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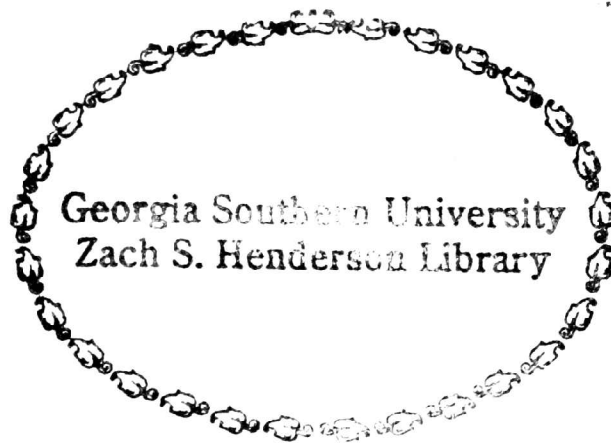
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THE LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT OF GEORGIA'S PRINCIPALS
IN PROVIDING INCLUSIVE SPECIAL
EDUCATION SERVICES

Marie Penkunas Klofenstine



THE LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT OF GEORGIA'S PRINCIPALS
IN PROVIDING INCLUSIVE SPECIAL
EDUCATION SERVICES

A Dissertation

Presented to

the College of Graduate Studies of
Georgia Southern University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
in
Educational Administration

by

Marie Penkunas Klofenstine

December 2002

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November 7, 2002

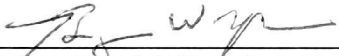
To the Graduate School:

This dissertation entitled "The Level of Involvement of Georgia's Principals in Providing Inclusive Special Education Services" and written by Marie Penkunas Klofenstine is presented to the College of Graduate Studies of Georgia Southern University. I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education with a major in Educational Administration.

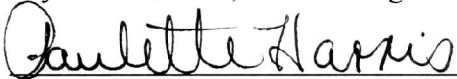


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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family.

First no one is more worthy of my gratitude than my husband, Bob, whose love and devotion enabled this work to be completed.

To my two sons, Alan and Kyle, who every night asked the same question,

“Are you finished with your paper yet?”

I am glad I can finally say...

“Yes.”

May they come to understand the great rewards for love, sacrifice, and perseverance.

A special dedication to T.Z. Lanier. It is people like you who inspire others to be the best they can be... and more.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work represents a major accomplishment in my life. It has challenged me far beyond what I thought I was capable of achieving. The people I have had the pleasure of working with have made the road worth traveling.

Thank you, Dr. T.C. Chan. Without your encouragement and support I would not have made it.

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Special thanks are extended to:

- My cohort, Hal, Tim, Jane, Pam, Myrel, and Susan who have been there to lend their support and encouragement along the way.
- The faculty at Riverside Middle School, who were committed to creating a school that truly welcomes all students.
- The other friends, coworkers, and family who have encouraged me along the way.

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ABSTRACT

THE LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT OF GEORGIA'S PRINCIPALS
IN PROVIDING INCLUSIVE SPECIAL
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DECEMBER 2002

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Increased responsibility of principals for all programs, including special education, comes at a time when administrative training provides minimal information on special education programs (Malloy 1996). Even though the trend in Georgia toward more inclusive practices has resulted in a call for major changes in teacher education programs, there have been little changes requiring principals to be competent, knowledgeable, or to take coursework related to special education administration.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the level of involvement of Georgia's school principals in special education service delivery in their schools. The dependent variables were three specific categories related to service delivery for students with disabilities: curriculum, personnel, and program/administrative duties. Comparisons

were made between principals' self-perceptions and those of special education teachers to investigate whether there was any difference in the perceptions of the principals' level of involvement between the two groups.

This study employed the use of a survey in an attempt to investigate the extent to which Georgia's principals were involved in the delivery of special education services in their schools. A stratified random sample of principals in Georgia along with one special education teacher in the school was selected to participate in this study. Data regarding each participant's gender, number of years of experience, area of certification, and level of education were also gathered. Information concerning the number of students, the geographic location, the percentage of free and reduced lunches, and the number of students receiving special education services in each school was also collected.

The analysis of data in this study revealed that principals rated their level of involvement in special education significantly higher than special education teachers. The independent variables collected from principal data revealed that principals were rated as having a higher level of involvement based on gender, education level, and experience. Education level was related to the principals' involvement in the area of personnel while gender was related to the principals' level of involvement in program/administrative duties surrounding special education. Select characteristics of the principals' schools revealed that the number of students in the school, the type of model used for the delivery of special education services, and the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch were related to the principals' level of involvement in special education services. The principals' level of involvement in the three areas was not related to knowledge.

