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# Attitudes of Secondary School Principals Toward Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in General Education Classes

Charles Watson Smith

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ATTITUDES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS TOWARD INCLUSION OF  
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSES

by

CHARLES WATSON SMITH JR.

(Under the Direction of Lucindia Chance)

ABSTRACT

The researcher's purpose of this study was to recognize perceptions of principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms in secondary schools in the state of Georgia. The researcher administered to 405 with e-mail address of the 448 principals of public high schools in Georgia a modified *Principals and Inclusion Survey* (2000) developed by Dr. Cindy L Praisner. Returned surveys included 102 principals' complete portions of the survey with 98 completing all portion of the survey. Data gathered with this survey were used to determine the current perceptions of secondary school principals related to their experience, attitude, and impact toward inclusion in Georgia. The survey results showed Georgia secondary principals' reported a positive attitude toward inclusion of students with disabilities.

INDEX WORDS: Inclusion, LRE, Special education services, Special education models of service

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. To my wife, Keiko Suzuki Smith thanks for always offering the words of encouragement. To my three sons and four daughters, Charles W. Smith III, Lt. Brian Suzuki Smith, USMC, SrA Andrew Oli Suzuki Smith, USAF, Kayko Stella Smith, and Eriko Terri Smith, Laura M. Smith, and Hallie Lynn Smith thank you for your love; you always make me so proud of you. To my grandson, Charles W. Smith IV grandpa's boy. To my parents Betty Lou Abarr, Charles W. Smith Sr. and Cecil D. Abarr; I thank you for always supporting me in my educational endeavors, both morally and financially. To my sister Patricia Smith Aiken thank you for your love, support, and encouragement. Especially to my Grandmother, Stella B. Smith, thank you for your lifelong wisdom. To my Japanese family, Katsutaka Suzuki, Sadako Suzuki, Takashi Suzuki, Yasuhisa Suzuki, Yoko Tazawa, Natsumi Tazawa, Yuichi Tazawa, Toshinobu Suzuki, and Raku Moroishi, thank you for making me a member of your family. To the staff and students of Sol C. Johnson High School thanks for making me apart of the Johnson family and creating the greatest six years of high school administrator training. To the staff and students of Sarah Mills Hodge Preparatory Academy thank you for making me a member of the Hodge family and advancing my administrator training at the elementary school level.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Educators, as well as the general public, constantly make every effort to provide the best achievable education for all children. One of the most influential persons in developing that education for all students is the building administrator. Administrators are responsible for identifying and articulating a philosophy or vision that reflects the beliefs that all children can learn and have the right to be educated with their peers in age-appropriate general education classrooms (Marzano, 2003). In assuring education for all students, schools must ensure the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom, the dominant education reform issue schools face. Inclusion is defined as the service delivery model in which students with disabilities have their special education needs met in the general education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate (Yanoff, 2003).

Again the building administrator is at the forefront. Research indicates clearly that principals are likely to support, develop, and even lead restructuring efforts that favor inclusion (McLeskey and Waldron, 2000; Livingston, Reed, & Good, 2001).

Students with disabilities have not always been provided the same opportunities as general education students. In the past, it has been left to the individual schools, as well as special education committees, to decide what inclusion is and who will benefit from its services. With the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001, increased importance has been placed on where students with disabilities are best served. The NCLB and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004) began an enormous educational revolution. The legal mandates associated with NCLB forced

states to scrutinize approaches to educating all children, such that they may no longer exclude students with disabilities from general education classrooms. As a result, districts have shifted since the 1990s from a segregation model of special education to a non-exclusive model for all students with disabilities. Special education is specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability (20 U.S.C. 1401(a) (16) IDEA).

Thirty years of educational research and experience suggests that all education professionals must change methodologies to help ensure that students with disabilities are well-educated in the least restrictive environment with their peers. Therefore, a preference for providing educational and related services for a full range of abilities and disabilities in the general education class with appropriate in-class support has gained in popularity and demand. Thus, inclusion has come to include transfer from special education to general education classrooms, special education schools to neighborhood schools, and private to public schools. The inclusion movement implies that students with disabilities have the opportunity for full membership in the social and learning contexts of their non-disabled peers. Unlike the mainstreaming movement of the last three decades, which treated the student with disabilities no differently than any other student and therefore lead to problems in students with disabilities' success, an inclusion program is different because it transforms the entire classroom and school (Pugach, 1993). The tenet throughout the mainstream movement was that the student must adapt and be ready to participate in the regular classroom such that the general education classroom does not change. In contrast, inclusion assumes that major change will occur in the general education classroom. Because it allows all students to spend time in small groups



receiving instructional assistance, students with disabilities do not stand out as being exceptional. Instead, their general education peers are working alongside them. Thus, it allows the student with disabilities to be included in general education settings without having to compete with students with non-disabilities. Instead, the student with disabilities need only to profit educationally and/or socially from being in a general education classroom.

Loosely defined directives to include students with disabilities in classrooms they would have attended only if they were not disabled resulted in heated debate (Murphy, 1996) For more a decade "researchers and educators...discussed changing the delivery of special education services, using such terms as mainstreaming, general education initiative, and inclusion," (Villa, Meyers, and Nevin, 1996, p.1), but only the passage of NCLB and IDEA brought forced educators' hands and allowed inclusion to trump other modes of delivery.

Yet inclusion remains a controversial topic, in part, because so many aspects of inclusion are misunderstood. Inclusion has been brought to the public's awareness because of integrating disabled and non-students with disabilities under a legal mandate. Yet inclusion is not a mere disability or legal concern. Instead, it is more accurately an educational equity and quality issue for all students because, when done well, inclusion programs have the potential to benefit students with a full range of exceptionalities (Giangreco, 1997). As education professionals have become aware of that, inclusive education programs for students with identified disabilities have become increasingly prevalent (Katsiyannis, Conderman, & Franks, 1995).

One objective of the Georgia Department of Education (DOE) is to prepare students with disabilities to function in general education classrooms with appropriate accommodations and modifications, and the state has embraced inclusion to achieve that goal. The state mandates that students be included in the "least restrictive environment," which has translated into inclusion in the general education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate (Georgia DOE, 2007). This inclusion model of serving students with disabilities in the general education environment allows all students with disabilities to be educated with their peers in the same physical location (Knight, 1999).

As with any significant school change, the principal must be the lead catalyst for inclusion to be successful. To be that catalyst, the principal must come to two important conclusions: one, that inclusion must address the needs of all students, not merely the ones with disabilities, and two, that inclusion is a transformation to school improvement. Therefore, to achieve substantive changes that result in a well-developed inclusion program, the administrator, and, in turn, the faculty, must support the ownership of this transformation. The administrator must convince all educators within the school about the need for the change, and he or she must support and empower those working closest to the students within the inclusion program. More specifically, McLeskey and Waldron (2000) state that the principal must ascertain the following: (a) which students will be included, (b) whether students will benefit from inclusion, (c) whether students with disabilities will have negative effects on the classroom, (d) how the classroom teacher's role and responsibilities will be influenced and modified, and (e) whether the classroom teacher will have the necessary time, resources, and /or expertise to make inclusion successful.

As instructional leaders, principals are critical for successful implementation of inclusion programs. They must be fully knowledgeable of the laws and all special education programs, and they must have at least a minimal knowledge of the practices and procedures affecting a general education curriculum with accommodations. Armed with that information, they must then have active input on all aspects of change regarding the implementation of an inclusion program and be the leader in monitoring its progress.

Unfortunately, research suggests that principals do not possess the critical knowledge base of law, practices, and procedures to effectively implement an inclusion program. Hof (1994) has reported that principals have limited knowledge or no academic background regarding the educational, social, or emotional needs of students with disabilities. For years, the State of Georgia required that all teachers, administrators, media specialists, and school counselors complete three semester hours of course work in the identification and education of children with disabilities, and that was the training concerning children with disabilities that was required of administrators and educators. At the time many educators and certainly most administrators received that training, the inclusion model was not taught, and so much of the training that serves as the "knowledge base" of integrating students with disabilities is long outdated.

Limited knowledge is not the only problem. Too often, principals are responsible for an extensive range of special education programs in areas in which they have had little training and/or experience. The role of the school principal has been significantly changed so that he or she must undertake additional duties, hire personnel, and complete paperwork.

That hiring process includes supporting the professional development of both special education and regular education in the inclusion model. As more school systems implement inclusion, general education teachers find themselves working with a more diverse population of students who have different learning styles and disabilities. Many general education teachers have discovered they have little or no preparation in special education; therefore, they feel inadequate with respect to working with students with disabilities. In an inclusive model, however, general education does not surrender responsibility for students with disabilities to special education; instead, general education works cooperatively with special education to offer a quality program for all students (Anderson and Decker 1993).

As the academic leader, then, the principal is expected to act as the agent for successful change. Because inclusion requires that both general educator and special educators be prepared to work with students with disabilities and with general education students equally, the principal holds a position with unique opportunities and responsibilities. In a study by Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, and Lee (1982) on the effect of principals on school effectiveness and school improvement, the researchers summarized many critical areas of leadership: “(a) an emphasis on achievement, (b) strong and frequent involvement with curriculum and instruction, (c) continually observing the work of educators and providing guidance and support, (d) actively distributing information and materials, (e) knowing the community power structure and maintaining appropriate relationships with parents, and (f) recognizing the unique styles and needs of individual teachers”(p.47). Effective principals are strong pragmatic leaders who allocate resources

effectively and have a thorough knowledge of the learning issues in their building. Therefore, principals have a major impact upon the progress and success of inclusion.

Equally important is establishing how the principal's role can be improved. The level to which administrators support change is often determined by the attitudes and values they hold. Consequently, a principal's perception toward inclusion can directly impact opportunities for students with disabilities who are placed in general education classes. This study was conducted to improve the understanding of principals' perceptions and attitudes toward inclusion, the factors related to these perceptions and attitudes, and the ways to transform those that hinder successful implementation of inclusion programs.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Inclusion in Georgia means that students with disabilities are placed in general education classrooms as much as possible, as long as their educational needs are met (Georgia DOE, 2007). Although inclusion is a primary focus in Georgia, some principals have little experience with special education or inclusion. Therefore, the examination of principals' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom may provide the first step in determining how to best assist administrators in implementing inclusion effectively. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of high school principals in Georgia regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classroom.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the attitudes of secondary school principals in the State of Georgia toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms?

2. To what degree are school principals' attitudes toward inclusion related to:

- age of the principal
- gender of the principal
- years of experience in general education classroom personal
- years of experience in special education classroom
- years of experience as a principal
- college credits in special education
- size of school
- average class size
- percentage of students with disabilities in the school
- certification in special education
- training in the different types of disabilities
- training in the different models or programs used in special education classrooms

3. Which combinations of these variables best predict secondary school principals' attitudes toward inclusion?

### **Conceptual Frameworks**

The research determined perceptions of Georgia of secondary schools principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The study determined the differences in the attitudes of 448 public secondary school principals related to the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education

classrooms in their schools. What principals perceive in regards to students with disabilities can result in the student's placement in the general education classroom.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2001) and Georgia Department of Education have mandated that students with disabilities be exposed to the highest degree possible to the general education curriculum. Therefore, principals' perceptions play an important role in the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

### **Importance of the Study**

Use of the study's findings may benefit superintendents, special education directors, and principals in developing an overall improvement plan toward meeting the needs of all students. This study will also contribute to the field of special education and educational leadership by providing research data regarding attitudes and demographics of current secondary school principals; by offering suggestions for the State Department of Education, school district administrators; and by advancing conclusions concerning the concepts and implementation of inclusion.

### **Procedures**

Given the significance of the study for students with disabilities, the researcher designed a study that solicits public secondary school principals' opinions toward inclusion in the State of Georgia. The researcher developed a survey instrument based on Praisner's *Principals and Inclusion Survey* (PIS, 2000) (Appendix A) adapted for secondary school principals. Dr. Cindy L Praisner granted the researcher permission to use the *Principals and Inclusion Survey* (PIS, 2000) (Appendix B).

## **Pilot Study**

The survey used in this study (Appendix A) was administered to four secondary assistant principals as a test pilot. The purpose of the pilot was: 1) verify clarity and compensability, 2) determine if any of the items contain ambiguities, and 3) verify the amount of time necessary to complete the questionnaire. The researcher chose assistant principals because they were excluded from participation in the final survey and because they are often responsible for placement issues and Individual Education Plan teams in their daily duties.

## **Research Design**

The descriptive study included a survey that assessed Georgia secondary principals' perceptions of inclusion. A descriptive study is non-experimental research design and thus, independent variables will not be manipulated. Nardi (2003) states that researchers conduct descriptive studies in order to present basic demographic information profiling study respondents, to describe the issues under study, and "to obtain more details and a strong sense of the variety of ways people engage with the world around them" (p. 15). The modified PIS includes structured questions requires Likert-scaled response selections; a general commentary section for participants' report of their training, experiences, and recommendations on inclusion of students with disabilities in secondary schools; and participants' beliefs in most appropriate placement for students with disabilities.

Data gathered with this survey was used to determine the current perceptions of secondary school principals as it related to their experience, attitude, and impact toward inclusion in Georgia. Additionally, the researcher collected demographic information: the



principal's (a) age and (b) gender; years of experience in the (c) general education and/or (d) special education classroom; (e) years of experience as a principal, (f) college credits in special education, (g) number of in-service workshop hours in inclusion, (h) size of school, (i) average class size, (j) percentage of students with disabilities in the school, (k) knowledge of different types of disabilities, (l) knowledge of different models or programs used in the special education classroom, and (m) relationship of the types of disabilities on the principal's campus as part of the survey.

### **Description of Population**

The entire population secondary school population of 448 public schools in the State of Georgia was surveyed to provide the best opportunity for obtaining a higher survey response rate than could be obtained by drawing a random sample for this population. The name and email address of every public secondary school principal was extrapolated from the Georgia Department of Education Web page.

