permission to use their information in the study, and explaining that no information would be used to identify them or their school. The email included a link to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/> for them to take the survey anonymously, (see appendix A.) Data was collected over a three-month.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, present the data summaries, and to examine the variables. Frequency distributions and percentages were computed for each variable of the survey. For section II of the survey, the training and experience of high school principals, the frequency distributions and percentages were determined for each experience type across all disabilities, along with each category in section IV of the survey. A measure of central tendency was calculated for questions in section II on formal training and for the number of in-service training hours for inclusive practices. A correlation between the principals' perception of inclusion and their personal experience was calculated for the second research question. In addition, correlations were calculated between principals' perceptions and professional training for the third research question. A significant relationship was determined by examining each variable of the attitudes of high school principals (Praisner, 2003).

Summary

The intent of this study was to measure the attitudes of Texas high school principals toward inclusion of learning disabled and emotionally disturbed special education students in the general education classroom. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. This chapter contained the research perspective, research context, participants, instrumentation and how the data was collected, and data analysis. The next chapter explains the analysis of the data collected.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This study examined the attitudes of Texas high school principals toward inclusion and their perception of the inclusion of special education students into the general education classroom. An electronic survey titled “Principals and Inclusion Survey (PIS)” was emailed to all of the Texas high school principals. The online survey was available to principals for three months, June 2010 - August 2010. This chapter is organized in terms of the research questions investigated in this study. First is demographic information provided by the principals; next, training and experience of the high school principals; then, attitudes toward inclusion of students with special needs; and finally principal’s perceptions about the most appropriate placements for students with disabilities based on their training and experience.

Demographic Data

A total of 1211 Texas high school principals were sent the online survey. The return rate was 395 (32.1%) overall responses. The number of responses varied per question with a range of 315 to 395. The average number of students in the schools surveyed was 250 (32.7%) or less. The next closest enrollment size was 1000 (25.1%) students. The average class size was between 10-19 (46.8%) students and 20-29 students (50.9%). The University Scholastic League (UIL) classification varied among respondents. The UIL classification is based on enrollment. For example, a 5A school has an enrollment of 2,065 or more students, while a 1A school has an enrollment of 199 or less students. Eighty-nine (24.5%) were 5A schools and 82 (22.5%) were 1A schools. All other respondents fell in between 1A and 5A schools. The average percentage of students with individual education plans (IEPs) was 171 (44.2%). The approximate number of

students with IEPs included in the regular education classrooms for at least 75% of the day, excluding gifted and talented students, was 218 (55.8%).

The average age of the respondents was 41-50 (39.0%) years old. The majority of the high school principals were male (65.7%). Their full regular education experience was 19 or more years (42.8%). The principal’s full time special education experience, however, was between 0-5 years (81.7%). The average number of years of the high school principal surveyed was 0-5 years (59.6%).

Table 1

Demographic Data

Results	Number	Percentage
Average Number of Students	250	32.7%
Average Class Size	10-19 20-29	46.8% 50.9%
University Interscholastic League (UIL) Classification	89 in 5A 82 in 1A	24.5% 22.5%
Average Number Students with IEP’s	171	44.2%
Number of Students with IEP’s Included in the Regular Education Classroom 75% of the Day	218	55.8%
Average Age of Respondents	41-50	39.0%
Gender of Respondents	234 males 122 Females	65.7% 34.3%
Full Time Regular Education Experience	19 or more years	42.8%
Full Time Special Education Experience	0-5 years	81.7%
Average Number of Years as a High School Principal	0-5 years	59.6%

Results

The results are organized around the four research questions, which guided this study.

1. What are the attitudes of Texas high school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom?

Section III of the Principals and Inclusion Survey (PIS) included ten questions where respondents answered *strongly agree*, *agree*, *uncertain*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree*. The mean of the total of ten questions was 25.71 with a standard deviation of 10.70. The skewness was -1.81 with a kurtosis of 1.18. There were 342 total responses, not every principal responded to each question. The high number of responses for the questions was 342 and lowest number of responses was 337.

Table 2

Research Question One Statistical Results

Mean	25.71
Standard Deviation	10.70
Skewness	-1.81
Kurtosis	1.18

The results indicated Texas high school principals' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom were positive. The chart below shows a summary of the responses for each statement. For each question answered, the highest percentage indicated a positive attitude. The first question, 191 (55%) of the principal chose disagree to the statement: Only teachers with special education experience can be expected to deal with student students with severe/profound disabilities in a school setting. One hundred

eighty-four (54.3%) of the principals responded agree with the statement: Schools with both students with severe and profound disabilities and students without disabilities enhance the learning experiences of students with severe/profound disabilities. One hundred seventy-three (50.7%) principals responded positively disagree to the statement: Students with severe/profound disabilities are too impaired to benefit from the activities of a regular school. One hundred sixty-eight (49.6%) principals, responded agree to the following statement: A good regular educator can do a lot to help a student with a severe/profound disability. One hundred twenty-two principals (36.2%) responded disagree to the following statement: In general, students with severe/profound disabilities should be placed in special classes/schools specifically designed for them. One hundred eighty-one (53.2%) of respondents answered “agree” to the statement: Students with disabilities can profit from contact with students with severe/profound disabilities.

For Statement 7: Regular education should be modified to meet the needs of all students including students with severe/profound disabilities, 41.1% (139) principals responded “agree.” One hundred seventy-five (51.5%) of principals responded, “disagree” to the eighth statement: It is unfair to ask/expect regular teachers to accept students with severe/profound disabilities. For Statement 9, 49.9% (170) principals responded, “disagree:” No discretionary financial resources should be allocated for the integration of students with severe/profound disabilities. Finally, 108 (31.7%) of respondents chose “agree” to the 10th statement: It should be policy and/or law that students with disabilities are integrated into regular educational programs and activities.