Several conclusions were made as a result of the findings of this study including: special education teachers and principals differ on the perceptions of the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery; specific characteristics such as education level and gender are related to principals' perceptions of their level of involvement in special education service delivery; school characteristics such as percentage of free and reduced lunch and the number of students in the school is related to the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Discussions about inclusion provoke strong and differing opinions among educators, families, community members, and policymakers. It is an issue that has outspoken advocates on all sides, whether staunchly for, avowedly against, or somewhere in between. Certainly, for a school or district to adopt a more inclusive approach to providing services to students with disabilities as well as a host of other "at-risk" students, and do it in a way that ensures the success of all, will in most cases, require significant restructuring (Katsiyannis, 1996).

Providing a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for children with disabilities has been a complex and often elusive task. The challenges of maintaining a balance between appropriateness and LRE and the recent intense scrutiny of special education delivery models have captured the interest of professionals and the public alike. As a result, there exists pressure for abandoning or dramatically restructuring the current special education delivery system. One approach has become known as inclusion, a term meaning "different things to people who wish different things from it" (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994, p. 299).

While opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in the general education classroom have increased over the past 25 years, the systems of special education and general education have remained separate. Federal legislation such as IDEA (1997) and No Child Left Behind (2001) means that for the first time since the

implementation of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) the dual system of special education and regular education faculty/staff roles and relationships will change, as will the traditional rules under which "things" happen within schools and districts. General educators and special educators will need to work together to meet the needs of all students. This will only happen under the supervision of a principal who is committed to building an inclusive school.

Inclusion means more than reconfiguring special education services. It involves a reformation of the entire educational system in which the separate systems of special education and general education unite (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995). While one of the prior justifications for separate educational systems was the presumed difference in how students with and without disabilities learn, research now shows that the best practices for all students are more similar than different (National Council on Disabilities, 1994).

As educators move toward including more students with disabilities in general education classrooms, it is necessary to reconsider every aspect of schooling, from how educators and students interact, to administrative, physical and logistical operations, and the allocation of financial resources. In order for inclusion to be successful, teachers need planning time, ongoing support, and professional development, and students with disabilities need supplemental aids and services. The principal of the school and his knowledge of special education practices such as inclusion, will greatly impact the success of a change in the delivery of services to children with disabilities. Understanding how special education teachers perceive the principal to be involved in the process of delivering special education services is essential to the process of special education reform.

Background of the Study

Special education legislation and federal rules and regulations have increased the level of responsibility of principals toward special education (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Within the framework of P.L. 94-142, principals are expected to perform additional involvement level and responsibilities related to special education. Essentially, the expectation derived from this law is that principals must function as the instructional leaders and managers for all students and programs in their schools (O'Neal, 2001; Osborne, Dimattia, & Curran, 1993; Sage & Burrello, 1994).

Principals have a key role in assuring that students with disabilities in their schools are educated with their non-handicapped peers in the "least restrictive environment" (O'Neal, 2001). However, numerous judicial and legislative interpretations of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) and its subsequent reauthorizations have contributed confusion and complexity to the administration of special education for the past 20 years (Weatherly 2001). Essentially, the expectation derived from this law is that principals must function as instructional leaders and managers of all students and programs in their schools (Morgan, Whorton, & Cruzeiro, 1998). The principal's ability to implement mandated legislation determines the day-to-day effect that it has on both the special and general education programs (Huefner, 1994; Malloy, 1996).

Accountability has become a major focus in the delivery of services to students with disabilities. President Bush's education reform bill, "No Child Left Behind" (2001) is based on the assumption that all children, including those with disabilities, be held to high standards in schools in the United States. Georgia's A+ Education Reform Bill

(2001) also addresses accountability for all students in Georgia's public schools by establishing stringent guidelines for the participation of students with disabilities in statewide testing. According to each of these proposals, principals are responsible for and must meet the special education obligations imposed by legislation in order to improve educational outcomes for all students.

The Emergence of Principals as Special Education Administrators

Legal mandates have redefined the role of the principal by adding numerous duties and responsibilities. Principals are charged with providing the most appropriate education for all students in their schools and complying with and implementing legal mandates. The principal is the key individual who actualizes federal legislation at the local level in K-12 programs and as instructional leaders of their schools, are responsible for special education programs and must be prepared to meet the demands of a changing educational system. Principals need to have an adequate knowledge base in order to satisfactorily meet the special education obligations imposed by legislation (O'Neal, 2001).