### **Data Collection**

The self-administered, modified PIS survey, the general commentary, and the demographic survey were e-mailed via *Survey Monkey* on the inter-net. The researcher provided a *Survey Monkey* web-site for those respondents to respond via the inter-net. According to Nardi (2003), questionnaires (or surveys) are the most efficient tool for surveying large samples of respondents and in shorter periods of time than interviews or other research methods. Beginning the third week after the initial e-mailing, the researcher e-mailed follow-up reminders to survey respondents as needed in order to achieve a minimum 60 % population respondent rate. Kerlinger (1986) suggests that a 40

percent to 50 percent return rate is common in general survey research and that higher percentage return rates are rare in behavioral research.

Survey administration procedures were designed to protect respondents' privacy and allow for anonymous participation. Respondents were not put their names or other identifying information on the questionnaires web-site. The only mark of identity will be for the school that the survey was returned.

### **Data Analysis**

Survey responses, the general commentary, and demographic information were categorized and tabulated, and frequency counts will be generated via *Statistical Package for the Social Science Version 17,(2008)* (SPSS version 17). The researcher assigned numeric values to each response category of each Likert-scaled question response, thus establishing a code for each variable.

The researcher answered the first question's statistical data by simply computing descriptive statistics, such as the frequencies that you have and means, medians and standard deviations. The researcher then also computed a Cronbach's alpha to determine the reliability of the attitude responses, then the researcher computed an overall attitude score (on value) for each participant and use that composite attitude score for research questions two and three. The second research question was addressed through the use of Spearman's rho for ordinal independent variables and the use of independent samples *t*-tests for binary independent variables (Cronk, 2008; Field, 2009). Research question three was addressed through the use of a stepwise multiple regression analysis whereby all of the independent variables were included as predictors of principals' attitudes and the best combination of predictors were identified (Field, 2009; Mertler & Vannatta,

2005). The statistical assumptions associated with the parametric tests (e.g., independent samples *t*-tests and multiple regression) were tested in order to ensure the statistical conclusion validity of the data. In addition, the reliability of the questionnaire was tested by computing a Cronbach's alpha. Statistical significance was determined by an alpha of .05.

### **Limitations**

This study was dependent on participation from secondary school principals across the state. The participating secondary school principals may have different policies and procedures regarding their system's methods for inclusive practices. The population may not be representative of all systems throughout the United States. The study was limited to only secondary school principals; therefore, teachers, counselors, special education directors, parents, and students are not included. Finally, the study was restricted to the State of Georgia; therefore, the results were limited to secondary schools in this state.

### **Assumptions**

The researcher assumes that the secondary school principals gave honest responses on the survey and therefore that the information obtained served as a credible base for study and conclusions. Further, the researcher expects that the information obtained served as a credible base for study and conclusions.

### **Summary**

Inclusion has become a critical component of the reform effort to improve the delivery of services to students with disabilities because it focuses on the placement of these students in the general education setting. Successful transformation projects require

strong leadership and support. Therefore, the principal has been identified as the instructional leader and change agent. Indeed, special educators have long acknowledged that the principal's support is critical to the success of special education in general education settings. For that reason, principals must demonstrate behaviors that will advance the integration, acceptance, and success of students with disabilities in general education classes.

The literature on inclusion has recognized a number of roles and responsibilities for principals to support and produce successful inclusion settings. The extent to which principals are motivated to translate these ideas into policy and practice remains largely dependent on the individual. For that reason, the degree to which principals support new changes is often determined by their attitudes and values. The assumption is that the behaviors of principals are a result of these underlying attitudes and beliefs. Due to the nature of the principal's leadership position, their attitudes about inclusion can result in either increased opportunities for students to be served in general education or in limited efforts to reduce the segregated nature of special education services. Consequently, for such whole-school reform as inclusion, a principal's leadership is seen as the key factor to success. Thus, it is important that principals exhibit behaviors that advance the integration, acceptance, and success of students with disabilities in general education classes. Accordingly, the decision to develop an inclusive school depends largely upon leaders' values and beliefs.

This first chapter includes an introduction to the topic of secondary principals attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the general classroom setting, a statement of the problem, as well as, a description of the significance of the study,

research questions, the conceptual framework, the procedures of this quantitative research study, limitations and delimitations of the study, and the definitions used in the study.

## **Definitions**

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions apply:

A student with a disability: is a child having “mental retardation, hearing impairments including deafness, speech or language impairments, visual impairments including blindness, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, specific learning disabilities, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who because of those impairments need special education and related services” (IDEA 20 U.S.C. 1401(a)(1)).

General Education: “the set of educational experiences which a child would receive in a school or school district were that child to enter school at kindergarten or first grade, and proceed through school without being labeled ‘handicapped’ or in need of special services” (Lilly, 1988).

Inclusion: a service delivery model in which students with disabilities have their special education needs met in the general education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate. Inclusion implies an opportunity to have full membership in the social and learning contexts of their nondisabled peers. Unlike mainstreaming, students with disabilities who are included in general education do not have to compete with students without disabilities but need only to profit educationally and/or socially from being in a general education classroom (Yanoff, 2003).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): In IDEA (20 U.S.C. 1412(5) (B)).

According to the final rules and regulations published in the *Federal Register*, children

with disabilities are to be educated with non-disabled children to the maximum extent possible and should only be removed from a normal environment when the extent and severity of their handicap precludes an appropriate education in the normal setting even with appropriate supplemental learning aids (1977, 121a550 (1), (2)). A child may only be removed from the general educational setting if the nature or severity of the disability is such that the child cannot be educated in general classes, even with the use of supplementary aids and services (20 U.S.C. 1412 (a)(5)).

Principal of a Secondary School: the person who directs and is accountable for planning, assessment, instructional leadership, communication, community relations, safety, and administrative management, required to manage the instructional and special programs, organization, co-curricular and extracurricular activities, and facilities of an assigned secondary school grades 9-12 for the purpose of this study.

Special Education: specially designed instruction, intended, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability (IDEA 20 U.S.C. 1401(a) (16)).

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

School administrators are a critical resource for teachers, as Littrell, Billingsley, and Cross (1994) discovered when they examined the effects of principal support on special and general educators' stress, job satisfaction, school commitment, health, and intent to stay in teaching. Principals fall into three attitudinal categories with regards to the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. These categories are as follows: (a) a positive attitude toward inclusion, (b) a negative attitude toward inclusion, and (c) an indifferent attitude or uncertain about the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. As a result, the researcher will review literature to discover what other researchers have written about principals' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Using search engines such as Georgia Library Learning Online (GALILEO), the researcher used search terms such as inclusion, attitude, principal, and high school to locate journal articles and dissertations on principals' attitudes toward inclusion. Missing from the literature are studies that reported the attitude of high school principals toward inclusion; therefore, the researcher will review studies of elementary and middle school principals to provide a context for this study.

#### **Positive Attitude Toward Inclusion**

For more than twenty years, researchers (Horne, 1983; Semmel, 1986; Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996) have reinforced the perception that a principal's positive attitude toward inclusion is a critical prerequisite for successful inclusion. To

further support a positive attitude toward inclusion, Livingston, Reed, and Good (2001) claim that principals' personal experiences with students with disabilities becomes a significant factor in the willingness of administrators to consider an inclusive placement. Consequently, principals' personal experiences with students who have disabilities became evident when discussing their attitudes about inclusion (Moore, 2006). According to Brown (2007), who investigated the attitudes of administrators toward inclusion, female administrators perceived that general education teachers are trained adequately to cope with students with disabilities, and regardless of whether parents of general students object to inclusion, the practice of inclusion should be supported.

Brown also investigated the factors influencing principals' attitudes. Using *The School Principals' Attitude toward Inclusive Education Questionnaire* to collect data from 55 school administrators employed by Rankin County School District during 2005-2006, she found a significant difference in attitudes of respondents toward inclusion of students with disabilities in general education based on gender, school level assignment, years of experience as an administrator, and general education teaching experience.

Further supporting the positive attitude of administrators as a salient factor in successful inclusion programs, Horrocks (2006) studied Pennsylvania principals' attitudes toward inclusion. The primary purpose of Horrocks' study was to identify the attitudes that principals held regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities, and the relationship between their attitudes and their placement recommendations for children with autism. The secondary purpose was to identify the relationship between specific demographic factors and attitudes toward inclusion and placement recommendations. A stratified random sample of 1,500 was drawn from the active list of 3,070 principals in



Pennsylvania public schools. The sample was stratified on school type (elementary, combined, and high school) as well as urban/city to ensure adequate representation. Horrocks found that the most significant factor in predicting both a positive attitude toward inclusion of children with disabilities and higher recommendations of placements for children with autism was the principal's belief that children with autism could be included successfully in the general education classroom. Horrocks' findings confirmed that principals who believed that children with autism could be included in general education classrooms were more likely to recommend higher levels of inclusion for this population. Overall, Horrocks found the respondents had a positive attitude regarding inclusion for children with disabilities. Comparing the demographic information with principals' attitudes yielded significant differences on only 4 of 9 variables. She reported the principal's length of service in their current district was negatively correlated with the principals' positive attitudes toward inclusion. While the other variables of professional experience teaching or supervising children with autism, belief children with autism could be included, and an overall positive experience with inclusion were positively correlated with positive attitudes toward inclusion. Six out of nine variables included in the principal's demographic information predicted higher placement recommendations. School level, gender, years as a principal, formal training, professional experience, and belief children with autism could be included were correlated with placement recommendations with higher placement levels of inclusion.

In Texas, Ramirez (2006) studied the attitudes of elementary school principals by conducting a web-based survey of Praisner's (2000) the *Principals and Inclusion Survey* (PIS) (2000) with 108 schools in the State of Texas. Results of the study suggested that

demographic factors, training, and experience did not have a statistically significant effect on principals' attitudes toward inclusion. However, the study did find that statistically significant differences were found in principals' attitudes if they had special education experience. The researcher found that the overall attitudes of principals were favorable toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Also favoring principals' attitudes toward inclusion was Fontenot's 2005 examination of the attitudes of rural, suburban, and urban public elementary school principals in Texas regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom. Fontenot (2005) used a three-part questionnaire that was administered to 733 randomly selected principals. Further, no significant correlation was found between age and attitudes nor gender and attitudes of principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities. Fontenot did find a negative correlation between the attitudes of principals who had experience teaching general education and the attitudes scores versus a positive correlation between principals' attitudes scores with teaching experience in special education. However, neither general education teaching experience nor special education teaching experience was significantly correlated with attitude in the results of this study.

In 2005, Durtschi provided insight of elementary principals' involvement in, preparation for, and attitude toward special education in the state of Wisconsin. Using the *Involvement in Special Education Survey* developed for this study, Durtschi disseminated the survey via e-mail to 1,115 elementary principals in Wisconsin. A total of 566 principals responded positively to the survey of Wisconsin's elementary principals'

attitude toward inclusion and principals' overall confidence in their special education abilities. Results indicated that principals who felt comfortable in their abilities and who spent a lot of time at their job and on special education-related activities proportional to the percentage of students with disabilities in their school encouraged collaboration and inclusion among their special education and general education teachers and had highly positive attitudes about inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

Adding to the literature that documents positive attitudes of school administrators was Martin's 2004 study. In this research, the education of students with disabilities emerged as a prominent school reform effort as schools moved toward inclusive services. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of principals in terms of inclusive strategies (e.g., co-teaching), support for change, and inclusive education, and to determine the relationship between these variables, the level of inclusion, and the school's work culture. An expert panel nominated a purposeful sample of two highly inclusive and two less inclusive schools from a large school district in Florida. Data collected through *The Educational Quality Benchmark System Survey* (EQBS) were used to reflect the schools' movement toward developing a quality culture as perceived by the respondents. Data collected from the *Program Inclusion Survey* (PIS) were used to measure the level of inclusion at the school site. Information from key informant interviews was used to gain insight into the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of principals. For the interview data, responses from three categories of questions (inclusive education, support for change, and inclusive strategies) were reported from audio taped interviews from four principals and four Exceptional Student Education

(ESE) specialists or assistant principals. Observations at each school site were conducted to look at the dynamics and content of inclusive school settings as they related to the culture and climate of the school. Observational data were placed into the categories of administrative support for vision and change, inclusive strategies, and inclusive education. Document analysis of the School Improvement Plans provided insight about each school's mission and vision statements as they related to students with disabilities. Major findings supported by the data indicated few significant differences between using a very inclusive model and lesser inclusive model. Perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes data revealed that the use of co-teaching was limited even in very inclusive schools. This is significant because training in the co-teaching model was provided for all school faculties and administrators and the co-teaching model was preferred by the Special Education Department. However, the principals in very inclusive schools supported inclusion through release time and financial support for professional conferences and promoted co-teaching as a model for inclusive practices. The most inclusive school worked with a university in staff development programs for students with disabilities by taking ESE interns and providing a resource space for them at the school site. It was also found that principals at decidedly inclusive schools provided a common planning time for general and special education teachers. The researcher concluded that principals are instrumental in determining whether or not inclusion through the co-teaching model is implemented in their schools and the extent to which it is accomplished. Consistent with the literature, the principal is the major change agent for inclusion or any reform effort.