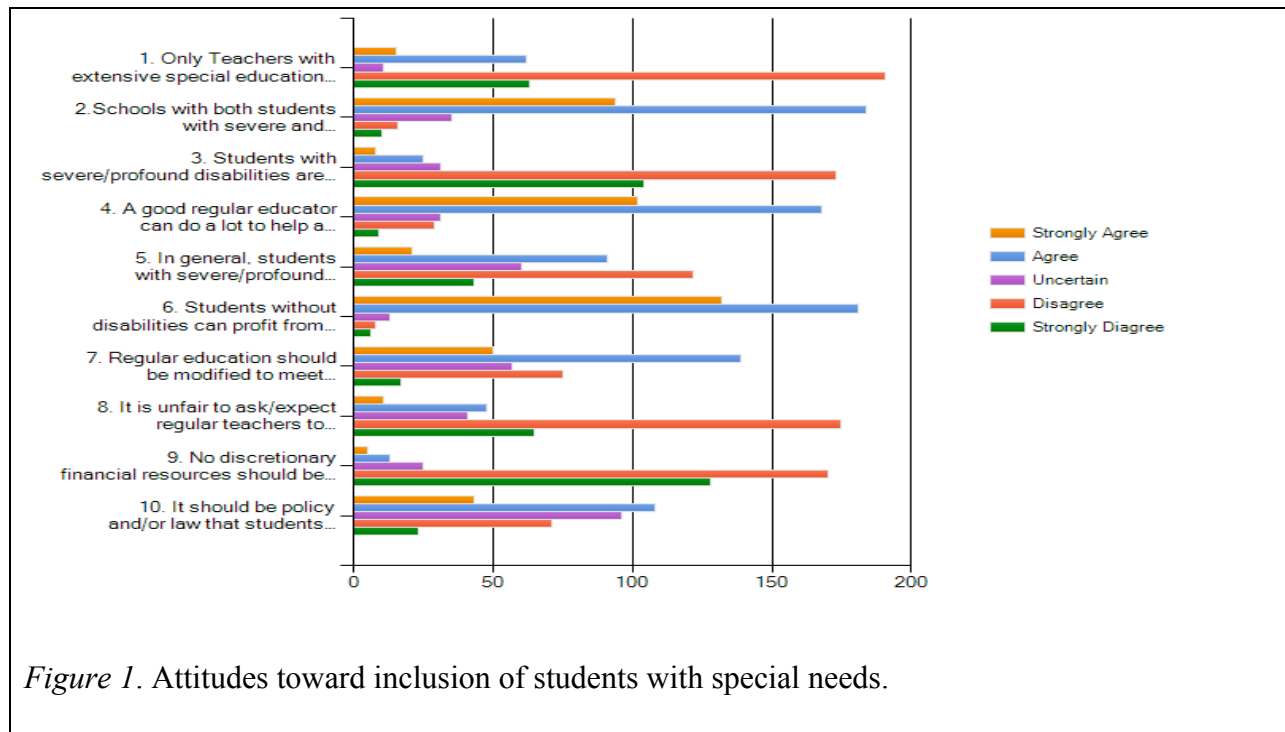
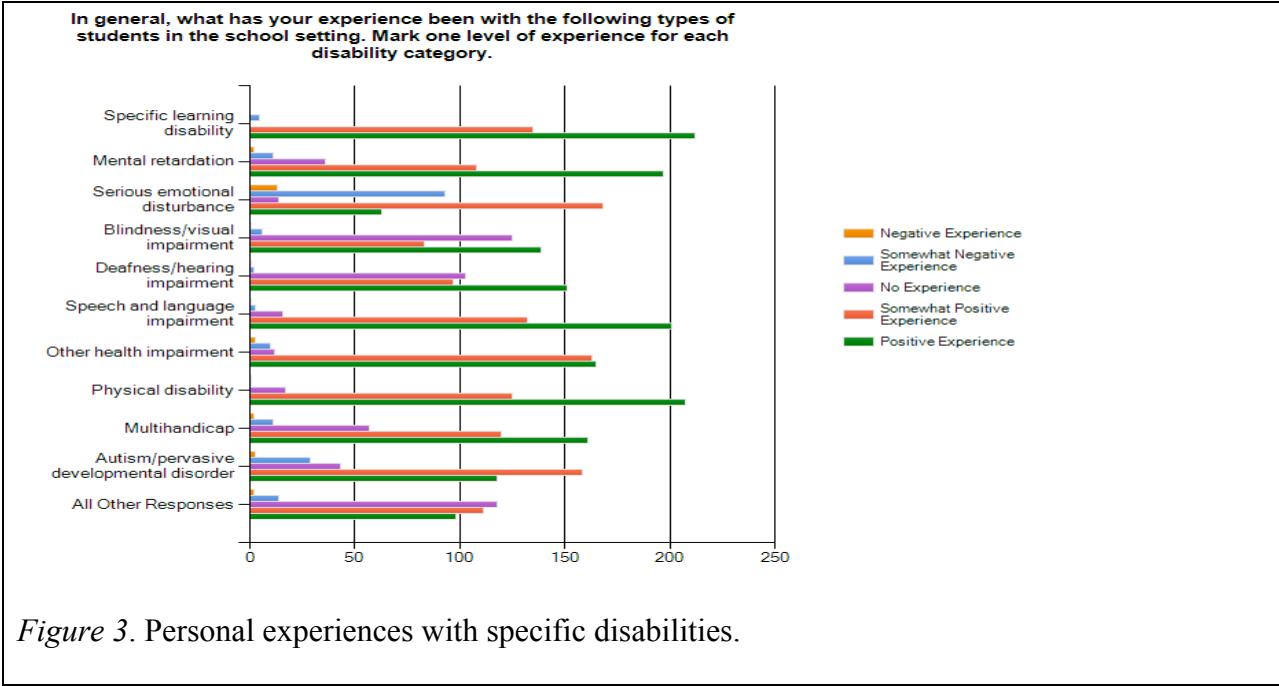
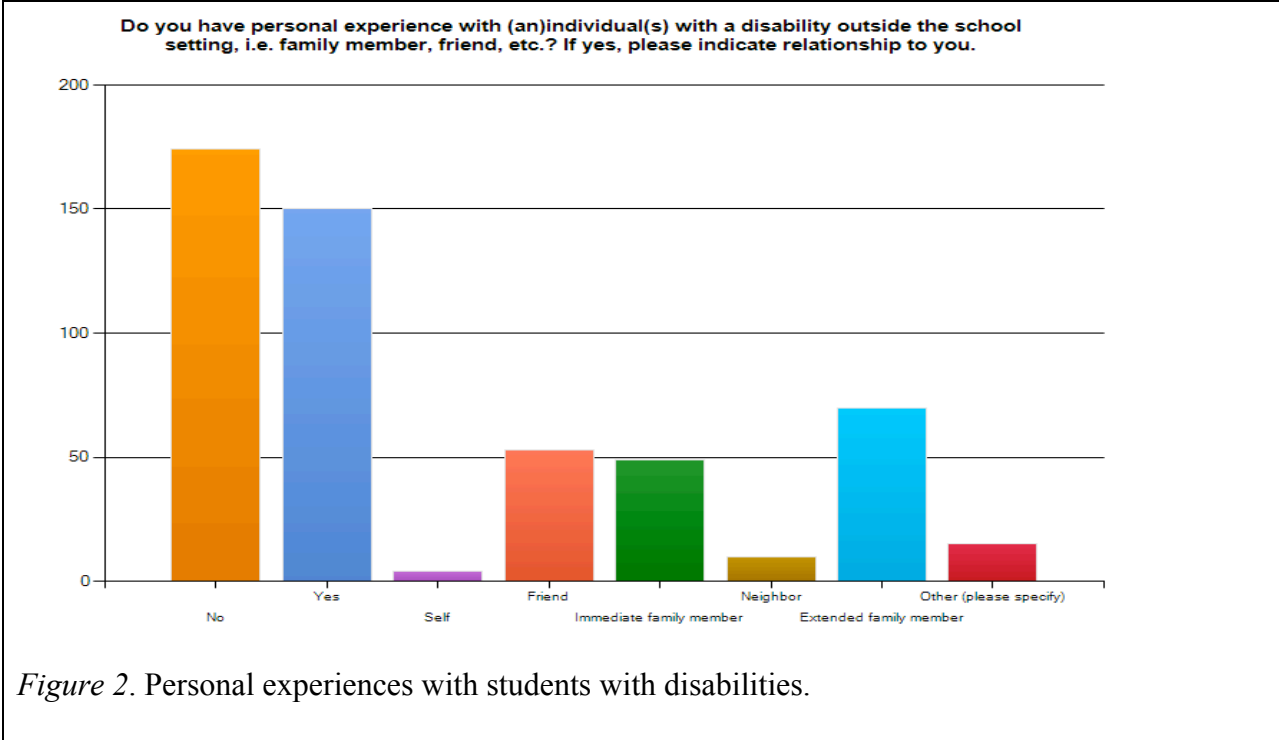