Many principals have acknowledged their additional responsibilities and understand that they are accountable for all programs within their buildings. However, other principals believe the needs of special education programs and the needs of students are not the responsibility of the building principal. These variations in principals' beliefs play an important role in the integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms (Bines, 2000).

The role of the principal is complicated further because federal and state mandates have disseminated information to the families of special education students providing

them with a clear understanding of their right to a "free and appropriate public education in their local school, with non-handicapped peers, to the greatest extent possible" (Public Law 94-142, 1975). These mandates were developed to counteract past practices when special education students were not admitted to public schools and often relegated to separate schools and institutions.

Because parents of students with disabilities are now more informed of their rights, many parents hold the schools and staff accountable for a quality of education they believe is most appropriate for their child. In some cases, schools are brought to task because they are not in compliance with some aspect of the law (Weatherly, 2001). Failure to comply with these legal mandates may result in a principal or school district being held liable for violations of this law (O'Neal, 2001). Our modern society is highly litigious, and the advent of P.L. 94-142 stimulated a higher incidence of lawsuits and due process hearing procedures (a legal process within the state educational organization mandated by P.L. 94-142) against school districts and principals (Weatherly, 2001). Principals must be prepared to interact with parents who know their rights and are knowledgeable about special education practices (Clark, 2001).

Many principals participating in previously documented studies (Barlow, 1987; Minor, 1992; Spence, 1985) expressed concerns related to inadequate preparation necessary to assist them in fulfilling their special education responsibilities. Recommendations offered from these studies suggested that principals would benefit from additional training in special education. However, very few studies have provided recommendations as to the type of training principals desired in the area of special education.

Principals' Responsibilities in Special Education

The involvement of school administrators with special education programs is often specified by state regulations and local policies (Patterson, Marshall, & Bowling, 2000). Thus, the following descriptions of principals' responsibilities may vary from state to state and from district to district.

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE, 1976) recognized numerous tasks of the principals in their management of special education programs. Primarily, principals are responsible for the coordination and administration of all special education services in the school. Administratively, principals provide overall supervision of educational personnel serving children with disabilities in the school along with general management of the building and school. Principals also are charged with designation and implementation of educational programs for children with disabilities. The promotion of positive attitudes of school personnel and parents that encourage the acceptance and inclusion of children with disabilities in regular classes and interaction with regular students is fundamental to the principal's role in special education (Rodriguez & Romaneck, 2001).

In many school settings, principals are involved with the interview and employment processes for hiring special education personnel in their schools. In addition, principals are frequently responsible for the observations and evaluations of special education staff as well. Depending on the principal's knowledge about and experience with special education, he/she may be involved in staff development programs and training for both special and regular education personnel regarding special education issues.

Principals play a key role in the process of identification, referral and placement of students into special education programs. In Georgia, the Student Support Team is used as a type of formal screening program that identifies students who may need special education services. The principal is usually responsible for supervising these programs, although many principals choose to delegate this responsibility to the assistant principal (O'Neal, 2001). When a student is referred to special education for evaluation and possible placement, the principal is usually the channel through which this referral is made and often attends and participates in pre-referral meetings.

Many principals are active participants in Multidisciplinary Staffings (MDS) and Individualized Educational Program (IEP) meetings. A principal's attendance and participation in these meetings creates a better understanding of a school's special education population and programs as well as assisting the principal with the management of special education resources (O'Neal, 2001).

Knowledge Needed by Principals to Manage Special Education Programs

Ireland (1985) stated that principals are responsible for a multitude of duties related to special education. "Even though the principals may delegate many of his/her duties, the administrator should have a working knowledge of each duty in order to supervise properly" (Ireland, 1985, p. 15). Patterson, Marshall, & Bowling (2000) emphasized that building principals must have certain competencies in order to effectively implement the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, 1997). In their review of literature, Patterson, et. al (2000) suggested that principals should have a basic understanding of the various areas of disabilities such as, visually-impaired, learning-disabled, hearing-impaired, emotionally-disabled, physically-

handicapped, and speech-language impaired. Principals also should have a sound knowledge of the rules and regulation of IDEA (1997) including the function and development of IEPs, timetables for referrals, testing, placement, and re-evaluations. In addition, principals should fully understand the concepts behind least restrictive placement and inclusion.