The purpose of the Maricle (2001) research study was to investigate the attitudes of New Jersey public secondary school principals toward inclusive education and

educational strategies related to its practice. The researcher sought to determine whether there was a significant difference in attitudes toward inclusion among principals based on: the school's geographical location (urban, suburban, and rural), and the number of years of experience of the principal (less than 5 years, 5-10 years, 6-15 years, more than 16 years). All New Jersey public secondary school principals were surveyed with the *Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education* survey, an 18-item Likert-type questionnaire designed by Inzano (1999) who used it to survey public elementary school principals. Findings supported the previous research regarding years of principal experience or school geographical location. These factors did not have a significant effect on secondary principals' attitudes toward inclusion. Principals appeared to have positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in all categories surveyed, with the exception of students with the most severe disabilities (mild to moderate behavior disabilities and learning disabilities with skills two or more years below grade level). Finally, all three educational strategies (in-class support, use of instructional assistant, curriculum adaptations) were viewed as effective strategies for inclusion. There were no significant differences between the public elementary school principals surveyed in 1999 and the public secondary school principals surveyed in 2001, suggesting that principals in general support inclusion for students with disabilities in their schools. Whether one supports or criticizes inclusion, approximately 75 percent of all students with disabilities receive their education in the general education classroom (Choate, 1993).

Providing an example of the positive attitude of principals was McLaughlin's 2001 study involving whether certain variables affected the attitudes of North Carolina public school principals toward the inclusion of children with disabilities into the general

classroom. The variables studied were the principals' gender, race, administration experience, total educational experience, and educational level attained, and school size, whether the school was elementary, middle, or secondary school was also considered. The population for this study consisted of 697 randomly selected principals from North Carolina. The systematic random sample method used permitted all of North Carolina's 100 Counties to be represented. Three hundred eighty-seven usable instruments were returned. The instrument used in this study was the *Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale* (ATIES) (Wilczenski, 1992) which was designed to measure attitudes toward including children with various disabilities in regular classes. The researcher documented five main findings. First, principals were generally more in favor of inclusion than not. Principals were very positive about including students with functional and learning disabilities, but they were very much against including students with behavioral disabilities. Second, the attitudes of female principals toward integrating students with disabilities into the general education program differed significantly from the attitudes of male principals. Third, the attitudes of high school principals and middle school principals toward inclusive education differed significantly from those of elementary principals. Fourth, principals' attitudes toward integrating students with disabilities into the general education program did not vary significantly based on the race of the principal, except in the subcategory of behavior. Fifth, school size, administration experience, total education experience, and educational level attained did not significantly affect the attitude of the principal toward inclusion.

As stated earlier, the Inzano (1999) study investigated the attitudes of public elementary school principals toward inclusive education and educational strategies

related to its practice. In addition, this study was designed to determine whether there was a significant difference in attitudes toward inclusion among principals grouped according to years of experience as a principal and school location (i.e., urban, suburban, or rural). Three hundred principals from New Jersey were randomly selected to complete the *Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Survey*, the 18-item Likert-type questionnaire designed for the study. A total of 167 usable surveys were received, yielding a return rate of 56 percent. Findings suggest that neither years of experience as a principal nor school location had a significant effect on principals' attitudes toward inclusion. In addition, except for students with the most severe disabilities, principals overall appeared to be in favor of including students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Lastly, of the three inclusive strategies studied, principals rated the use of paraprofessionals as being the most effective. A practical implication of this research is that with inclusive education gaining in popularity, both principals-to-be and those already in the field would benefit from training in dealing effectively with diverse student populations.

### **Negative Attitudes toward Inclusion**

When inclusion was being implemented in Georgia in the 1990s many administrators voiced concerns about students with disabilities being educated in the general education classroom; these administrators had been trained and worked under a segregated system of special education. These educators/leaders voiced the same concerns as teacher that they did not want students with disabilities in the general education classrooms, Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996). Some of these negative attitudes still prevail today when it comes to inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom, not only in Georgia but across the country and in other countries.

One might question the effectiveness of a principal who possesses a negative attitude toward students with disabilities. If, as suggested by (Hannah, 1988) teachers who have negative attitudes are often reluctant to teach students with disabilities, it seems likely that principals who have negative attitudes would be reluctant to become involved with students with disabilities. Professionals who are uncomfortable with students who have disabilities might avoid contact with those students or neglect opportunities for their students' development. Thus, school administrators who are uncomfortable with students with disabilities might choose to avoid participating in Individualized Educational Program (IEP) meetings and/or rely on other school personnel to address those students' academic, career, and personal/social needs. Administrators with fewer years of general education teaching experience tend to disagree that general education teachers are not trained adequately to cope with students with disabilities (Hannah, 1988).

Davis and Maheady (1991) found that some principals believed that inclusion would have a negative effect on the academic achievement of other students in an inclusive setting, specifically students who were not disabled. For students with severe disabilities, Livingston, Reed and Good (2001) found that many rural principals supported the traditional, segregated placement of students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms. Further, rural principals were more likely to favor self-contained classrooms as the most appropriate placement for students with disabilities. Dyal, Flynt, and Bennett-Walker (1996) claimed similar findings in their study. After three decades of landmark special education legislation that held so much promise, special education is just that a promise, Schwarz, (2006). The American school system and society have earned failing grades for educating and supporting students with disabilities to live, work,



and play in the community. Schwarz, (2006) special education is a service, not a place, and the purpose of the service is support learners in successfully achieving a general education. No educator should draw a line between who will and who will not learn in the general education classroom. Therefore, principals have to embrace a whole new model for success of students with disabilities. The new model for success, inclusion, must be internationally received and practical for administrators to make educational services work for all students.

Internationally, Choi (2008), found general and special education in South Korea are at an important juncture. A significant trend in the reform of South Korean education is expanding the inclusion of students with disabilities. Among various school professionals, principals have been considered the most significant players for creating successful inclusive schools. Choi's study surveyed South Korean elementary school principals, examining their definition of inclusion, level of knowledge of legislation, attitudes toward inclusion, and perceptions about supports and resource needs for successful inclusive practices. Surveys were sent to 800 principals in four educational regions and a total of 536 surveys were returned. The results of this research demonstrated that South Korean elementary principals agreed with important inclusion concepts and generally have positive attitudes toward inclusive education. However, principals still considered special education schools to be more appropriate educational placements for students with disabilities. Also, principals reported that students with disabilities were not provided with instruction and curriculum adapted to their educational needs. In addition, principals' believed that their schools did not have adequate staff, administration, or supports for implementing inclusive education. Several

variables, which could have influenced perceptions, attitudes, or school practices also, were found. In particular, principals' knowledge of legislation, and the extent to which they received in-service training, were strongly related to perceptions, attitudes, or school practice.

Middle school administrators tend to agree that students with disabilities belong in special schools where all their needs can be met and they benefit academically, according to Brown (2007). Additionally, Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998) gave more detail about principals' negative attitudes when they concluded that inclusion could work in their school; however, they indicated that not all students with disabilities should be considered for inclusion or included in the regular classroom. This conclusion reaffirmed the research of Cook, Semmel, and Gerber (1999). They discovered that principals were in agreement that the achievement of students with mild disabilities increased when they were included with consultative services.

Bailey (2004) furthered the understanding of principals' attitudes through the exploration of their perceptions of the most persistent barriers to inclusive practices. Bailey found principals viewed the lack of resources, particularly funding, as the most debilitating to implementing inclusion. Interestingly, they viewed training as an important barrier to inclusion but low on the scale of importance. Recognizing these attitudinal tones of the principals for implementation of inclusion and the priority set by perceived barriers was most important for creating an inclusive school environment. In a study of Alabama principals, Dyal, Flynt, and Bennett-Walker (1996) summarized their findings by stating principals did not favor full inclusion, noting this perception possibly came as a result of principals feeling more comfortable with the existing service delivery models,

namely, special education pullout programs. Additionally, possible resistance to change may be attributed to the mixed messages in research findings and interpretation (Livingston, Reed, & Good, 2001). For example, in a study of three research projects conducted in six schools, researchers found that even significant professional and financial investments produced lackluster achievement outcomes (Zigmond, Jenkins, Fuchs, Deno, Fuchs, Baker, Jenkins, & Couthino, 1995).

In recent years, principals' attitudes toward inclusion entered the phase of uncertainty. Operating an inclusionary program without the commitment of the administrators who implement the program is a major concern. Studies revealed that administrators and teachers were uncertain of or disagreed with the benefits of inclusion. It is possible that the administrators who did not acknowledge the importance of inclusion may be facing negative experiences with the inclusive classrooms that are in operation. This is a concern since an unsuccessful program would only strengthen negative attitudes or uncertainty regarding inclusion and its benefits.

### **Uncertain about Inclusion**

Between the two camps of pro-inclusion and anti-inclusion are large groups of educators and parents who are confused by the concept of inclusion. They wonder whether inclusion is legally required and wonder what is best for children. They also question what it is that schools and school personnel must do to meet the needs of children with disabilities. As is true in other areas of school restructuring, change must be based on research and broadly shared beliefs and philosophies. The recommendations

that researched based training in inclusion can help districts or building administrators in designing a positive education and more inclusive environment.

A doctoral research study by Geter (1997) provided documentation of the state of flux created by administrators' attitudes toward inclusion. Geter explored 550 Georgia high school and elementary principals' attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular classroom. Geter studied differences in attitudes of principals based on gender, race, principal education experiences, student population, educational training, special education classes completed and students served through special education. The researcher also used an Attitude Toward Inclusion Scale to determine significant differences between high school and elementary school principals' attitudes toward inclusion of special education students. Geter discovered two major findings: (a) there were no significant differences between the Georgia high school and elementary school principals' attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms and (b) there were no significant differences between principals' attitudes toward inclusion with regard to principal gender and number of in-service hour completed in special education.

While No Child Left Behind Act (2001) mandates greater attention to all students, including those in special education, educational research has shown that principals do not generally have adequate knowledge of special education in their schools. Indeed, Praisner (2003) found large numbers of principals and aspiring principals that have uncertain attitudes toward inclusion. Principals complain that special education laws are complicated and constantly changing.

Hunter (2006) found that inclusion of students with disabilities in general education has changed the roles of secondary principals and their relationship to special education. Hunter's research suggests that the principal acts as a leader and is important to the successful implementation of inclusion. Thus, principals' perceptions in reference to IDEA 1997, which includes providing the least restrictive environment (LRE), and its success in large urban school districts play major roles in its implementation. The attitudes of principals can have either a positive or negative impact upon the integration of students with disabilities. Hunter investigated the current attitudes of secondary school principals in a large urban school district and examined the relationship between attitude and various associations between attitude, experience, and placement were conducted. A survey entitled the "Principals and Inclusion Inventory" was used to collect data on 13 potential predictor variables. Principals were also asked to rate their experiences with students with disabilities and to provide hypothetical placements for each disability category. These results suggest that effective inclusion practices that will ensure that principals have positive experiences with students with disabilities are an important factor in the successful inclusion. Further investigations are needed to help refine the variables associated with positive attitudes and experiences, as well as to explore the basis for differences between disabilities categories.

Adding to the uncertainty, Hesselbart (2005) surveyed 37 principals and assistant principals in rural northwest Ohio to investigate relationships regarding attitudes toward inclusion with other variables such as teaching experience, both in special education and general education, experience with students with disabilities, and placement preferences. His results indicated that just under half of the principals surveyed has a positive attitude

toward inclusion, where as the same percentage were uncertain. Further, his statistical analysis indicated that the only strong correlation with attitude was preferred placement. Hesselbart's results concluded that colleges and universities need to do more in preparing administrators to work with students with disabilities.

Praisner (2000) found that about one in five principals' attitudes were positive toward inclusion, however, most were uncertain, neither clearly positive nor negative. Praisner (2000) researched the current attitudes of elementary school principals in Pennsylvania and examined the relationship between attitude and various characteristics, experiences, and program factors. The results were based upon data from 408 elementary school principals; data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlational procedures.

Based upon a survey of 124 elementary school principals from New York City, Levy (1999) found limited support for age as a variable related to attitude while gender, years as an administrator, teaching experience, years of experience with disabilities, years of inclusion experience, and/or inclusion training did not have a significant connection with attitudes toward inclusion. Levy (1999), in a doctoral research study, investigated how the attitudes of elementary principals prevent or enhance the successful restructuring of schools for the inclusion of students with disabilities. The results of his study were limited, however, by the restricted sample.

Hof (1994) conducted a doctoral research study to assess the perceptions of elementary school principals from four mid-western states regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom how these perceptions differed in regard to chosen demographic variables and what information contributed to

the development of these perceptions. Further, Hof also investigated the actual inclusion practices in use by these principals and connected the actual practices with perceptions of principals and selected demographic variables. From the total of 217 surveys, factors such as the employment of a Director of Special Education, degree attainment, number of students with disabilities, and size of the district were shown to impact a principal's perception of inclusion while gender, age, and experience did not. Also, the level of inclusion achieved by a school was improved by the principal having a specific personal goal regarding inclusion. Finally, college coursework did not transfer to a principal's knowledge base about inclusion. The principal's information came largely from attending professional conferences and in-service opportunities. Although Hof provided a number of specific factors impacting upon inclusion practices, only a small number of general recommendations resulted for the study.

A doctoral research study by McAneny (1992) examined the possible relationship between principal attitudes and referral and placement decisions. Results were determined based upon a survey received from 111 principals in a single state. The study established that principals who reported positive attitudes toward mainstreaming were more likely to offer opportunities for students with disabilities to remain in regular classes. Also, the accessibility of support services increased the likelihood of student placement in regular classes. Principals with more experience were less likely to mainstream students with disabilities. The results indicated that principal attitudes impact placement decisions. The general idea of this study, however, was restricted by its small sample from a single area. The outcomes were also weakened by the study's use of the concept of mainstreaming instead of the more current inclusion terminology.

## **Summary**

Inclusion is a critical issue for educational leaders. The building administrator needs to understand the necessity and practicality of the inclusion of all students in the general education program (Washington, 2003). The principal's attitude toward students with disabilities has shown and eventually determined if there were educational services for all students; therefore, the administrator's attitude positive, negative, or attitudes of uncertainty toward inclusion could determine if inclusion is viable service option.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study examined the current attitudes of high school principals in the state of Georgia concerning inclusion, the basis of those attitudes, and the indicators that predict those attitudes contingent upon the students' disabilities and personal characteristics of the principal. This chapter described the procedure the researcher followed, the researcher design, the research questions, protection of human subjects, the population, the participants, the sample size, the instrument used, the data collection and the data analysis.