Figure 1. Attitudes toward inclusion of students with special needs.

2. What is the relationship between Texas high school principals’ perception of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom in relation to their personal experiences?

The mean was 37.5 with standard deviation of 13.88. The skewness was -1.97 with a kurtosis of 2.85. The correlation between the principals’ perception and their personal experiences was .07. The correlation factor between Texas high school principals’ perception of inclusion and their personal experiences is higher than .05, indicating there is a correlation between the two factors. The respondents chose positive experiences for the following: specific learning disability; mental retardation; blindness/visual impairment; deafness/hearing impairment; speech and language impairment; other health impairment; physical disability; and multihandicap. The principals indicated they had somewhat positive experiences with serious emotional disturbance and autism/pervasive developmental disorder.



3. What is the relationship between Texas high school principals' perception of students with disabilities in the general education classroom to their professional training?

This question analyzed five different experience areas: Years of experience as a regular education teacher, years of experience as a special education teacher, and years of experience of as a high school principal. Also analyzed were two areas of training: special education training and in-service training.

The results of the survey indicated that there are two areas where a positive correlation exists: special education training credits and in-service training experience were the correlation number was higher than .05. The results indicated Texas high school principals' perceptions for including students with disabilities into the general education classroom was based on the training hours in inclusive practices, 0.16 correlation factor. 41.8% of 352 respondents had twenty-five or more hours of inclusive practices training. 44.0% of 348 respondents had only 1-9 hours of special education credits in their training, 0.13 correlation factor. The majority of principals that responded had five or less years of full-time special education teaching experience, and 19 or more years of full-time regular education experience.