Principals should have knowledge of the available and specialized educational programs and services for special education students and the skills to supervise in the areas of screening, evaluation, placement and program development (Sage & Burrello, 1994). In addition, principals would benefit from a knowledge of and skills in the coordination and performance of related staff development activities. Principals need to know how to build collaboration between regular and special educators within their school, as well as how to motivate staff towards more acceptance and inclusiveness of special needs students (McLaughlin, 1997). In addition to these areas of necessary knowledge, Patterson, et. al (2000) emphasized that principals should: (1) understand assessment methodologies, (2) know how to communicate with medical and educational specialists, and (3) work with parents of disabled students with a sensitivity for their needs.

Statement of the Problem

The principal of the 21st century is challenged to facilitate administrative vision, demonstrate concern for students' learning processes and relate to faculty, staff, and community in a cooperative environment (Kugelmass, 2000; Pellicer, 1999). Moreover, it is the principal's responsibility to implement and institutionalize new strategies for leading change (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993; Duke & Iwanicki, 1992). Such challenges, coupled with the legal obligations of providing services to students with

special needs in the least restrictive environment, require new strategies. Many of these strategies are based on providing services for students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Educational reform literature abounds with articles describing the ideal school headed by a strong visionary leader, promoting an atmosphere of collegiality and participation in a learning environment (Gameros, 1995; Lashway, Mazzarella & Grundy, 1997; U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Such studies have illustrated the dynamic nature of the principalship by delineating attributes or skills of effective principals. Most of the studies, however, have not focused on the principal as leader of special education programs (Gameros, 1995; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995; Lashway, Mazzarella & Grundy, 1997).

As a result of legislation, rules and regulations enacted by federal, state and local educational agencies, the responsibilities of principals toward administering special education in their schools have greatly expanded. Consequently, the role of the principal has undergone a paradigm shift. Many principals in the field fail to acknowledge their new responsibilities or are not sufficiently prepared to effectively carry out their new responsibilities.

Although many principals lack the skills needed to properly plan and implement special education program in their schools (Mamlin, 1999; Richardson & Lane, 1993), they are a critical component for the successful implementation of inclusive practices whereby students with disabilities are educated with their nondisabled peers (Ingram, 1997; Keyes 1998; Powell & Hyle, 1997). There is a need to arrive at a consensus about the: (a) administrative activities in special education for which principals are responsible,

(b) types and amount of pre-service training which should be required by institutions of higher education, and (c) kinds and amount of in-service training needed by principals currently in the field.

The legislators who wrote the laws and issued mandates have assumed that principals possess appropriate training to lead special education programs. As educators have increasingly become the target of lawsuits, it is imperative that principals understand laws related to special education placement options, specifically the provisions of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The school district must bear the burden of proof regarding placement options (Weatherly, 2001), and a statement must be included in the IEP as to why a student cannot participate in the general education setting.

Traditionally, special education directors have been responsible for many of the day-to-day tasks relating to special education in Georgia (O'Neal, 2001; Patterson, et.al, 2000). However, recent legislative mandates at the state and national level and court decisions have made principals accountable and responsible for the education of students with disabilities in their schools (Osborne, DiMattia, & Curran, 1993). As many educators across Georgia attempt to comply with IDEA's provision of insuring that students with disabilities receive a quality education, the responsibility will shift from the special education director to the principal. It is imperative that principals recognize the importance of their involvement in the delivery of special education programs in their schools.

This study examined principals' level of involvement in special education programs in their schools by surveying the perceptions of principals themselves and those of special education teachers. The findings of this study will contribute to information

concerning the knowledge base of Georgia's principals regarding special education law, methods of instruction, and actual school practices related to special education service delivery.

With specific requirements and legislative mandates relating to school reform and the inclusion of special education in such efforts, it is to the advantage of local education agencies to know the level of involvement of principals in special education program delivery. With the consequences such as loss of funding, the lack of the principal's involvement can be detrimental for districts. Practitioners as well as educational training institutions need to understand the impact principals have in creating a school that fosters an inclusive environment. In addition, opportunities to receive feedback are necessary to foster professional growth and development in principals.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following major research question: What are the perceptions of principals and special education teachers regarding principals' level of involvement in special education programs in Georgia's schools? The following related sub-questions were also addressed:

1. What differences exist in the perceptions of principals and special education teachers regarding principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery?
2. What is the relationship between selected variables of principal characteristics and the principals' involvement in the delivery of special education service?
3. To what extent do selected variables of a principal's school affect his or her level of involvement in special education services delivery? Is there a relationship

between selected characteristics of principals' schools and the level of involvement of school principals in the delivery of special education programs?