#### **Procedures**

In this study, the researcher solicited the opinions toward inclusion of public secondary school principals in the state of Georgia. The researcher developed a survey instrument based on Praisner's *Principals and Inclusion Survey* (PIS, 2000) (Appendix A) adapted for high school principals. Using this survey, the researcher requested information regarding principals' attitudes toward inclusion. Data gathered with this survey was used to determine the current perceptions of secondary school principals as it relates to their experience, attitude, and impact in Georgia toward inclusion. Additionally, the researcher collected demographic information, sex, age, and training and education using a descriptive questionnaire.

#### **Research Design**

The study incorporates a descriptive quantitative research design that studied attitudes of Georgia high school principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities

in the general classroom. This study involved the use of a survey instrument with principals. This study used a survey developed by Praisner (2000)(Appendix A), modified to gather information from Georgia secondary school principals. The researcher chose a quantitative design as this design was the most appropriate design method for this study, it allow the researcher to gather data about attitudes of principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities in general education, from a large group of administrators.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study using Praisner's PIS (2000) modified for secondary school and the State of Georgia:

1. What are the attitudes of secondary school principals in the state of Georgia toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms?
2. To what degree are school principals' attitudes toward inclusion related to:
  - age of the principal
  - gender of the principal
  - years of experience in general education classroom personal
  - years of experience in special education classroom
  - years of experience as a principal
  - college credits in special education
  - size of school
  - average class size
  - percentage of students with disabilities in the school
  - certification in special education

- training in the different types of disabilities
  - training in the different models or programs used in special education classrooms
3. Which combinations of these variables best predict secondary school principals' attitudes toward inclusion?

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

This study adhered to the ethical standards of the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. All participants were invited to participate in the study, and were provided the opportunity to decline participation in the study at any time. All participant and participant information remained confidential. All participants gave implied informed consent approval by completing the survey.

### **Population**

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), and Fullan (1997, 2003) indicated that the principal occupies the key position within the high school structure. They serve dual roles as academic leaders and as managers and, therefore, are in the best position to critically evaluate the inclusion process within their schools. As academic leaders, they are in position to evaluate the impact of inclusion at the faculty and student levels. Also, as academic managers, they share information with members of the school district administration and participate in meeting in which all aspects (e.g. academic, budgetary, policy, planning, etc.) of inclusion are discussed, decided, and implemented. Therefore, principal are also in the unique position to obtain, analyze and filter feedback from both internal and external public school stakeholders, Marzano et al (2005).

## **Participants**

The participants in this study were secondary principals selected from the names and e-mail address of every public secondary school principal. The researcher extrapolated the names and e-mail addresses from the Georgia Department of Education Web page.

## **Sample Size**

The entire population, according to Georgia Department of Education, of approximately 448 Georgia public high school principals was contacted. This population was surveyed to provide the best opportunity for obtaining a higher survey response rate than could be obtained by random sample from this population.

## **Instrumentation**

The quantitative research study was conducted using a survey developed by Praisner (2000) and adapted by the researcher to gather information related to secondary school principals.

The survey was comprised of three sections: (a) a demographic information checklist for gathering the information on the high school principals; (b) a training and experience checklist for gathering information on the high school principals training and experience; (c) a Likert-scale section measuring the respondents' attitude of high school principal's for inclusion of students with disabilities.

The reliability and validity of the research instrument in this study to collect the quantitative data was authenticated by its use in a previous published study, In addition, Stainback (1986) conducted an analysis of reliability by computing a Pearson Product-

Moment Correlation Coefficient with a split half correction factor, on the original survey, section III of the PIS. The reliability coefficient was 0.899 for this section

Nardi (2003) noted the questionnaire or survey is the most efficient tool for surveying large samples of respondents and in a shorter period of time than interviews or other research methods. The researcher adapted Praisner's PIS (2000) for this study. Dr. Praisner granted permission to use and adapt the PIS for this study (Appendix C). The PIS was designed by Praisner to measure the degree to which training, experience, and program factors were related to principal's attitudes. Praisner used the PIS with elementary principals; this researcher modified the survey for use with high school principals.

Modifications to the PIS were: The purpose of this survey statement was reworded as follows: from "elementary" to "secondary"; to indicate the intended survey population. Section I of the PIS contains four questions on demographic information; so no changes will be made to this section.

Section II of the PIS contained 13 items designed to gather information on the principal's training and experience about inclusion. Item 5, years as an elementary principal was changed to read number of years as a secondary principal. This change was necessary to modify the survey for the new intended population. Items 10, 11, 12, and 13 were deleted. No other modifications were made in Section II. Content validity for this section was established by Praisner (2000) in her study of attitudes of elementary principals toward inclusion. Content validity of the original PIS was determined by expert judgment. After developing the questionnaire, Praisner had it reviewed by a panel of four professors at Lehigh University. The panel "reviewed, analyzed, and evaluated

the questions to assure the potential content validity of the question for measuring the variables that may relate to the attitudes of elementary principals” Praisner (2000), p.34.

This researcher addressed the question of content validity for high school for Section II of the PIS by presenting the survey to four high school assistant principals in the Savannah/Chatham Public School System. They reviewed, analyzed, and evaluated the questions to assure content validity. The researcher then piloted the revised version of the PIS with five principal within the State of Georgia. These five principals were excluded from the actual study. Therefore, the validity of the survey rest with the four high school assistant principals and the five principals who reviewed the instrument as well as the research performed by Praisner (2000), Washington (2003), and Ramirez (2005).

Section III of Praisner’s PIS was be used to measure attitudes toward inclusion. The ten questionnaire items originated from the *Superintendents’ Attitude Survey on Integration* (SASI) adapted by Stainback (1986) from the *Autism Attitude Scale for Teachers* Oiley, Devellis, Wall, and Long (1981).

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 in the general education setting. The administrators reviewed, analyzed, and evaluated the questions to assure the potential content validity of the questions for measuring attitudes of superintendents. Further, Stainback (1986) conducted an analysis of reliability by comparing a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient with a split half correction factor. Stainback found a

reliability coefficient was 0.899 for this section. The researcher made no modifications to Section III of Praisner's PIS.

The Section IV of Praisner's PIS, measured principals' beliefs about the most appropriate placement for students with disabilities. This researcher deleted this section from the original survey. No other modifications were made to the survey.

### **Data Collections**

Following approval of the IRB, the researcher began the data collection by e-mailing, via the internet, the modified PIS to every public high school principal within the state of Georgia. Additionally, an electronic cover letter accompanied the PIS web-link. The cover letter requested the principal's participation. Principals' e-mailing addresses were obtained from the Georgia Department of Education, by extrapolating a high school list from their web-site. A follow-up reminder letter was e-mailed to all principals who did not return the questionnaire, after three weeks of the initial e-mailing. Dillman (1978) suggested that a well-developed cover letter and follow-up letter be sent to all respondents to ensure the maximum benefit when conducting a survey. Further, Dillman (1978) stated that three conditions must be met to maximize survey response rate. These conditions are the researcher must minimize the cost to the respondent, maximize the reward for responding, and establish trust with the participant. The researcher was able to minimize the cost to the respondent by using *Survey Monkey* for the survey package and establish trust with the participant by providing e-mail address and by telephone calls maintaining open lines of communication between the respondent and the researcher. Further, the researcher was not able to maximize the reward for respondents because of the anonymity of the respondents.

To further assist, the respondent the researcher provided the survey via the internet. The researcher posted the PIS on *Survey Monkey*. *Survey Monkey* enabled the researcher to produce web-based surveys; therefore, the PIS was posted using this tool.

### **Data Analysis**

The statistical analysis used for this study was performed SPSS, version 17.0. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003), the SPSS program is a comprehensive statistical program that is used to analyze and describe data. The researcher assigned numeric values to each response category of each Likert-scaled question response, thus establishing a code for each variable. Reversal items were reverse coded prior to computing an overall attitude score. The responses were coded so that higher values reflect more favorable attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

To answer the research questions presented in this study, the variables were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Research question one was addressed by descriptively summarizing the principals' attitudes as measured by the research questionnaire. The attitude data served as the dependent variable for this study. The second research question was addressed through the use of Spearman's rho for ordinal independent variables and the use of independent samples *t*-tests for binary independent variables (Cronk, 2008; Field, 2009). Research question three was addressed through the use of a stepwise multiple regression analysis whereby all of the independent variables were included as predictors of principals' attitudes and the best combination of predictors were identified (Field, 2009; Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). The statistical assumptions associated with the parametric tests (e.g., independent samples *t*-tests and



multiple regression) were tested in order to ensure the statistical conclusion validity of the data. In addition, the reliability of the questionnaire was tested by computing a Cronbach's alpha. Statistical significance was determined by an alpha of .05. The findings of these analyses are presented in chapter four.

### **Summary**

This study analyzed secondary principals' attitudes toward the practice of inclusion when one assessed several independent variables. All 448 Georgia high school principals were included in the study. The entire population was given the opportunity to respond with the objective of providing a complete picture of Georgia secondary schools and principals relating to the practice of educating students with disabilities through inclusion.

The data was collected using a survey that had been tested for reliability and validity. The survey was in four section including areas for participant responses to, demographic information, training and experience, attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities, and most appropriate placement for students with disabilities.

Data was analyzed using the *SPSS, version 17.0*. The information once gathered and analyzed was made available to the participants upon request. The researcher intends this study to be practical for state and local policy makers, educational leaders and other involved with implementing an inclusion program.

## CHAPTER 4

### REPORT OF DATA AND ANALYSIS

#### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine current attitudes of secondary principals in the state of Georgia relative to inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Further, this study attempted to determine the effect of various demographic characteristics and training experiences of secondary principals as they relate to the principals' attitudes toward inclusion.

#### **Method**

A modified version of the Principals and Inclusion Survey (PIS) developed by Praisner (2000) was transmitted electronically May 17, 2010, via e-mail to 405 high school principals from the state of Georgia. This number is based on the current information from the Georgia Department of Education that there are 448 current public high schools in Georgia. Using the April, 13, 2010, school contact list from the Georgia Department of Education 29 principals did not have an e-mail address listed, 14 e-mails were returned for incorrect e-mail address. Further, two asked not to be included in the survey this researcher was able to sent 405 principals the survey. The principals had a six week time frame in which to complete the questionnaire on *Survey Monkey*.

After the questionnaires were completed, they were examined for completeness. The data collection procedure used for this study was a web-based, self administered, survey instrument on *Survey Monkey*. The questionnaire was developed using Praisner's (2000) *PIS*. Upon receipt of the data, the data were analyzed using SPSS version 17.0. Research question one was addressed by descriptively summarizing the principals' attitudes as measured by the research questionnaire. The attitude data served as the

dependent variable for this study. The second research question was addressed through the use of Spearman's rho for ordinal independent variables and the use of independent samples *t*-tests for binary independent variables (Cronk, 2008; Field, 2009). The primary reason why Spearman's rho was selected instead of analysis of variance (ANOVA) was because many of the subgroup sizes were very small, resulting in a ranked variable with several levels (Field, 2009). Research question three was addressed through the use of a stepwise multiple linear regression analysis whereby all of the independent variables were included as predictors of principals' attitudes and the best combination of predictors were identified (Field, 2009; Mertler & Vannatta, 2005). The statistical assumptions associated with the parametric tests (e.g., independent samples *t*-tests and multiple regression) were tested in order to ensure the statistical conclusion validity of the data. In addition, the reliability of the questionnaire was tested by computing a Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a reliability coefficient of .88. Statistical significance was determined by an alpha of .05.

### **Sample Size**

The modified *PIS* was uploaded on to *Survey Monkey* and the web link was e-mailed with a cover letter to 405 public secondary, high school, principals in the state of Georgia. The participants e-mail addresses were obtained from the Georgia Department of Education web site.

### **Demographics**

In all, 405 principals presumably received the web-link and had an opportunity to participate in the study. On May 30, 2010 a follow-up reminder will be e-mailed to the sample group. A total of 102 completed surveys were downloaded from *Survey Monkey*

which is 25 % of the sample group. It must be noted that there was some variability in the number of responses for each section of the *PIS*, as some sections were not answered. The total number of principals' starting the survey was 102 with 98 completing all sections of the *PIS*.

### **School Information**

In Section I of the survey, principals were asked to address four questions pertaining to their specific school. The principals were asked to give the approximate number of students attending their school, the number of students with disabilities in special education with IEPs, and the approximate percentage of students with disabilities in their building who were included in general education classrooms for at least 75% of their total instructional day.

Table 1 provides the response frequencies to the first item pertaining to the approximate number of all students in the building. The results indicate that 49 principals had more than 1000 students in their building (48.0%) 23 had between 751 and 1000 students (22.5%). Only seven (6.9%) of the principals reported having between 0 and 250 students in their building.

Table 1

*Approximate Number of all Students in the Building*

Number of students in building	n	Percent
0-250 students	7	6.9
251-500 students	12	11.8
501-750 students	11	10.8
751-1000 students	23	22.5
1000 or more students	49	48.0
Total	102	100.0

The summarized results in Table 2, pertaining to the average class size for all students, indicate that none of the principals reported having fewer than 10 students in a class and none of the principals reported having 40 or more students in a class on average. The majority of the principals (n=69) reported their average class sizes to be between 20 and 29 students (67.6%).

Table 2

*Average Class Size for all Students*

Average class size	n	Percent
0-9 students	0	0.0
10-19 students	9	8.8
20-29 students	69	67.6
30-39 students	24	23.5
40 or more students	0	0.0
Total	102	100.0

The summarized results for the approximate percentage of students with disabilities served through an IEP in the building are presented in Table 3. The results indicate that 48 of the principals reported between 6 and 10 percent (47.1%). However, as many as 25 principals (24.5%) had between 11 and 15 percent, and an additional 14 or (13.7%) had between 16 and 20 percent. Only two or 2% of principals reported having 21 percent or more students with IEPs in the building.