Table 3

Correlations between Perceptions and Professional Training

Years of Regular Education Teaching Experience	-0.13
Years of Special Education Teaching Experience	-0.01
Years as a High School Principal	-0.03
Special Education training credits	0.13
In-service training experience	0.16

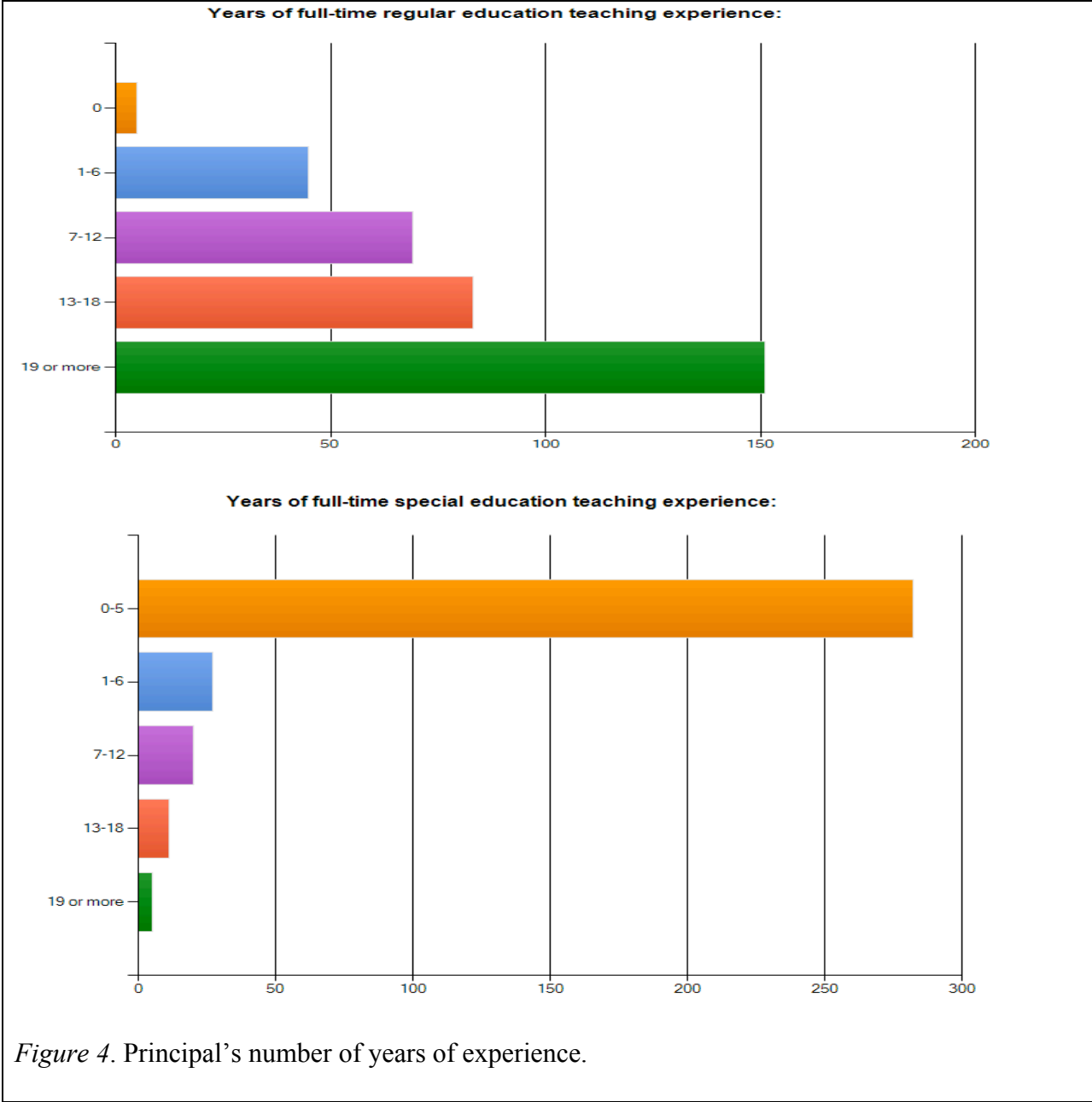


Figure 4. Principal's number of years of experience.