4. What relationship exists in the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery and his/her knowledge of special education?
5. What training do special education teachers and school principals perceive as needed by school principals in the area of special education program delivery?

Significance of the Study

In order for students with disabilities to receive the benefits intended by IDEA, educational services must be carefully structured (Gallagher, Floyd, Stafford, Tabler, Brozovic, & Alberto, 2000). The school principal must be aware of safety and accessibility issues, various curriculums and instructional strategies, and approaches to discipline (O'Neal, 2001). The fulfillment of the requirements of the federal law requires the ... "commitment of each individual school and the leadership of each principal" (O'Neal, 2001, p.L:14). When the agencies both federal and state, monitor the compliance of a school district with the laws and regulations, "it is the principal who must be accountable for the application and enforcement in a specific school" (O'Neal, 2001, p.L:7).

As school principals in Georgia are being held more accountable for the education of all students in their schools, their lack of involvement in special education can be problematic for districts. Currently, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission does not require any courses in special education for endorsement in school leadership. Consequently, principals in Georgia have little knowledge of the laws and practices relating to special education. As the fields of special education and general education

merge, it is essential that these principals acquire the information necessary to insure successful and responsible practices for all children. The information in the current study provided information regarding Georgia's principals' level of involvement in special education and afforded local education agencies information necessary to address various issues surrounding the principals' level of involvement in special education.

This study is also important to the researcher as a teacher of students with disabilities. Currently, the researchers' school is one of few middle schools implementing the inclusion model. Knowing the downfalls of special education pullout programs, it would seem that principals would advocate for more collaboration among teachers to provide an education to students with disabilities that was not disconnected from Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum. Moreover, as an instructor of a graduate level class for special education teachers, this researcher has learned that many special education teachers feel principals are apathetic toward the education provided for students with disabilities.

The literature was limited in its scope regarding the perceptions of principals' level of involvement in special education delivery. Two studies conducted in California at the University of La Verne, (Miller, 2000; Maurizio, 1998) examined elementary, middle and high school principals' level of involvement in the delivery of special education.

Sisson's (2000) study compared the perceptions of special education directors, principals, and university faculty in Arizona, focusing more on the training aspect of principals. A study conducted in Georgia examined the involvement of school principals in special education programs but was limited to elementary schools and relied only on

the self-perceptions of principals (Peterson, 1997). No study comparing the special education teacher's perceptions with the principals' perceptions and how specific factors may relate to the principals level of involvement were found in the literature review.

It was important that a study of this type be conducted in Georgia. The Georgia Board of Education has included a specific definition for Least Restrictive Environment defining the general education classroom as the preferred placement for students with disabilities. This would mean that principals are responsible for ensuring that this policy is followed and for monitoring the progress of students with disabilities in their schools. To effectively assume these responsibilities principals will need to increase their level of involvement in special education programs delivery.

This study explored the ways in which principals' backgrounds influenced the delivery of quality services offered to students with disabilities. In addition, the data collected in this study was designed to provide information regarding knowledge base of Georgia principals regarding special education law, methods of instruction, and actual school practices related to special education services. It is essential that principals understand the level of support expected by special education teachers and how the differences in the perceptions of the two groups can be used to identify barriers to effective communication. This study has provided school principals in Georgia insight into particular areas that warrant their involvement. Principals need to take initiative as the leaders in their schools identifying areas of support deemed necessary by special education teachers.

Procedures

A survey was used in the attempt to investigate the extent to which Georgia's principals were involved in the delivery of special education services in their schools. A stratified random sample of principals in Georgia along with one special education teacher in the school was selected to participate in this study. Data regarding each participant's gender, number of years of experience, area of certification, and level of education were also gathered. Information concerning the number of students, the geographic location, the percentage of free and reduced lunches, and the number of students receiving special education services in each school was also collected.

Assumptions

This researcher, in completing this study, made two assumptions. First, it was assumed that principals and special education teachers in Georgia participating in this study were familiar with various delivery models of special education. Second, it was assumed that the participants would complete the survey provided to them with careful consideration of each item.