Table 3

*Approximate Percentage of Students with IEPs in the Building*

Percentage of students with IEPs	n	Percent
0-5%	12	11.8
6-10%	48	47.1
11-15%	25	24.5
16-20%	14	13.7
21% or more	2	2.0
No response	1	1.0
Total	102	100.0

Finally, Table 4 provides the summarized responses regarding the approximate percentage of students with IEPs in the building that are included in general education classrooms for at least 75% of their school day. The results indicate that 60 principals reported having 81 to 100 percent of their students IEPs in general education for at least 75% of their school day (58.8%). In general, principals were more likely to report having the majority of their students with IEPs participate in general education for at least 75%

of their school day than they were to report not having the majority of their students with IEPs participate for at least 75% of their school day.

Table 4

*Approximate Percentage of Students with IEPs that are Included in General Education*

Percentage included in general education	n	Percent
0-20%	6	5.9
21-40%	3	2.9
41-60%	8	7.8
61-80%	24	23.5
81-100%	60	58.8
No response	1	1.0
Total	102	100.0

The results in Section I of the survey indicate that the principals in this study were most likely to have at least 751 students in the building, have average class sizes consisting of between 20 and 29 students, have no more than 10% of their students in the building with IEPs, and to have the majority of the students with IEPs spend at least 75% of their school day in general education.

*Demographic Characteristics, Training and Experience*

In Section II of the survey, principals answered nine questions pertaining to demographics, training and experience. The principals provided their age, gender, years of full-time general education teaching experience, years of full-time special education teaching experience, years as a secondary school principal, approximate number of

special education credits, approximate number of in-service training hours in inclusive practices, participation in formal training, and if they were certified in special education.

The gender composition of the sample is summarized in Table 5. The results indicate that 53 (52.0%) were male, 44 (43.1%) were female and five principals did not indicate their gender (4.9%).

Table 5

*Gender Composition of Principal Sample*

Principal gender	n	Percent
Male	53	52.0
Female	44	43.1
No response	5	4.9
Total	102	100.0

The age of the principals is summarized in Table 6. The results indicate that 39 principals were between 51 and 60 years of age (38.2%) and 34 were between 41 and 50 years of age (33.3%). However, none of the principals were 30 or younger and only 10 (9.8%) were over 60 years of age.



Table 6

*Age of Principal Sample*

Principal age	n	Percent
20-30 years	0	0.0
31-40 years	15	14.7
41-50 years	34	33.3
51-60 years	39	38.2
61 or more	10	9.8
No response	4	3.9
Total	102	100.0

The experience related items asked principals about the number of years of experience they had teaching full-time in general education, number of years teaching full-time in special education, and their number of years as a secondary school principal. Table 7 provides a summary regarding full-time teaching experience in general education. The results indicate that the principals were relatively diverse in their general education teaching experience. The most common response was to have 19 or more years (32.4%) with 33 principals selecting that response option. However, as many as 30 principals (29.4%) had only between one and six years of general education teaching experience.

Table 7

*Years of Full-Time General Education Teaching Experience*

General education teaching	n	Percent
0 years	0	0.0
1-6 years	30	29.4
7-12 years	17	16.7
13-18 years	19	18.6
19 or more years	33	32.4
No response	3	2.9
Total	102	100.0

The number of years of experience teaching full-time in special education is summarized in Table 8. The results indicate that 85 principals reported having no full-time teaching experience in special education (83.3%). Furthermore, none of the teachers had more than 18 years of experience and only one had between 13 and 18 years of full-time special education teaching experience (1.0%).

Table 8

*Years of Full-Time Special Education Teaching Experience*

Special education teaching	n	Percent
0 years	85	83.3
1-6 years	6	5.9
7-12 years	6	5.9
13-18 years	1	1.0
19 or more years	0	0.0
No response	4	3.9
Total	102	100.0

The number of years as a secondary school principal is summarized in Table 9.

The results indicate that 51 (50.0%) of the principals had between zero and five years of experience. In fact, as many as 79 (79.8%) had 10 years or less of experience.

Table 9

*Number of Years as a Secondary School Principal*

Years as principal	n	Percent
0-5 years	51	50.0
6-10 years	28	27.5
11-15 years	12	11.8
16-20 years	5	4.9
21 or more years	3	2.9
No response	3	2.9
Total	102	100.0

The next set of summarized responses pertains to the principals' training. The approximate number of special education credits in their formal training is summarized in Table 10. The results indicate that 80 principals had between one and nine special education credits (78.4%); only 2 (2.0%) had no special education credits. Therefore almost all of the principals in this study reported some formal training in special education with nine (8.8%) having extensive training (e.g., 16 credits or more). The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GAPSC) requires special education course work in the identification and education of children with special education needs is required for all teaching fields, Educational Leadership, Media Specialist, and School Counseling as mandated by Georgia House Bill 671. This course, an introduction to special education, may be completed for college credit or Georgia professional learning units in the local system or Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) (GAPSC, 2011).

Table 10

*Approximate Number of Special Education Credits in Formal Training*

Special education credits	n	Percent
0 credits	2	2.0
1-9 credits	80	78.4
10-15 credits	8	7.8
16-21 credits	4	3.9
22 or more credits	5	4.9
No response	3	2.9
Total	102	100.0

The approximate number of in-service training hours in inclusive practices is summarized in Table 11. The results indicate that 40 (39.2%) of the principals reported having between one and eight hours of in-service training in inclusive practices and an additional 27 (26.5%) had between 9 and 16 hours of in-service training. Furthermore, as much as 30 (29.4%) had more than 16 hours of in-service training in inclusive practices. Again, only two (2.0%) of the principals reported having no formal training.

Table 11

*Approximate Number of In-Service Training Hours in Inclusive Practices*

Hours in inclusive practices	n	Percent
0 hours	2	2.0
1-8 hours	40	39.2
9-16 hours	27	26.5
17-24 hours	17	16.7
25 or more hours	13	12.7
No response	3	2.9
Total	102	100.0

Table 12 summarizes the percentage of principals who indicated that the areas listed on the survey were included in their formal training courses (10% of content or more). Formal training courses are defined as teacher preparation courses at the undergraduate and graduate education level. The results are presented in rank order. Special education law was the most common content area reported with 92% of the principals having had at least 10% of their training within that particular area. In addition, 91% of the principals indicated that their training focused on characteristics of

students with disabilities. A small majority (53%) of the principals had training that focused on behavior management class for working with students with disabilities and 50% had training that focused on fostering teacher collaboration. The remaining areas were selected by less than 50% of the principals. However, every area listed on the survey was an area of focus within the training curriculum for at least some of the principals in this study.

Table 12

*Included in Formal Training with at least 10% of Content*

Content area	Percentage
Special education law	92%
Characteristics of students with disabilities	91%
Behavior management class for working with students with disabilities	53%
Fostering teacher collaboration	50%
Crisis intervention	46%
Change process	46%
Teambuilding	43%
Academic programming for students with disabilities	39%
Supporting and training teachers to handle inclusion	39%
Interagency cooperation	16%
Field based experiences with actual inclusion activities	15%
Family intervention training	13%
Life skills training for students with disabilities	12%
Eliciting parent and community support for inclusion	11%

The results from Section II of the survey indicate that slightly more than half of the principals in this study were male, the majority of the principals were between 41 and 60 years of age, the principals varied greatly with regard to their number of years of teaching in general education, most of the principals had no experience teaching in special education, the majority of the principals had between 0 and 10 years of experience serving as secondary school principals, almost all of the principals had at least some training in special education, and the special education training that principals received were most likely to pertain to special education law and the characteristics of students with disabilities.

### **Research Question One: Secondary Principals in Georgia Attitudes Toward**

#### **Inclusion**

One of the primary goals of this study was to determine the attitudes of secondary principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting. The principals' attitudes were calculated using Section III of the survey. The total number of principals' initiating the survey was 102 with 98 completing section III of the PIS. Four respondents did not complete all questions in section III.

The reliability of the survey was assessed by computing a Cronbach's alpha after reverse coding the negative valence items (e.g., Items 1, 3, 5, 8 and 9). The results indicate that the reliability of the survey was excellent ( $\alpha = .88$ ) and therefore the survey was deemed to be reliable (Ponterotto & Ruckdeschel, 2007). Since the items on the survey were highly correlated and therefore measuring the same underlying construct, an overall attitude score was computed for each participant by averaging the principals' responses to all 10 items on Section III of the survey. Therefore the potential score range

was from one to five with higher values reflecting more favorable attitudes regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

In order to address research question one, frequency distributions were constructed for each of the likert scale items on Section III of the survey, and descriptive statistics were computed based on the participants’ overall attitude score. The individual item responses are summarized first and then the descriptive statistics for the principals’ overall attitude scores are presented last.

Table 13 provides the response frequencies for the first item in Section III on the survey, which states “Only teachers with extensive special education experience can be expected to deal with students with disabilities in a school setting.” The results indicate that the principals were most likely to disagree (65.3%) followed by strongly disagree (25.5%). In fact, only 8.1% either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Table 13

*Section III Survey Item 1 Response Frequencies*

Item 1	n	Percent
Strongly disagree	25	25.5
Disagree	64	65.3
Uncertain	1	1.0
Agree	6	6.1
Strongly agree	2	2.0
Total	98	100.0

Item 2 states “Schools with both students with disabilities and students without disabilities enhance the learning experiences of students with severe/profound



disabilities.” The results in Table 14 indicate that 60 of the principals agreed (61.9%) with an additional 14 (14.4%) strongly agreeing with the statement. However, as much as 15 (15.5%) were uncertain. Finally, eight (8.2%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 14

*Section III Survey Item 2 Response Frequencies*

Item 2	n	Percent
Strongly disagree	4	4.1
Disagree	4	4.1
Uncertain	15	15.5
Agree	60	61.9
Strongly agree	14	14.4
Total	97	100.0

The summarized results for Item 3 are presented in Table 15. Item 3 states “Students with disabilities are too impaired to benefit from the activities of a regular school.” The results indicate that the 94 either disagreed (63.3%) or strongly disagreed with the statement (32.7%). Finally, four ( 4.1%) either agreed or strongly agreed.

Table 15

*Section III Survey Item 3 Response Frequencies*

Item 3	n	Percent
Strongly disagree	32	32.7
Disagree	62	63.3
Uncertain	0	0.0
Agree	1	1.0
Strongly agree	3	3.1
Total	98	100.0

Item 4 states “A good regular educator can do a lot to help a student with a disability.” The summarized results in Table 16 indicate that 57 of the principals agreed (58.2%) with another 34 (34.7%) strongly agreeing with the statement. Finally, three (3%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 16

*Section III Survey Item 4 Responses Frequencies*

Item 4	n	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	1.0
Disagree	2	2.0
Uncertain	4	4.1
Agree	57	58.2
Strongly agree	34	34.7
Total	98	100.0

Item 5 states “In general, students with disabilities should be placed in special classes/schools specifically designed for them.” The summarized responses in Table 17 indicate that 70 principals disagreed (71.4%) with the statement and an additional 19 (19.4%) strongly disagreed. Finally, five (5.1%) showed some level of agreement with the statement.

Table 17

*Section III Survey Item 5 Response Frequencies*

Item 5	n	Percent
Strongly disagree	19	19.4
Disagree	70	71.4
Uncertain	4	4.1
Agree	2	2.0
Strongly agree	3	3.1
Total	98	100.0

Item 6 states “Students without disabilities can profit from contact with students with disabilities.” The summarized responses in Table 18 indicate that 91 of the principals either agreed (69.8%) or strongly agreed (25.0%) with the statement. Finally, four (4.2%) either disagreed for strongly disagreed.

Table 18

*Section III Survey Item 6 Response Frequencies*

Item 6	n	Percent
Strongly disagree	2	2.1
Disagree	2	2.1
Uncertain	1	1.0
Agree	67	69.8
Strongly agree	24	25.0
Total	96	100.0

Table 19 provides the summarized results for Item 7, which states “General education should be modified to meet the needs of all students including students with disabilities.” The results indicate that 61 of the principals agreed (62.9%) with an additional 22 (22.7%) strongly agreeing. However, 13 (13.4%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 19

*Section III Survey Item 7 Response Frequencies*

Item 7	n	Percent
Strongly disagree	2	2.1
Disagree	11	11.3
Uncertain	1	1.0
Agree	61	62.9
Strongly agree	22	22.7
Total	97	100.0

Item 8 states “It is unfair to ask/expect regular teachers to accept students with disabilities.” The results in Table 20 indicate that 61 of the principals disagreed (62.9%) with another 28 (28.9%) strongly disagreeing with the statement. Finally, six (6.2%) either agreed or strongly agreed.

Table 20

*Section III Survey Item 8 Response Frequencies*

Item 8	n	Percent
Strongly disagree	28	28.9
Disagree	61	62.9
Uncertain	2	2.1
Agree	2	2.1
Strongly agree	4	4.1
Total	97	100.0

Item 9 states “No discretionary financial resources should be allocated for the integration of students with disabilities.” The summarized responses in Table 21 indicate that 54 (55.1%) of the principals disagreed and 32 (32.7%) strongly disagreed. However, seven (7.2%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Table 21

*Section III Survey Item 9 Response Frequencies*

Item 9	n	Percent
Strongly disagree	32	32.7
Disagree	54	55.1
Uncertain	5	5.1
Agree	3	3.1
Strongly agree	4	4.1
Total	98	100.0

The final item in Section III of the survey states “It should be policy and/or law that students with disabilities are integrated into general educational programs and activities.” The summarized responses in Table 22 indicate that while 55 of the principals either agreed (56.1%) and 10 strongly agreed (10.2%) with the statement, as many as 18 (18.4%) were uncertain and as many as 15 (15.3%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Therefore the principals were most diverse on this particular item.