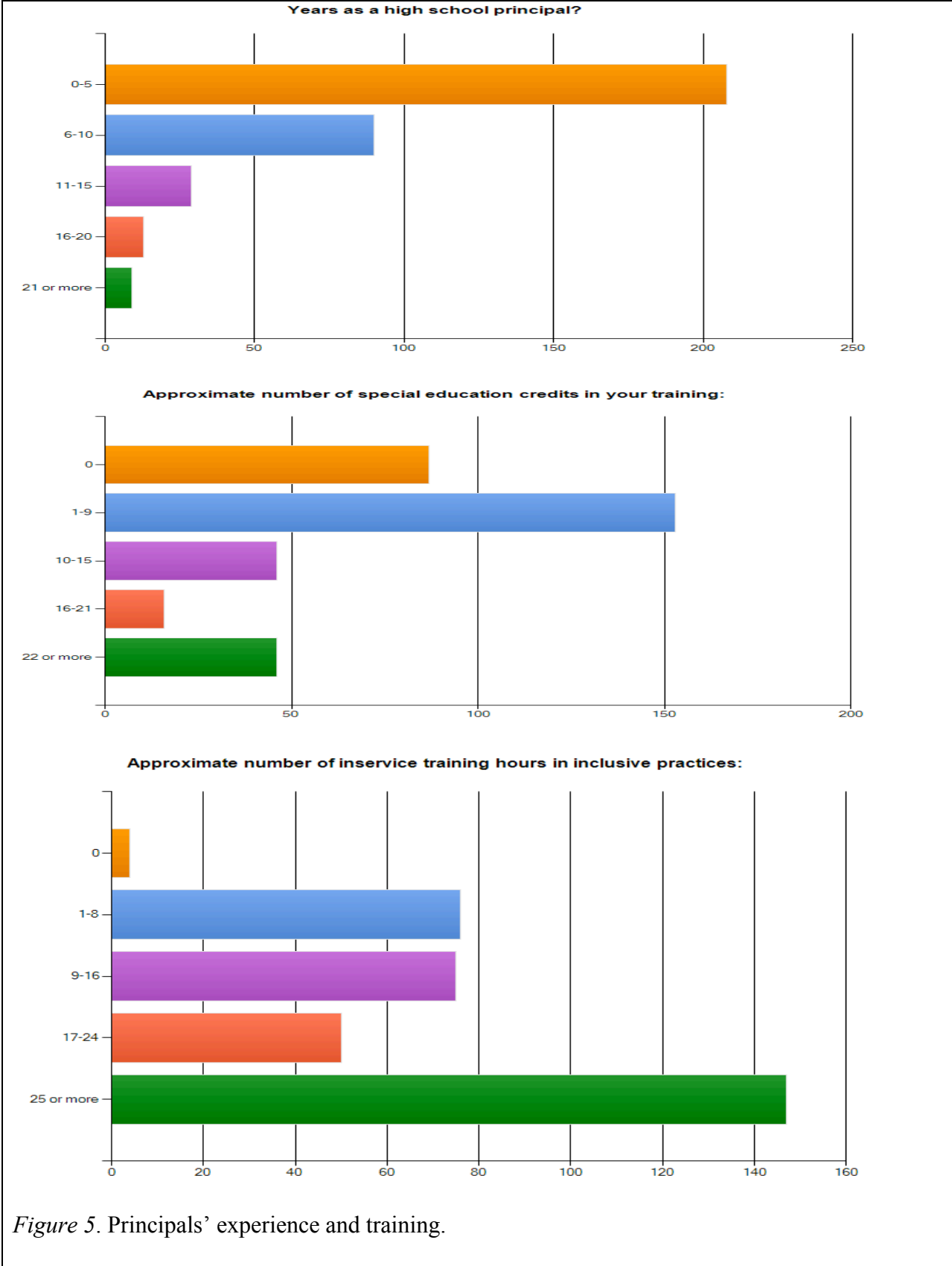


Figure 5. Principals' experience and training.

4. What is the relationship between Texas high school principals' perception of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom to their formal training in inclusion?

There were fourteen areas of training that were presented and each principal was asked to mark the areas where they received their formal training, accounting for 10% of the content or their courses. Three hundred fifty-two principals responded to the each of the individual items. No one respondent had all of the fourteen topics included in their formal training. The most frequent topic principals had as part of their formal training, was special education law (94.6%). The topic principals had least in their formal training was family intervention training (14.2%). There were three topics that had around the same percentage: Characteristics of students with disabilities (77.6%), Behavior management class for working with students with disabilities (77.6%), and crisis intervention (77.8%). The following table shows the number of responses received on principals' formal training.

Table 4

Principals' Formal Training in Specific Areas

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Characteristics of students with disabilities	77.6%	273
Behavior management class for working with students with disabilities	77.6%	273
Academic programming for student with disabilities	53.1%	187
Special education law	94.6%	333
Crisis intervention	77.8%	274
Life Skills training for students with disabilities	23.6%	83

(table continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Teambuilding	55.4%	195
Interagency cooperation	15.9%	56
Family intervention training	14.2%	50
Supporting and training teachers to handle inclusion	61.6%	217
Change process	45.7%	161
Eliciting parent and community support for inclusion	18.5%	65
Fostering teacher collaboration	62.2%	219
Field based experience with actual inclusion activities.	24.7%	87

Appropriate Placements for Students with Disabilities

The study examined Texas high school principals' perception for the best placement of students with different disabilities. The disabilities included specific learning disabilities, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance, blindness/visual impairment, deafness/hearing impairment, speech and language impairment, other health impairment, physical disability, multihandicapped, Autism/pervasive developmental disorder, and neurological impairment. The selections for each disability were the following: special education services outside regular school; special class for most or all part of the school day; part-time special education class; regular classroom instruction and resource room; regular classroom instruction for most of the day; and full-time regular education support.

The results with the highest percentage for each Texas high school principals' perception for the most appropriate placements for students with disabilities were the following:

- Specific learning disability – 48% of 320 respondents chose full-time education with support.
- Mental retardation – 34.6% of 321 respondents chose special class for most of all of the school day. 29.9% of 321 respondents also part-time special education class.
- Serious emotional disturbance – 32.7% of 321 respondents chose special class for most or all of the school day.
- Blindness/visual impairment – 50% of 319 respondents chose full-time regular education with support.
- Deafness/hearing impaired – 51.4% of 319 respondents chose full-time regular education with support.
- Speech and language impairment – 62.8% of 317 respondents chose full-time education with support.
- Other health impairment – 61.6% of 318 respondents chose full-time education support.
- Physical disability – 66.6% of 317 respondents chose full-time education support.
- Multihandicapped – 25.7% of 315 respondents chose full-time education support. 22.5% chose regular classroom instruction for most of the day.
- Autism/pervasive development disorder – 20.9% of 316 respondents chose regular classroom instruction and resource room; 20.3% chose regular classroom instruction for most of the day, 19.6% chose full-time education with support.
- Neurological impairment – 24.5% of 318 respondents chose special education class for most or all of the school day; and 24.2% chose part-time education class.

The results of this section indicated the high school principals chose the full-time education with support for the majority of the disabilities surveyed. For the more severe disabilities (mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance), the principals chose a more non-inclusive setting.

Summary

Section I of the Principals and Inclusion Survey was designed to provide background information on the schools. The results indicated that majority of the principals surveyed were from schools with a population of 250 or less. The average class size varied from 10 to 29 students. The classification of schools based on the criteria from University Interscholastic League (UIL) was 5A and 1A. The approximate number of IEP's in the building was 6-10%, and the number of students with IEPs included in the regular education classroom was 81-100% as reported by the principals.