Limitations

As with any research study certain limitations are inevitable. The validity of this study was based on a self-reported survey, which may have been a limitation. In addition, because of the new mandates relating to special education reform, the survey response of some principals in the study may not have reflected their true level of involvement in special education programs in their school for fear that their answers may reflect negatively on their job performance.

Definition of Terms

In an attempt to promote consistency and understanding in the investigation, certain terms were chosen for definition. The following terms are defined for the reader:

Collaboration-teachers share goals, decisions, classroom instruction, assessment, and responsibility for students.

Continuum of special education services- Delivery of services appropriate for students with disabilities. A continuum of alternative placements is available to meet the needs of disabled children general and special educators are effectively prepared to teach allowing for collaboration between special education teachers and regular classroom teachers.

Criteria- Factors used to determine whether a student has been placed in the least restrictive environment. Such factors as the use of supplementary aids and services, educational and non-educational benefits.

Curriculum- Content taught in the general education environment and adapted to compensate for intellectual, physical, sensory or behavioral challenges of individuals.

Due process- Procedures enabling parents and guardians to receive required notices, review their child's records, and challenge identification, evaluation, and placement decisions.

Equal opportunity in education- A result of the Brown vs. Board of Education. All students regardless of race would have equality of educational opportunity.

Exceptional children-Children whose school performance shows significant discrepancy between ability and achievement and as a result require special instruction, assistance and or equipment.

Free and Appropriate Education-Education at no cost to the person with the disability, which includes educational services, designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities to the maximum extent possible.

Geographic Location- Categorizes schools as urban, rural, or suburban.

Inclusion- A philosophy which embraces diversity and the provision of a continuum of educational options for students with disabilities. Inclusion requires placements of students with disabilities in the regular classroom with the necessary supports whenever possible.

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) - The primary law governing treatment of students with disabilities in the K-12 system. Originally implemented in 1975 as the Education of All Handicapped Act, IDEA is a funding statute requiring action from school districts wishing to receive any federal funding. IDEA requires school districts to provide a free, appropriate, public education in the least restrictive environment.

Involvement- direct participation in various tasks related to special education services.

Integration- Movement from a segregated special class to an integrated age-appropriate regular education classroom.

Least restrictive environment- Core of federal and state laws governing special education and requiring similar settings in which pupils would be educated if not considered handicapped. Settings are selected with respect to students' needs.

Mild disability- A disability in the area of cognitive, intellectual, or behavioral that may only impact the student's performance in a regular classroom.

Placement-Location for the delivery of specialized education determined annually and according to the individual child's needs.

Policy-The dynamic and value-laden process, which includes the system's expressed intentions and official enactments.

Pullout model- Provides special education and related services outside general education classrooms (Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000).

Professional development- A training curriculum and technical assistance program which supports the concepts of ongoing assessment of needs, opportunities to achieve at higher standards, continuous improvement and ongoing professional learning.

Pullout- Condition where students receive special education services in a resource room.

Referral-Special education process of identification and referral of students suspected of having a disability. The student may then be recommended for further evaluation.

Regular Education Initiative- (REI) Federal reform movement designed to restructure general, compensatory, and special education service delivery systems.

Special education- Specifically designed instruction in classrooms, at home, or in public or private institutions. Special Education also includes such related services as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and psychological counseling and medical diagnostic services necessary to the child's education.

Summary

Although there is an abundance of literature supporting the reasons for educating students with disabilities in regular classrooms, little research exists concerning the level of involvement of the principal and his/her knowledge of special education practices. Research clearly points out the importance of the principal in the implementation of any innovation.

The principal should assist the staff in reconceptualizing special education as a set of supports that enable all students to succeed, rather than as a program designed only for certain students in a segregated setting. In order for school leaders to be responsible for all students in their schools, it is necessary to examine their level of involvement in areas such as special education

CHAPTER II

Review of Research and Related Literature

In support of this study, which ascertains the level of Georgia's principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery, this chapter provides a review of research and related literature surrounding the topic of special education and the importance of the principal in the delivery of services to students with disabilities.

Introduction

Federal law provides for a free and appropriate public education to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. Though not specified in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, least restrictive environment has been interpreted to mean inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Marston, 1996). An important and often overlooked issue related to the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom, is the principals' knowledge of and attitudes toward special education programs. Baker, Wang, & Walberg (1995) stated that building principals' support was positively related to teachers' use of instructional strategies that resulted in successful inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Inclusive education suggests educating all students, regardless of differences, in general education classrooms and do not focus on how to assist any particular category of students, but rather how to meet the needs of all students. Proponents in the field

believe that school systems can be restructured to provide support services more effectively to all students without exclusionary practices.