Table 22

*Section III Survey Item 10 Response Frequencies*

Item 10	n	Percent
Strongly disagree	3	3.1
Disagree	12	12.2
Uncertain	18	18.4
Agree	55	56.1
Strongly agree	10	10.2
Total	98	100.0

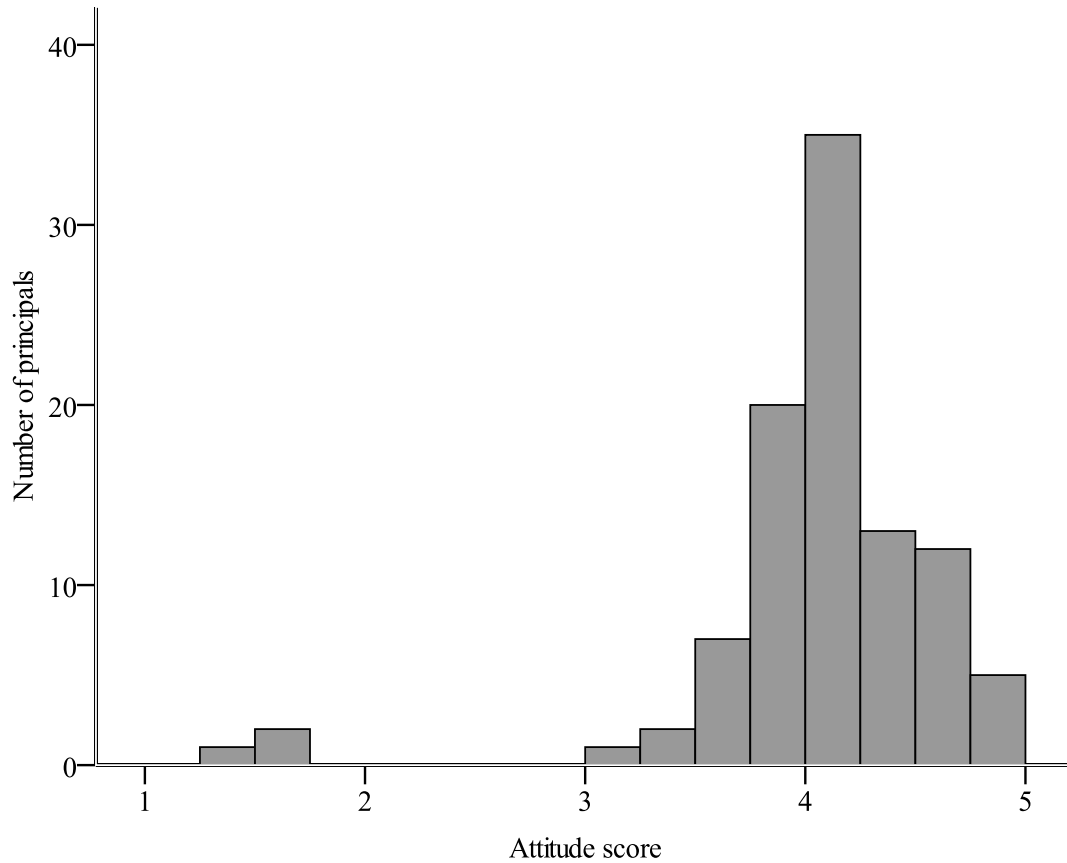
The descriptive statistics for the principals' overall attitude score are provided in Table 23. The results indicate that although there was a relatively wide range in the scores with a minimum of 1.30 and a maximum of 4.90, on average principals had favorable attitudes regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities (4.02).

Table 23

*Attitudes toward Inclusion of Students with Disabilities*

Source	<i>N</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Attitude score	98	1.30	4.90	4.02	0.58

Figure 1 displays the distribution of attitude scores. The histogram featured in Figure 1 indicates that the vast majority of the participants had neutral to very favorable attitudes regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities. However, there were three extreme attitude scores on the low end of the scale, which represent unfavorable perceptions regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities.



*Figure 1.* Distribution of Principals' Attitudes Scores.

The results for research question one indicate that the majority of the principals in this study had favorable to very favorable perceptions regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities. However, there were some principals with relatively neutral or unfavorable attitudes. It is important to note that the restricted degree of variability in the principals' attitudes may weaken the ability to detect true differences or relationships between principals' characteristics and their attitudes (Cohen, 1988).

**Research Question Two: Principal Characteristics and Principal Attitudes**

In addition to determining secondary principals' overall attitudes on inclusion, this study explored the possible relationship between various principal characteristics and principal attitudes about inclusion. Specifically, age, gender, years of experience



teaching full-time as a general educator, years of experience teaching full-time as a special educator, years as a secondary principal, college credits in special education, size of school, average class size, percentage of students with disabilities in the school, certification in special education and content-related training experiences were examined relative to their relationship with principals' attitudes. The effect of each characteristic was measured independently for research question two.

Two types of analyses were used to address research question two. First, the ordinal independent variables were correlated with the principals' attitude scores using Spearman's rho. Second, the effect of the binary independent variables on principal attitudes was tested using independent samples *t*-tests.

Table 24 provides the Spearman's rho results for each of the ordinal independent variables. The results indicate that none of the relationships tested reached statistical significance,  $p > .05$ . Therefore when looking simply at the bivariate relationships, no significant relationships were found between principal age, years of experience teaching full-time general education, years of teaching full-time special education, years as secondary principal, number of special education credits, school size, average class size or percentage of students with IEPs in the building and principals' attitudes about inclusion.

Table 24

*Spearman's rho Results for Ordinal Independent Variables and Principal Attitudes*

Source	<i>N</i>	<i>r<sub>s</sub></i>	<i>p</i>
Principal age	97	0.05	0.663
Years teaching general education	98	0.10	0.329
Years teaching special education	97	0.05	0.640
Years as secondary principal	98	-0.05	0.642
Special education credits	98	0.12	0.245
Size of school	98	0.09	0.357
Class size	98	-0.08	0.461
Percentage of students with IEPs	97	0.16	0.128

The independent samples *t*-test results are presented in Table 25. The *t*-test results indicate that only two significant effects were found. Specifically, secondary principals who had at least 10% content area in supporting and training teachers to handle inclusion had statistically significantly higher mean attitude scores than teachers who did not (4.20 vs. 3.89),  $t(96) = 2.65$ ,  $p = .009$ , and secondary principals who had at least 10% content area in fostering teacher collaboration had statistically significantly higher mean attitude scores than teachers who did not (4.18 vs. 3.83),  $t(96) = 3.09$ ,  $p = .003$ .

Table 25

*Independent Samples t-Test Results for Binary Independent Variables and Principal**Attitudes*

Source	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender	1.18	94	0.240
Certified	1.66	96	0.101
Characteristics of students with disabilities	0.55	96	0.584
Behavior management class	1.55	96	0.124
Academic programs for students with disabilities	1.42	96	0.159
Special education law	-0.73	96	0.470
Crisis intervention	-0.72	96	0.471
Life skills training for students with disabilities	1.34	96	0.185
Team building	-0.74	96	0.462
Interagency cooperation	1.78	96	0.078
Family intervention training	0.26	96	0.792
Support & train teachers to handle inclusion	2.65	96	0.009
Change process	0.27	96	0.788
Eliciting parent & community support for inclusion	1.23	96	0.222
Fostering teacher collaboration	3.09	96	0.003
Field based experiences with inclusion	0.90	96	0.371

The results for research question two indicate that the secondary principals in this study were found to differ significantly with regard to their attitudes about inclusion based on the content area of their formal training. Specifically, secondary principals who had at least 10% of their content in the area of supporting and training teachers to handle

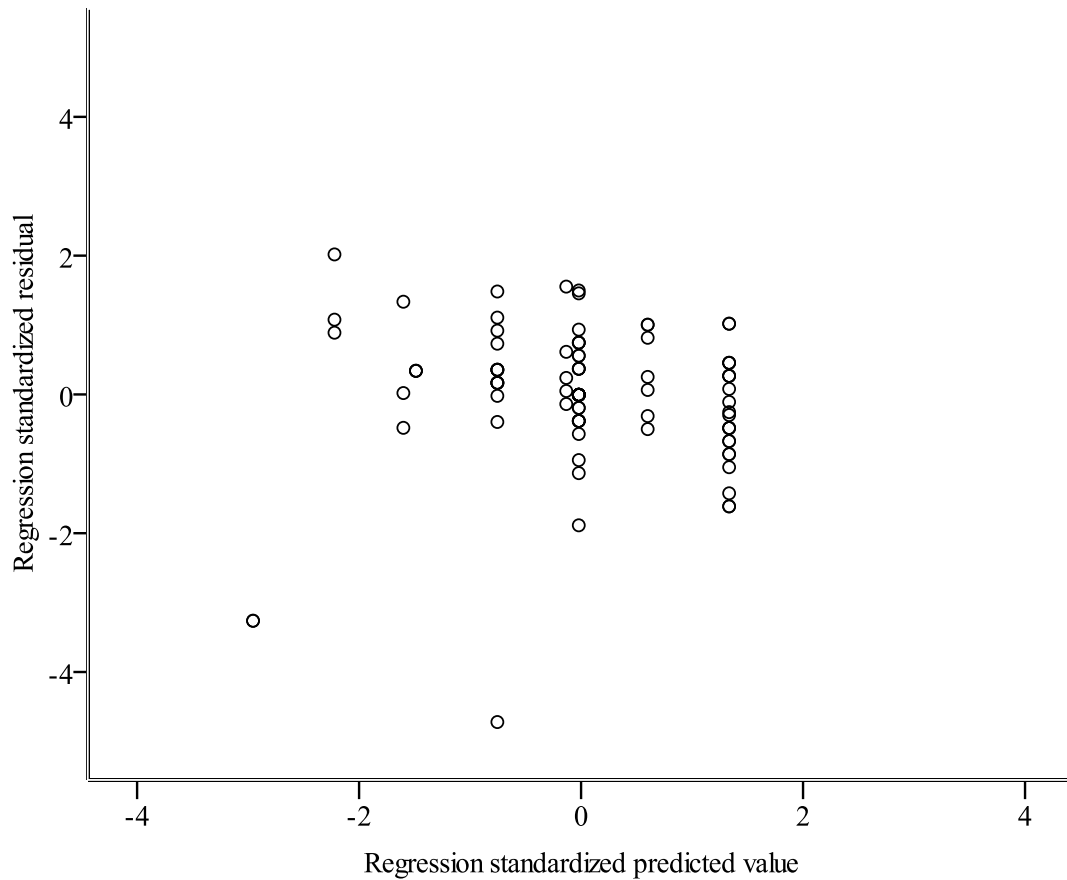
inclusion and/or fostering teacher collaboration had statistically significantly more favorable attitudes about inclusion. However, it is important to note that the variability for many of the principal characteristics was small and therefore the principals were relatively homogeneous on many of the factors, which reduces the statistical power needed to detect true relationships (Cohen, 1988).

### **Research Question Three: Best Combination of Predictors of Principal Attitudes**

While the second research question examined the bivariate relationships between each of the principal characteristic variables and their attitudes about inclusion, the third research question examined the combined relationships in the attempt to identify the best combination of predictors of principals' attitudes about inclusion. Therefore a stepwise multiple linear regression analysis was conducted.

Multiple linear regression analysis is based on certain statistical assumptions about the data. The three statistical assumptions of linearity, normally distributed errors and homoscedasticity (constant error variance) were tested by creating a scatter plot with the standardized regression predicted values on the x-axis and the standardized regression residuals on the y-axis. When the data points cluster randomly within the center of the scatter plot, the three statistical assumptions have been met (Mertler & Vannatta, 2005).

The scatter plot featured in Figure 2 indicates that the vast majority of the data points were clustered randomly throughout the center of the scatter plot and therefore the statistical assumptions of linearity, normally distributed errors and homoscedasticity were not violated.



*Figure 2.* Regression Standardized Predicted Values and Standardized Residuals.

The model summary presented in Table 26 provides the results of the stepwise linear regression analysis by step or model. Since there were two significant predictors, two models were identified. The first model includes the first significant predictor selected and the second model includes the first significant predictor selected and the second or final significant predictor selected. None of the other variables were found to be significant predictors of principals' attitudes and therefore the analysis stopped after the second model.

The results in Table 26 indicate that the first model was statistically significant and explained 11% of the variance in principals' attitudes,  $R = .34$ ,  $p = .001$ . The second model was statistically significant and explained an additional 9% of the variance totaling

20% of explained variance. The additional explanatory value for model two was statistically significant,  $R = .45$ ,  $p = .002$ .

Table 26

*Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Model Summary Results*

Model	$R$	$R^2$	$R^2_{adj}$	$\Delta R^2$	$F_{chg}$	$p$	$df_1$	$df_2$
Model 1	0.34	0.11	0.10	0.11	11.51	0.001	1	91
Model 2	0.45	0.20	0.18	0.09	9.69	0.002	1	90

Table 27 provides the regression coefficient results for each model. The results for the first model indicate that when all of the variables were accounted for, percentage of students with IEPs was the most significant predictor of principals attitudes towards inclusion,  $\beta = .34$ ,  $p = .001$ . The regression coefficient indicates that the strength of the relationship between the two variables was moderate and positive. Therefore principals with a greater percentage of students with IEPs in the building were associated with higher (more favorable) attitudes about inclusion.

The results for the second model indicate that having formal training with at least 10% of the content pertaining to supporting and training teachers to handle inclusion was also a significant predictor, even after accounting for the effect of the first predictor (percentage of students in the building with IEPs). The regression coefficient for percentage of students in the building with IEPs remained about the same,  $\beta = .35$ ,  $p < .001$ . The regression coefficient for training with at least 10% content in supporting and training teachers to handle inclusion was moderate in strength and positive,  $\beta = .29$ ,  $p = .002$ . Therefore principals who had the training were associated with higher (more favorable) attitudes towards inclusion.