Section II of the survey examined the training and experience of the principals. The average age of the respondents was 41-50 and the majority of them were male. Nineteen or more of them have full-time regular teaching experience, while five or less had special education teaching experience. The majority of the principals surveyed had been a high school principal for five or less years. One to nine special education credits were included in their training, but the majority had 25 or more in-service training in inclusive practices. Special education law was the area most chosen that was included in the principals' formal training. Most of the principals were not certified in special education, but did have a specific plan to deal with a crisis situation involving students with special needs. Half of the high school principals surveyed did have personal experience with individuals with disabilities and the other half did not have any experience.

Section III analyzed the Texas high school principal's attitudes toward inclusion of student with special needs. The overall outcome revealed a positive correlation between the principals'

attitudes on inclusion of students with disabilities based on the principal's personal experiences and training.

Section IV of the survey measured principals' perceptions about the most appropriate placements for students with different disabilities. The majority of the principals agreed that inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom was the best placement for the disabilities listed in the survey. However, for the more severe disabilities, the principals favored a more non-inclusive setting. Those disabilities included mental retardation and serious emotional disturbance. For the cognitive disabilities, combinations of an inclusive and non-inclusive setting were chosen.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine Texas high school principals' attitudes toward the inclusion of student with disabilities into the general education classroom. The principal's personal experience, professional training, and formal training were examined. This study was a quantitative study using survey methodology. The "Principal's Inclusion Survey" developed by Cindy Praisner and G.H. Stainback, was distributed electronically to 1211 Texas high school principals. The major sections of the chapter include the statement of the problem, review of the methodology, summary of the results, and discussion of the results.

Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the attitudes and perceptions of Texas high school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom. In addition, the principal's personal experiences, professional training, and formal training were examined. This study answered these following specific questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Texas high school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom?
2. What is the relationship between Texas high school principals' perception of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom in relation to their personal experiences?
3. What is the relationship between Texas high school principals' perception of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom to their professional training?

4. What is the relationship between Texas high school principals' perception of inclusion with students with disabilities in the general education classroom and to their formal training in inclusion?

Overview of Methodology

This was a quantitative study that used survey methodology to collect the data. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics, which described the characteristics of the population being surveyed. The participants in this study included Texas public high school principals. The list of participants was developed from a principal's database from the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals (TASSP). The survey used in this study was the "Principals and Inclusion Survey (PIS)" developed by Dr. Cindy Praisner (2003) and Dr. G.H. Stainback (1986). The Texas Association of Secondary School Principals emailed the survey to the 1211 Texas high school principals in June 2010. The email included a letter stating the purpose of the survey, asking permission to use the data provided, and a link to the survey on Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey is a web site that allows you to create professional online surveys. The survey was available online from June 2010 through August 2010. The survey was divided into four sections. The first section was gathering information on demographic data; the second section was obtaining information on training and experience; section III was eliciting information on principal's attitudes toward the inclusion of students with special needs; and the last section was collecting information on the most appropriate placements for students with disabilities.

Once the data was collected, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the results, present the data summaries, and examine the variables. Frequency distributions and percentages were computed for each variable in the study using formulas in Microsoft Excel. In section II

and section IV of the PIS, the frequency distributions and percentages were calculated using formulas in Microsoft Excel for each experience type across all disabilities. A correlation between the principals' perception of inclusion and their personal experience was calculated for my second research question; and correlations were calculated between principals' perceptions and professional training for the third research question. In addition, a measure of central tendency was calculated for the question on formal training and the number of in-service hours for inclusive practices.

Summary of the Results

The intent of this study was to investigate the attitudes of Texas high school principals' toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The principal's personal experiences, professional training, and formal training were analyzed. The study answered the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Texas high school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom?

Based on the responses of the ten questions in section III of the Principals and Inclusions Survey, the principal's attitudes were positive. For all of the ten questions answered, the highest percentages showed a positive attitude. The mean total for the ten questions was 25.705 with a standard deviation of 10.693. The responses indicated that the high school principals felt that students with disabilities, even those with severe/profound disabilities, would benefit from being in the general education classroom with their non-disabled peers, with modifications to meet their needs. There was one question in this section where there was a 10% difference between "agree" and "disagree." The question was the following: In general, students with

severe/profound disabilities should be placed in special education classes/schools specifically designed for them. 36.2% of the principals disagreed with this statement, and 27.0% agreed.

2. What is the relationship between Texas high school principals' perception of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom in relation to their personal experiences?

The results indicated there is a relationship between the principal's perception of inclusion and their personal experiences. The mean was 37.535 with a standard deviation of 13.88 and correlation of .072. Principals were asked about having a personal experience with a disability outside of the school setting, 49.9% of the principals answered no and 42.5% answered yes. The percentage of principals that indicated they had an extended family member with a disability was 19.8%; 15.0% of the principals had experiences with a friend; and 13.9% of the principals had personal experiences with an immediate family member. These following disabilities received positive experiences from the principals: specific learning disability; mental retardation; blindness/visual impairment; deafness/hearing impairment; speech and language impairment; other health impairment; physical disability; and multihandicapped. These following disabilities received a somewhat positive experience from the principals: serious emotional disturbance and autism/pervasive developmental disorder.

3. What is the relationship between Texas high school principals' perception of students with disabilities in the general education classroom to their professional training?

Three difference levels of experience were analyzed to answer this question. Those three areas are the following: years of experience as a regular education teacher, years of experience as a special education teacher, and years of experience as a high school principal. In addition, two areas of training were analyzed, special education training and in-service training. A positive

correlation exists between principal's special education training experience (0.131819) and in-service training experience (0.158794). The results of the survey indicated Texas high school principals' positive perceptions for inclusion was based on the training hours in inclusive practices. The results indicated there was not a positive correlation between the perception of students with disabilities and years of experience as a regular education teacher, special education teacher, or as a high school principal. The majority of principals that responded had five or less years of full-time special education teaching experience and 19 or more years of full-time regular education experience.