The mission of inclusive schools includes a realization that educating all students together will adequately prepare them for living in a diverse society. The collaboration between general education and special education should provide a safety net for students who are slow learners and don't qualify for special education services (Florian, 1998). The efforts to rejoin students with disabilities with nondisabled students in the same classrooms have raised several important and sensitive issues. Aside from the issues of peer acceptance, adaptability of curriculum, instructional methodologies, and teacher attitudes, the level of involvement of the principal in inclusion warrants particular consideration (Gamerros, 1995; Ingram, 1996; McLesky, 1995).

Leading an inclusive school requires a personal belief that all children can learn and a commitment to providing children equal access to a rich core curriculum and quality instruction. The process of carrying out the services related to inclusion is much different than simply stating that the school is an inclusive school. Principals must formulate and refine a personal vision of heterogeneous schooling and articulate that vision to the faculty in his/her school (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996, Sebba & Ainscow, 1995).

The call for restructuring of special education in the United States to establish meaningful educational standards or student outcomes requires great effort and commitment on the part of all individuals. School principals are considered a critical component for the successful implementation of inclusive schooling practices whereby students with disabilities are educated with their peers in the general education classroom (Ingram, 1997; Keyes 1998; Hyle, 1997). However, they may feel overwhelmed by these

additional responsibilities and lack training necessary to carry them out thereby limiting their involvement in special education programming.

In this era of litigation, the courts will not excuse a principal's ignorance about the law. Therefore, principals must constantly familiarize themselves with changing legal issues impacting special education (Cunningham & Gresso, 1993; O'Neal, 2001; Weatherly, 2001; Wesienstein, 2001). Georgia does not require additional training in special education as part of the certification requirements for educational leadership (Morgan & Demchak, 1995). Several studies have demonstrated that principals with a background in special education are better prepared to supervise inclusive programs and meet the needs of all students (Gameros, 1995; Wagner, 1999). Conversely, principals who lack training in special education can be problematic for districts.

The research and literature of this chapter focus on a review of literature surrounding the topic of special education and the importance of the principal in the delivery of services to students with disabilities. The documentation and dissemination of this material, as well as data gathered through this study, has provided valuable information needed to aid educators in determining principals' involvement level in special education programs in their schools.

History of Special Education

The enactment of Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, in 1975 and its subsequent reauthorizations has impacted the lives of many students with disabilities. Millions of students now benefit from special education services, which were generally not provided before the enactment of these laws. Prior to this landmark legislation many students with disabilities either were excluded from

public schools, or if educated in the system, were taught in highly segregated and separate facilities. This unprecedented legislation guarantees services for all children with disabilities by public school agencies. It further provides for a free appropriate public education to students with exceptional educational needs in the least restrictive environment (LRE), as well as the development of individual educational plans and the use of nondiscriminatory evaluations, support services, parental involvement and due process (P.L. 94-142). The intent of LRE is that students with disabilities should be educated in the same environment as their nondisabled peers as much as possible with needed support and services.

Despite the fact that we were able to secure more suitable physical environments for services provided to students with disabilities, less progress has been made over the years on the quality of education provided. Separate and unequal special education service systems developed. The operation of parallel programs and systems for students called normal and for others labeled as handicapped evolved (National Center for Educational Restructuring and inclusion (NCERI, 1994). Separation, due to funding patterns and internal segregation, reduced the likelihood that students would return to general education (Skirtic, 1991).

In 1985, Madeline Will, then Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, US Department of Education, delivered a significant Keynote address related to the education of special needs students at the Wingspread Conference held in Racine, Wisconsin. This address and her position paper published in 1986, "Educating Children With Learning Problems: A Shared Responsibility", was the basis for the Regular Education Initiative (REI). Will (1986)

used the phrase 'regular education initiative' to discuss the merger of the governance of special and regular education. The purpose of the regular education initiative, as defined by Stainback, Stainback, and Bunch (1990), was to "find ways to serve students classified as having mild or moderate learning problems in regular classrooms by encouraging special education and other special programs to form a partnership with regular education" (p. 11). Will reported that many students were not able to participate in programs offering needed individual help because they did not fit eligibility requirements. Will (1986) further stated that reform should occur at the building level with the leadership of the principal and the appropriate staff to design and deliver effective, coordinated and comprehensive services for all children based on individual educational needs rather than on eligibility for special programs.