Table 27

*Regression Coefficient Results by Model*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Step 1					
Percentage of students with IEPs	0.19	0.06	0.34	3.39	0.001
Step 2					
Percentage of students with IEPs	0.19	0.05	0.35	3.66	< .001
Support/train teachers to handle inclusion	0.36	0.11	0.29	3.11	0.002

The results for research question three indicate that it is important to consider the inter-relationships between each of the principal characteristics and principals' attitudes towards inclusion when trying to determine the predictive ability of the principal characteristics. The results also indicate that the best combination of predictors of principals' attitudes towards inclusion were the percentage of students in the building with IEPs and whether or not the principal had attended a formal training with at least 10% of the content pertaining to supporting and training teachers to handle inclusion. In fact, the two predictors combined explained 20% of the differences in principal's attitudes towards inclusion.

**Summary**

The purpose of this study was to examine current attitudes of secondary principals in the state of Georgia relative to inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Further, this study attempted to determine the effect of various demographic characteristics and training experiences of secondary principals as they relate to the principals' attitudes toward inclusion.

The results of this study indicate that the principals were relatively homogeneous in that the majority had favorable to very favorable perceptions regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities. In fact, only three principals had overall attitude scores that fell below a value of three (e.g., below neutral). In fact, all three of these principals had a score below a value of two, which represents unfavorable to very unfavorable attitudes about inclusion. The results of this study also indicate that when taking all of the principal characteristics into consideration, the best predictors of principals' attitudes include the percentage of students in the building with IEPs and whether or not the principal had attended a formal training with at least 10% of the content pertaining to supporting and training teachers to handle inclusion. Specifically, greater percentages of students with IEPs and attending formal training with at least 10% of the content pertaining to supporting and training teachers to handle inclusion were associated with more favorable attitudes towards inclusion.

This chapter provided the data analysis findings and addressed the three research questions associated with the study. Chapter 5 will provide an interpretation of these findings and discuss the practical implications for special education and inclusion. In addition, the limitations of the current study will be discussed and recommendations for future research will be provided.



## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter provided an overview of the study, including research questions, findings, discussion of findings, conclusions, implications, recommendations, and concluding thoughts. This chapter was organized to include a summary, analysis, and discussion of how the research finding related to the review of the literature. Finally, the chapter concluded with implications and recommendations for additional study and concluding thoughts.

#### **Summary**

The degree to which an administrator/academic leader supports academic innovations, such as, inclusion is often determined by their attitudes and values (Praisner, 2000). The principal as instructional leader of all programs within the school, influences all instructional practices and culture; therefore, the principal is the single most important associated with effective schools (Horne, 1983; Semmel, 1986; Villa, Thousand, Myers, & Nevin, 1996). Therefore, the principals' attitude toward inclusion of student with disabilities in the general education classroom could directly impact inclusion placement of students,( Livingston, Reed and Good, 2001). The attitudes of principals toward students with disabilities are essential in facilitating inclusive practices Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, (1999). Accordingly, a principal's personal experiences with students who have disabilities become evident when speaking to them about their attitudes about inclusion. If a principal believes in inclusion, appropriate school restructuring or changes are more likely to take place or be promoted. On the other hand, if they do not believe in inclusion,

they will maintain existing service delivery models such as exclusionary practices of separate classrooms.

### **Analysis and Discussion of Research**

In this study, the researcher solicited the opinions toward inclusion of public secondary school principals in the state of Georgia. The researcher developed a survey instrument based on Praisner's *Principals and Inclusion Survey* (PIS, 2000) adapted for high school principals. Using this survey, the researcher requested information regarding principals' attitudes toward inclusion. Data gathered with this survey were used to determine the current perceptions of secondary school principals as it relates to their experience, attitude, and impact in Georgia toward inclusion. Additionally, the researcher collected demographic information, gender, age, and training and education using a descriptive questionnaire. Further, the results of this study extend previous research by (Praisner, 2000) by examining secondary principals' attitudes toward inclusive education.

This study was conducted to better understand Georgia secondary principals attitudes toward inclusion. Overall, the findings indicate that a majority of Georgia secondary principals held a positive attitude toward inclusion of student with and without disabilities. This finding suggest principals believe that students with disabilities can achieve academic accomplishment from being included in the general education classroom with students without disabilities; further, students without disabilities benefit from being in classrooms with students with disabilities. Based on the finding of this study, the results were presented to the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of secondary school principals in the State of Georgia toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms?

2. To what degree are school principals' attitudes toward inclusion related to:

- age of the principal
- gender of the principal
- years of experience in general education classroom personal
- years of experience in special education classroom
- years of experience as a principal
- college credits in special education
- size of school
- average class size
- percentage of students with disabilities in the school
- certification in special education
- training in the different types of disabilities
- training in the different models or programs used in special education classrooms

3. Which combinations of these variables best predict secondary school principals' attitudes toward inclusion?

### **Research Question One**

The results of research question one, "What are the perceptions of secondary school principals in the State of Georgia toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms?", indicated that the majority of the principals in this study had favorable to very favorable perceptions regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities agreeing with the conclusion of (Horne, 1983; Semmel, 1986; Vilia, Thousand, Meyer & Nevin, 1996; Horrock, 2006; Brown, 2007; and Ramirez, 2006).

However, there were some principals with relatively neutral or uncertain attitudes toward inclusion as found by (Hof, 1994; Geter, 1997; Hunter, 2006 and Praisner, 2000 or unfavorable attitudes as found by, Davis and Maheady 1991; Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1996; Livingston , Reed and Good, 2001 and Choi, 2008).

Because inclusion remains a viable instructional model to serve all students, it was important to determine the principal's role as inclusion was implemented in schools. Principals are in a unique position to affect inclusion of students with disabilities in Georgia secondary schools. One of the goals of this study was to gain a better understanding of secondary principals' attitudes toward inclusion. Overall, the findings indicated a majority of Georgia secondary principals self reported positive attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classrooms. This research indicates a positive attitude was necessary to promote inclusion in Georgia secondary schools. Therefore, a majority of secondary principals, in this study, rated highly and most highly on those areas that related to the educational benefit of an inclusive education. This finding indicates that secondary principals surveyed in Georgia believe that both students with disabilities and general education students benefit from inclusion. The study was consistent with the findings of McLeskey & Waldron, (2000) and Ramirez, (2006). This finding was also a reflection on the views of America's general society as long as the students with disabilities perform well on the current academic assessment and the secondary schools meet Annually Yearly Progress. Attitudes are constantly evolving and being refined over time. Further, over time the principal's acquisition of knowledge about the inclusion and of students with disabilities plus their effective use of this knowledge has refined attitudes. Although the majority of

the principals in this study and researchers (Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996) provided support that students with disabilities in the general education classroom obtained educational benefit there were principals that agreed with (Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, 1999) finding that principals did not believe academic achievement was enhanced. In fact, three principals self reported extreme attitude scores in the low range, which represented unfavorable perceptions regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. (Davis and Maheady, 1999) study also found that some principals believed inclusion would have a negative effect on academic achievement similar to Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, (1999) findings.

Many negative attitudes toward inclusion are based on a lack of experience. If the principal attended school that did not have students with disabilities. Some principals may have lead schools earlier in their career that did not have students with disabilities enrolled. These administrators may feel apprehensive or even fear inclusion because of the unknown factor. However, some attitudes are based on the attitudes of others. Teachers convince principals to refuse admittance to students with disabilities because of medical issues, requires catheterization, the student is in diapers or has behavioral problems. Older and retiring administrators persuaded younger administrators not embrace inclusion because fear of a loss of academic standards that the older administrators set for the school.

### **Research Question Two**

The results of research question two, "To what degree are school principals' attitudes toward inclusion related to: age of the principal, gender of the principal, years of experience in general education classroom personal, years of experience in special

education classroom, years of experience as a principal, college credits in special education, size of school, average class size, percentage of students with disabilities in the school, certification in special education, and training in the different types of disabilities training in the different models or programs used in special education classrooms?”, indicated that the principals in this study were found to differ significantly with regard to their attitudes about inclusion based on the content area of their formal training. Horrocks (2006) discovered that six out of nine variables included in the principal’s demographics information predicated a higher placement in special education recommendation. School level, gender, years as a principal, formal training, professional experience, and belief in students with disabilities all positively correlated with placement with higher levels of inclusion. This study found, administrators who had more formal and in-service training in the area of supporting and training teachers to deal with inclusion and/or fostering teacher collaboration had statistically significantly more favorable attitudes about inclusion. The need for special education training is even greater for new administrators entering the field.

It was determined by Georgia secondary principals’ self reporting that the following demographic categories, age, gender, school size, the percentage of students in special education in the general education setting and the percentage of students in special education did not have a significant effect on principals’ attitudes toward inclusion. These findings support Hof (1999); Levy (1999); and Praisner (2000) on gender and age; however, differed slightly from Levy (1999) who found a negative relationship between age and attitude. Further, it was found that Georgia principals’ training and teaching experience in general education and special, principal experience,

in-service hours in inclusive practices, number college credit hours in special education, and the time frame of their special education training did not affect their attitudes toward inclusion with the exception of principals' special education training experience.

Principals with experience teaching special education reported having a more positive attitude toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. However, number of principals self reporting experience teaching special education was small and therefore homogenous. Further, the principals with little special education experience had less favorable attitudes toward inclusion, than those principals with moderate special education teaching experience. This investigation collaborated the findings of previous researchers (Hof, 1994; Inzano, 1999; Levy, 1999; Praisner, 2000; Villa, et al., 1996; Maricle, 2001) who found no significant relationship between principals attitudes, and general education and/or principals experience; yet, differs from the principals attitude and special education experience.

The research of Hof in 1994, suggested that principals do not possess the critical knowledge base of law, practices, and procedures to effectively implement an inclusion program. Hof also has reported that principals have limited knowledge or no academic background regarding the educational, social, or emotional needs of students with disabilities. However, this research indicates that Georgia secondary principals reported being trained in formal or in-service training in special education law, characteristic of students with disabilities, behavior management, fostering teacher collaboration, crisis intervention, change process, academic programming for students with disabilities, support and teacher training to handle inclusion, interagency cooperation, field based experiences with inclusion, family intervention training, life skills training for students

with disabilities, and eliciting parent and community support for inclusion. However, the survey did not ask if this training was systematic and/or occurred on a regular basis.

Further, this study reminded the researcher that principals are in a unique position to produce positive change and inclusion in schools. It supports researchers (Ramirez, 2006; Prasiner, 2000; Inzano, 1999; Barnett, 1998) a positive attitude of the principal produces a positive inclusive program in the secondary school.

Maricle (2001) addressed the need to develop opportunities for students with disabilities who were not being widely accepted in an inclusive setting when they were more than two years behind grade level academically. Overall, Georgia secondary principals' reported a more positive attitude toward inclusion of students with disabilities than (Praisner, 2000) who found only one in five principals had a positive attitude toward inclusion. Fontenot (2005) did find a negative correlation between the attitudes of principals who had experience teaching general education and the attitudes of principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities. However, neither general education teaching experience nor special education experience was significantly correlated with attitude in the results of this study. Martin (2004) found the principals in very inclusive schools and who had positive attitudes toward inclusion found time for training, release of fund for inclusion and worked with university staff developing programs for students with disabilities. These findings are very useful in the implementation of inclusion of students with disabilities in Georgia secondary schools.

The secondary school principal is vital in assuring that all students be provided a free and appropriate education. Therefore, for students with disabilities, the secondary school principal must ensure that least restricted environment (LRE) education includes a



full continuum of services. The current rules of the Georgia Board of Education require that policy and procedures be developed that ensure the provisions of LRE; consequently, secondary school principals must be aware of these requirements and not allow their attitude to influence the development or implementation of these policies.

The leadership role of secondary school principals is crucial for improved education for students with disabilities. However, in recent years several states have moved away from mandating preparation programs to include coursework on special education policy, procedures, laws, and practice. Georgia still requires course work in law, special education identification and education of children with special education needs for certification.

### **Research Question Three**

The results of research question three, “Which combinations of these variables best predict secondary school principals’ attitudes toward inclusion?”, indicated that it is important to consider the inter-relationships between each of the principal characteristics and principals’ attitudes towards inclusion when trying to determine the predictive ability of the principal characteristics. The results in this study found that in model one of the Multiple Linear Regression indicated when all of the variables were accounted for, percentages of students with IEPs was the most significant predictor of principals’ attitudes toward inclusion. Further, the regression coefficient indicated that the strength of the relationship between the two variables was moderate and positive. Therefore, principals with greater percentages of students with IEPs in the building were linked with higher, more favorable, attitudes about inclusion. Supporting these findings, Durtschi (2005) results indicated that principals who felt comfortable in their abilities and who

spent a lot of time at their job and on special education- related activities proportional to the percentage of students with disabilities in their school. Maricle (2001) found that principals in general supported students with disabilities in their schools. Inclusion expectations of the principal are creating a shared vision, involving advocacy groups, facilitating individualized education plans (IEPs), providing assistance with curricula, ensuring appropriate learning opportunities for disabled learners, working with transition services and facilitating the development of staff (Livingston, Reed, & Good, 2001).

The continuum of services has expanded, creating the need for increased skills, knowledge and understanding. At the same time, principals feel the responsibility of their key roles in inclusive schools. Because educating the student with a disability presents a special challenge, change has come slowly in administrative ranks Livingston, Reed, & Good (2001). An additional consideration is the natural resistance to change. In the change process associated with inclusion, principals face the assumption of new roles. Initially negative perceptions generally improve with actual administrative experience with inclusive practices (Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996). (Livingston, et.al, 2001) claimed that well-supported implementation of inclusion overcame most opposition, even when the particular opposition group was composed of school administrators themselves. However, (Dyal, Flynt, and Bennett-Walker, 1996) stated principals did not favor full inclusion, noting this attitude came as a result of principals feeling more comfortable with the existing service delivery models, namely, special education pullout programs. This researcher did not uncover any findings similar to Hannah (1988) who reported that administrators who were uncomfortable with students

with disabilities avoided attending IEP meetings and/or relied on others to attend to the needs of students with disabilities.