4. What is the relationship between Texas high school principals' perception of students with disabilities in the general education classroom and to their formal training in inclusion?

There were fourteen areas of training that were examined in this study. Of all of the fourteen areas listed for formal training, no principal indicated they had all of them as part of their formal training. The majority of principals (94.6%) indicated they did have special education law as part of their formal training. There were three formal training topics where the percentages were almost the same: characteristics of students with disabilities (77.6%), behavior management class for working with student with disabilities (77.6%), and crisis intervention (77.8%).

This study also analyzed the appropriate placements for students with disabilities with different disabilities. The disabilities included specific learning disabilities, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance, blindness/visual impairment, deafness/hearing impairment, speech and language impairment, other health impairment, physical disability, multihandicapped, Autism/pervasive developmental disorder, and neurological impairment. The principals

indicated that full-time education with support would be the best placement for the majority of the disabilities listed on the survey. In addition, the principals indicated a more restricted, non-inclusive setting would be appropriate for more severe disabilities such as mental retardation and serious emotional disturbance.

Discussion of the Results

This study examined the attitudes of Texas high school principals' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom. The first research question, "What are the attitudes of Texas high school principal's toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom?" Principal's attitudes were positive towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The principals felt that students with disabilities would benefit from contact with their non-disabled peers. Furthermore, principals felt the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom should be made into policy and/or law. Although some principals felt a less inclusive setting would be beneficial for students that had severe/profound disabilities. The most influential person in developing inclusive schools is the building principal (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000). Since the principal is the most influential person on the campus, having a positive attitude toward inclusion provides students with disabilities the greatest opportunity to achieve.

The second research question, "What is the relationship between the Texas high school principals' perception of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom in relation to their personal experiences?" The results indicated that there is a positive correlation between principal's perception and their personal experiences. The principals listed positive experiences for the following disabilities:

- Specific learning disability
- Mental retardation
- Blindness/visual impairment
- Deafness/hearing impairment
- Speech and language impairment
- Other health impairment
- Physical disability
- Multihandicapped

The principals indicated somewhat positive experiences with serious emotional disturbance and autism/pervasive disorder. The positive experiences with several of the disabilities provided principals with knowledge to make informed decisions on the placement of students with disabilities into the general education classroom. Therefore, students can achieve to their maximum extent possible.

The third research question, “What is the relationship between Texas high school principals’ perception of students with disabilities in the general education classroom to their professional training?” did not reveal a positive correlation between their years of experience as a regular and/or special education teacher or high school principal. However, a positive correlation was revealed between the principal’s perception and special education training credits and in-service training experience. The majority of principals that responded had 19 or more years as regular education teachers, but only five or less years’ special education teaching experience. In addition, the majority of the principals had only been a high school principal for five or less years. The interesting part of the data revealed during the principal’s formal training, the principals only received from one to nine special education credits, but received over 25 or

more hours of in-service training in inclusionary practices. Principal's training on inclusion was mainly from training they received after being hired and not from their formal education.

The last research question for this study, "What is the relationship between Texas high school principals' perception of inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom to their formal training in inclusion?" uncovered some interesting data. 94.6% of the respondents had special education law as part of their formal inclusion training, but actual topics relating to inclusion were under 25%. However, there were three areas where 77% of the principals had as part of their formal training: characteristics of students with disabilities, behavior management class for working with students with disabilities, and crisis intervention. The relationship between principal's perception and their formal training in inclusion has revealed a lack of formal training. The results indicated the majority of principals received the standard training in special education law and practices, but little training in inclusive practices.

The last part of this study examined Texas high school principals' perception for the best placement of students with different disabilities. The disabilities are the same disabilities that were analyzed in research question two. The results revealed that for the majority of the disabilities, except for mental retardation and serious emotional disturbance, principals chose the least restrictive environment for these students. The principals felt that inclusion of students in the general education classroom with their non-disabled peers would be educationally beneficial for students with disabilities.

Relationship to Current Studies

The results from previous studies conducted revealed similar conclusions to those derived from this study. Those studies include research conducted by Praiser (2003), Harris (2009), Brown (2007), and Ramirez (2006). The overall attitudes of principals toward the inclusion of

students with disabilities were positive. However, some school administrators had concerns about the placements of students with more severe/profound disabilities, such as serious emotional disturbance and mental retardation, and felt that these students should be placed in more restrictive settings. Below are some current studies on principal's attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom.

Praisner (2003) concluded that elementary principal's attitudes had a more positive attitude toward inclusion and were more favorable to place students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. Harris (2009) conducted a study on elementary school assistant principals' attitudes toward inclusion of special needs students in the general education setting. The study revealed that elementary assistant principals recommended that students with autism, mental retardation, and serious emotional disturbance be placed in more restrictive for all or most of the school day. Harris (2009) also revealed that for students with specific learning disabilities, elementary school principals recommended these students should receive regular education classroom instruction support and resources.

Brown (2007) investigated the attitudes of administrators toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education and factors influencing their attitudes. Brown (2007) found that female administrators perceived that regular education were teachers trained adequately to cope with students with disabilities, and regardless of whether parents of students objected to inclusion, the practice should be supported. Brown also revealed that middle school administrators tended to agree that special needs students belong in special schools where all their needs can be met and they benefit academically from inclusion in regular classrooms.

Ramirez (2006) studied elementary principals' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting. Ramirez (2006) concluded from this study that

demographic factors, training, and experience did not have a statistically significant affect on principals, and overall attitudes toward inclusion were more favorable toward inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom.

Limitations of Results

This study focused on Texas high school principals. The overall return rate on the survey was 396 respondents, but throughout the survey the respondents skipped various questions. There were 1211 Texas high school principals in the spring of 2010. The return rate should have been higher and all of the questions should have been answered, instead of the respondents skipping certain questions. Each question was skipped one or more times. The first part of the survey contained questions relating to the background of the schools such as number of students, class size, school size based on the University of Interscholastic (UIL) enrollment, age of principals, and gender of principals. The majority of the principals were from schools with either 250 students or less or 1000 or more students. There were not many principals in schools with enrollments between 251 to 999 students. The majority of the schools had class sizes between 10-19 or 20-29 students. The majority of the principals were ages 41 – 60 and male. This information provided insight on the respondents. The results of this study would have shown a more accurate picture of principal's attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom if more principals had responded and answered all of the questions. In addition, a more widespread enrollment in schools would have yielded more accurate results. The respondents represented either small schools or large schools, with very little representation in mid-size schools (enrollments between 251-800 students).

Implications for Practice

This study revealed that principal's attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education were positive. Principals are the most influential person on campus and set the tone for the entire school. Principals are responsible for the educational programs at school campuses. Since principals have a positive attitude toward inclusion of students with disabilities, they are able to make the decisions that will benefit students with disabilities. Their positive attitudes will serve as an example to the school staff, thus providing a positive learning environment for disabled students.

This study revealed one area of weakness in the principal's knowledge of inclusive practices. One area found weak is formal training. The majority of the principals received formal training in special education law and basic special education procedures, but very little in inclusion. The most training the principals received in inclusion was through in-service training. Colleges need to include inclusive practices as part of their training programs. One reason is that students with disabilities are now required to take grade level state assessments. For example, the Texas Academic Knowledge and Skills Test (TAKS), which is also a requirement for high school graduation. In order for students with disabilities to be successful, they will need to be taught in the general education classroom with their non-disabled peers.

The findings from this study also uncovered that lack of training in dealing with students with more severe/profound disabilities, such as mental retardation and serious emotional disturbance. This study revealed that principals preferred a more restrictive setting for these students. Principals need more in-service training on how to integrate these students into the general education classroom.

Recommendations for Future Research

An area to be considered for future research is to focus on the educational impact of inclusion on students with disabilities into the general education classroom by tracking them from elementary to high school and by looking at national, state, and local formal assessments and grades. Also, this study focused solely on Texas high school principals. Therefore, this study can be expanded to include all campus and district administrators in the state of Texas and maybe compare the results to other states.

The findings of this study suggest that more inclusive training be added to a principal's formal training. Hence, research can be done to examine the effects of more inclusive training on principal's attitudes toward inclusion before they take on their first administrative position.

Conclusion

The results of the study found that principals have a positive attitude for the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom. Principals are the center of the educational environment at their campuses. With this positive attitude toward inclusion, principals can work with regular and special education teachers to design a learning environment where students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers will achieve at higher levels. Once more inclusive training is provided, students with disabilities will be able to reach their maximum potential and go beyond.

APPENDIX A
LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

To: [Email]
From: [Email]

Subject: Principals and Inclusion Survey for Dissertation Study Body:

Dear:

My name is Troy Farris. I am currently a doctoral student at the University of North Texas in Denton. I am conducting a study for my dissertation on Texas High School Principals' Attitude Toward the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities into the General Education classroom. I am currently a high school assistant principal. One of my duties is overseeing the special education department. I have a valued interest in special education.

The benefits of this study will provide information to principals on the academic benefits of inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom.

Please take a moment to fill out this quick online survey. This survey will take approximately three minutes to complete. There is no information contained in this survey that would identify you, your school, or school district. The results of this study will remain confidential and only used for the purpose of this study. There are no foreseeable risks involved in this study.

The purpose of the study is to determine the opinions of high school principals toward the inclusion movement and to gather information about the types of training and experience that principals have gone through. There are no right or wrong answers, so please address to the best of your knowledge and provide me with what you believe.

Again, thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to help me with my study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and that your decision to participate or to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits and you can stop participation at any time.

Below is the link to my online survey. <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx>
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx>

"This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of

research subjects."

You can contact Dr. Johnetta Hudson, UNT Associate Professor in Educational Administration and Troy Farris for further information or questions.

APPENDIX B
PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY

Praisner wrote:

- > Troy-
- > You have my permission to use the PIS in your research. However, please remember that
- > Section III was adapted from the work of George Stainback who adapted it from an autism
- > scale. You may want to speak with your advisor about whether or not you need to have his
- > permission as well. Section I, II, and IV were developed by me and so there is no concern
- > there. If you need formal permission, please draft a letter requesting it that I can
- > sign.
- >
- > I've attached the survey and Instrument section of my dissertation.
- >
- > Best Wishes,
- > Cindy

Stainback George H. show details 5/4/10

to me

OK and good luck with your work.

From: Troy Farris
Sent: Tuesday, May 04, 2010 8:43 AM
To: Stainback George H.
Subject: Request for Survey Use

Dr. Stainback,

My name is Troy Farris. I am currently a doctoral candidate at the University of North Texas in Denton. I am currently working on my proposal for my dissertation entitled, Texas High School Principals' Attitude Toward the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in the General Education Classroom. As part of my study, I am requesting to use a survey, Principals and Inclusion Survey (PIS), developed by Dr. Cindy Praisner and yourself. Dr. Praisner granted me permission to use the survey that she developed (sections I, II, and IV). I am requesting permission to use Section III that you adapted for an autism scale. I have attached a copy of the survey that Dr. Praisner sent to me. Thank you for your consideration.

Troy Farris

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