The results for the second multiple linear regression analysis model indicated that having formal training with a good percentage of their class work in content pertaining to support and training teachers to deal with inclusion was a significant predictor, percentage of students in the building with IEPs. The results also indicated that the best combination of predictors of principals' attitudes towards inclusion were the percentage of students in the building with IEPs and whether or not the principal had attended a formal training or in-service training with a large percentage of the content pertaining to supporting and training teachers about inclusion.

While research suggests a majority of principals have positive attitudes toward inclusion, professional development and practical supports are often required, by administrators, to assist teachers in implementing inclusive practices. This research underscores the importance of research and school improvement, appropriate professional development and continued supports to assist teachers, by academic leader, in the implementation of inclusive school practices.

### **Implications**

This study was conducted to better understand secondary principals, in Georgia, attitudes toward inclusion. Overall, the findings indicate that a majority of Georgia secondary principals reported that they held a positive attitude toward inclusion of student with and without disabilities. Principals believe that students with disabilities can co-exist and can benefit from co-existence in the general education classroom with

students without disabilities; further, students without disabilities benefit and gain a better understanding of students with disabilities from being in classrooms.

The results of this study revealed that principals' attitudes about inclusion of students with disabilities related to their training and experience. Also, the findings of this study can assist education administration programs in preparing an educational leader/principal for the role of an inclusion facilitator. Educators should insist that teacher and administrator preparation programs include curricula that are relevant to the current trend in inclusion and practice of co-teaching. Student teachers should have experience in this method of teaching students with disabilities. There must be further changes in preparation of administrators, counselors, media specialist and teachers requiring increased inclusion training. Further, systematic training in current inclusion practices, should be required as part of the renewal procedure for all educators' certificates.

School and system administration should be strong supporters of in-service training opportunities, and opportunities for teachers to volunteer for the inclusion model of teaching. The principal overall has many duties and roles to perform within the school and school district, and community. Principals are the foundation of leadership within the school and the mortar that establishes the educational community among the staff while trying to plan for certain programs within the school. Therefore, for a school to have a successful inclusion program the principal needs to have a positive attitude toward inclusion. This attitude will help the teachers and students to have an overall effective inclusion experience.

For an effective inclusion model in the school a principal must have had proper and informational training on inclusion. This may include additional classes to be taken

during the summer, workshops, or in-services. Training funds can bring another issue for inclusion. Financial support can come from special education if the administrator understands special education funding for in-service inclusion training. Further, special education funding can be used by the principal to enhance the whole classroom, and the inclusion teacher can be used to service both students with disabilities and general education student. After the principal has base line knowledge about needed inclusion training, he/she develops an implementation plan to ensure a smooth transition between the classes without inclusion to class with inclusion of students with disabilities .Principals awareness of good inclusion models and practices is critical. Ones lacking this awareness and expertise may be needed to include colleagues or other staff members in a shared leadership model.

Use of this study's findings benefits superintendents, special education directors, principals and graduate level education leadership programs in developing an overall improvement plan toward meeting the needs of all students. This study also contributes to the field of special education and educational leadership by providing research data regarding perceptions and demographics of current secondary school principals; by offering suggestions for the State Department of Education, school district administrators; and by advancing conclusions concerning the concepts and implementation of inclusion.

### **Recommendations**

Future research on secondary principals' perceptions in Georgia regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classroom as they relate to principals' perception in regional areas or the nation as a whole should be the next focus

of study. Further, the focus should include factors that affect how principals' feel about the inclusion of secondary students with disabilities in the secondary general education classroom and whether they believe there are both academic and social benefits nationally. Additionally, future researchers may look at the types of instruments used to measure principals' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom at the secondary school level. The idea of inclusion at the secondary level is more complicated warranting future investigation. More studies are required in order to answer these questions.

Additional in-depth research is required for two areas discovered in this research. The first area is that of the finding that 50 percent or 51 of principals answering this survey had between zero and five years experience as a principal. A study is required to see why so many schools will be led by inexperienced leaders without any legal or practical expertise when it comes to special education. A second is of a study required in the area of formal special education training. Using the data from this study research is required to investigate if the these findings are in line with the State of Georgia findings and national findings that 50 percent of secondary principals have between zero and five years experience as a principal.

Next, this research study found that 78.4 percent of 80 principals reported between one and nine credits hours in formal special education training. Is this an indication that principals only have the required three credit hours course for certification? Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GAPSC) requires one course in identification and the education special education students or three semester credit hours for certification as an administrator in Georgia. Further study is required in the

number of special education course a secondary principal needs to be an effective leader of inclusion. Leadership training programs are compelled to require the study; however, yet in recent years some states have moved away from mandating preparation programs to include coursework on special education policy, procedures, laws, and practice. Georgia and other states have not kept pace with the changing times and have not required additional course work.

One area not investigated in this study was the role of assistant principals in carrying out school leadership responsibilities: Do teachers perceive the assistant principals leadership responsibilities toward implementing, maintaining, and supporting inclusion in the same manner as principals? Do assistant principals engage in the same tasks as school principals? Does the assistant principals practical experience in this role translate to the qualities needed by effective principals of inclusion for the future? Future research in the area of principal practice must consider the rapidity of change facing schools in order to best prepare future school leaders for the challenges ahead.

The support of school administration is important for inclusion effectiveness. In order for, in-service training opportunities to be provided and opportunities for teachers to volunteer for the inclusion model of teaching administration must be a strong supporter for inclusion. Without administrative support, there would not be a successful outcome. An effective program must include the commitment of administrators, faculty, staff and parents to provide the necessary components to increase the likelihood of success. In addition, further research is needed in the investigation of the effectiveness of inclusion in facilitating the academic development of students with disabilities. The reports in this study showed what administrators thought were necessary for a successful inclusion

program was in fact the consult model under inclusion, as reported in Table 13 of this study. Additional studies should also examine the effects of consult model and the co-teaching model on student success. Further studies might also include the perceptions of the students themselves as well as parents and teachers on the benefits of inclusion, inclusion under the consult model, co-teaching model and the role of the special education teacher in inclusion.

In order to answer other concerns, a nationwide longitudinal study should be conducted to track students enrolled in inclusion classrooms from elementary level throughout secondary school. This study could also track the opinions and attitudes of principals as they progress over the years from having been the leading educational change catalyst within the inclusive school.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, based on the current trends in education and the positive attitudes of Georgia secondary principals, the inclusion model appears to be gaining wide acceptance as a viable service option for students with disabilities. This should compel school districts and teacher preparation programs to provide training in the inclusion model. As this research showed, principals in Georgia believe that both students with disabilities and general education students benefit from inclusive education.

The secondary school principals who participated in this research generally have a positive attitude toward inclusion. Further, principals with in-service or formal training in special education and inclusion practices have a considerable more positive attitude toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. In fact, principals self reported 92% has training in special education law, 91% had training in



characteristic of student with disabilities, 53% reported behavior management for students with disabilities, and 50% reported training in fostering teacher collaboration. For years, principal have relied with special education professional instead of the having direct contact with students dishabilles themselves; however, the more principals have direct contact with students with disabilities the more they have a positive attitude toward the student and including them in the general education classrooms.

It is evident from this study that in Georgia inclusion is becoming a reality in education. According to this study a majority of Georgia and current research in other states secondary principals have a positive attitude toward inclusion and inclusionary practices. This positive attitude toward inclusion is also related to more professional development being offered to principal through professional development and professional contact with their students with disabilities. However, how are principals trained and prepared to implement other teaching models for students with disabilities. Based on this study secondary principals are better prepared for inclusions; however, there is still room for improvement. Secondary school principals agree on the practices of inclusion as being important, further study could determine if principals attitudes are being employed in the decision to place a student in an inclusive setting.

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APPENDIX A

Principals and Inclusion Survey

The purpose of this survey is to determine the opinions of secondary school principals toward the inclusion movement and to gather information about the types of training and experience that principals have. There are no right or wrong answers so please address the questions to the best of your knowledge and provide us with what you believe.

\*\*\*\*\*

SECTION I- Demographic Information

The following information will be used to describe the population being studied and will not be used for identification purposes.

- 1. Approximate number of all students in your building:
2. Average class size for all students:
3. Approximate percentage of students with IEPs in your building:
4. Approximate number of students with IEPs in your building that are included in general education classrooms...

SECTION II- Training and Experience

- 1. Your age:
2. Gender:
3. Years of full-time general education teaching experience:
4. Years of full-time special education teaching experience:
5. Years as a secondary school principal:
6. Approximate number of special education credits in your formal training:
7. Approximate number of inservice training hours in inclusive practices:
8. Mark the areas below that were included in your formal training such as courses, workshops, and/or significant portions of courses...

- Characteristics of students with disabilities
- Behavior management class for working with students with disabilities
- Academic programming for students with disabilities
- Special education law
- Crisis intervention
- Life skills training for students with disabilities
- Teambuilding
- Interagency cooperation
- Family intervention training
- Supporting and training teachers to handle inclusion
- Change process
- Eliciting parent and community support for inclusion
- Fostering teacher collaboration
- Field based experiences with actual inclusion activities

9. Are you certified in special education?

No  Yes

### SECTION III- Attitudes Toward Inclusion of Students with disabilities

Please mark your response to each item using the following scale:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Only teachers with extensive special education experience can be expected to deal with students with disabilities in a school setting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Schools with both students with disabilities and students without disabilities enhance the learning experiences of students with severe/profound disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Students with disabilities are too impaired to benefit from the activities of a regular school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. A good regular educator can do a lot to help a student with a disability.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. In general, students with disabilities should be placed in special classes/schools specifically designed for them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Students without disabilities can profit from contact with students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. General education should be modified to meet the needs of all students including students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. It is unfair to ask/expect regular teachers to accept students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. No discretionary financial resources should be allocated for the integration of	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

students with disabilities.

10. It should be policy and/or law that students with disabilities are integrated into general educational programs and activities.

***Thank you for taking the time to answer all of the questions on this survey. We appreciate your assistance with this study!***

## APPENDIX B

**From:** [praisner@netzero.net](mailto:praisner@netzero.net)  
**Date:** 10/5/2009 11:59:41 AM  
**To:** [smithcha@clds.net](mailto:smithcha@clds.net)  
**Subject:** Re: Permission to use PIS



Charles:

You have my permission to use the Principals and Inclusion Survey with proper citation. Please note that Section III was adapted from the work of George Stainback. You may need to speak to your advisor on how to handle permission for this section. I've attached a copy of the Instrument section of my dissertation which describes the development of the survey.

Best Wishes,  
Cindy Praisner

## APPENDIX C

**Charles W. Smith Jr.  
1953 Woking Court  
Hinesville, Georgia  
31313**

Dear Georgia High School Principal:

My name is Charles W. Smith Jr. I am assistant principal at Sol C. Johnson High School and a doctoral student in the College of Education at Georgia Southern University. I am researching the attitudes of high school principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classrooms. As inclusion practices increase, this information could be useful for superintendents, school boards, and special education directors nation wide when developing special education programs.

This letter is to request your assistance in gathering the needed data. Should you agree to participate in this study, you will find an electronic survey, attached to the following link: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RZXXRPZ> on the *Survey Monkey* webpage. The survey should take about 5 to 10 minutes to complete. All responses provided will be kept absolutely confidential. The questionnaire has been coded in order to track non-responses. The codes will be kept confidential. The survey will be most helpful if all questions are answered. You will receive a copy of the results of this survey, via e-mail at the conclusion of this study.

If you have any questions about this doctoral research dissertation, please contact Charles at (912) 876-5488. Further, if you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, they should be addressed to the IRB Coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at (912) 681-5465.

As a fellow administrator, I know your time is very valuable; therefore, I thank you for your time in advance for your assistance in this study and in completing the survey.

Sincerely,

Charles W. Smith Jr.  
Assistant Principal  
*Sol C. Johnson High School*  
*Savannah Chatham County Public Schools*  
Doctoral Candidate  
*Georgia Southern University*



## APPENDIX D

Good morning,

Please find the attached approval letter for H10361. Also, below is a copy of your invitation email that we modified. Please use this as your invitation email (we added one small clause, highlighted in bold).

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Thanks,

Brian Butler

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs

P.O. Box 8005

Statesboro, GA 30460

Phone: (912) 478-0843/5465

Fax: (912)478-0719

Dear Georgia High School Principal:

My name is Charles W. Smith Jr. I am assistant principal at Sol C. Johnson High School and a doctoral student in the College of Education at Georgia Southern University. I am researching the attitudes of high school principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classrooms. As inclusion practices increase, this information could be useful for superintendents,

school boards, and special education directors nation wide when developing special education programs.

This letter is to request your assistance in gathering the needed data. Should you agree to participate in this study, you will find an electronic survey, attached to the following link: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RZXXRPZ> on the Survey Monkey web- page. The survey should take about 5 to 10 minutes to complete. All responses provided will be kept absolutely confidential. The survey will be most helpful if all questions are answered; however, you may skip any questions you do not feel comfortable answering. You will receive a copy of the results of this survey, via e-mail at the conclusion of this study.

If you have any questions about this doctoral research dissertation, please contact Charles at (912) 876-5488. Further, if you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, they should be addressed to the IRB Coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at (912) 478-0843.

As a fellow administrator, I know your time is very valuable; therefore, I thank you for your time in advance for your assistance in this study and in completing the survey.

Sincerely,

Charles W. Smith Jr.

Assistant Principal

Sol C. Johnson High School

Savannah Chatham County Public Schools

Doctoral Candidate

Georgia Southern University