An underlying assumption of the work of Will (1986) is that special education services must be allowed to establish partnerships with general education to cooperatively assess the educational needs of students with learning problems and develop effective educational strategies for meeting student needs. Will (1986) visualized a system that would bring services to the student rather than one that brings the student to the services. It was this vision that laid the foundation upon which inclusion rests.

Mainstreaming was an early attempt at the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education environments. Mainstreaming, a term that does not occur in the text of the law, was used to refer to components of the school day in which students labeled as handicapped spent time in general education (Katsiyannis, 1996). In practice, the mainstreaming concept required that students had to earn the opportunity to be in the general education classroom. This practice routinely occurred although the Individuals

with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has been clear concerning least restrictive environment criteria. According to IDEA, removal from the regular education environment is to occur only when the nature and severity of the handicap does not allow for the education in regular education classes to be achieved satisfactorily even with the use of supplementary aids (1975, Sec 612 [5][B]). IDEA has been clear concerning Least Restrictive Environment criteria and holds the interdisciplinary team responsible for demonstrating why a student cannot receive services in the general education classroom (Weatherly, 2001). However, there continues to be disagreement as to the meaning of IDEA resulting in wide variations of implementation.

Inclusion is different from mainstreaming. Mainstreaming brought students with special education needs into general classrooms only when they didn't need specially designed instruction when they could keep up with the "mainstream". Inclusion, a philosophy of acceptance, belonging and community, also means that general education classes are structured to meet the needs of all the students in the class (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2000). This is accomplished through educational strategies and collaboration between educators so that specially designed instruction and supplementary aids and services are provided to all students as needed for effective learning.

In 1990, IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act) became law. IDEA expanded the definition of special education to include instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings and extended related services to include social work services and rehabilitative counseling. However, services for students with disabilities continued to be delivered in separate settings. As a result, the National Council on Disability reported to President Clinton on the reauthorization of IDEA in 1995

and the issue of least restrictive environment (LRE) was one of the ten basic themes addressed. The Council recommended that the reauthorization be pursued and that it should address the improved implementation of IDEA.

The Court has made it clear that IDEA is not one of the so-called 'unfunded Federal mandates, but is a Federal grant program that is entirely justified under Congress' power . . . More than that, the Court has acknowledged in the most unequivocal terms that IDEA provides federal aide to the States to help them carry out their own legal obligations to educate all children, including those with disabilities (p. 4). The responsibility for providing the required education remains on the States. . . And the Act established an enforceable substantive right to a free appropriate public education' (National Council on Disability, p. 1009-1010).

While "inclusion" is not a term used in the law and regulations, it is currently the most often used terminology to indicate consideration of the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities. IDEA defined the consideration of least restrictive environment as:

Procedures to assure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily ([IDEA] 1412[5][B][1990]).

In 1997, IDEA was again reauthorized. The focus of IDEA (1997) changed from one that merely provides disabled children access to an education to one that improves results for all children in our education system. The IDEA (1997) strengthens the role of parents in educational planning and decision making on behalf of their children. In addition, this legislation significantly impacts the level of involvement the principal has in special education programs. The provision that students with disabilities must be included in statewide assessment increases school principals' accountability (Bradshaw, 2000). IDEA (1997) also focuses on the student's educational planning process and on promoting meaningful access to the general curriculum with principals primarily responsible for implementing both aspects (O'Neal, 2001).

Models of Special Education Service Delivery

Self-Contained Classes. Self-contained classes are separate classes from the general classroom environment. Students must spend more than 60% of the school day in a self-contained class to qualify for this placement option. Self-contained classes create a social stigma for students with disabilities, which can be particularly hard to deal with (Janney & Snell, 2000). If students with disabilities have no chance to interact with their peers, the chances of them becoming socially accepted are greatly reduced.

Placement in a self-contained classroom is considered more restrictive than a resource program or regular class, and as such is considered less appropriate for students with mild disabilities. IDEA is quite specific about students being placed in the regular classroom whenever possible, and it certainly appears to be going against this mandate to place students with disabilities in self-contained classes for most of the school day. Yet for many students with disabilities, once placement in a self-contained setting has been

determined, the option of receiving services in the general education setting is greatly reduced (Janney & Snell, 2000).

Resource Rooms. In Georgia, the resource room is the most frequently used placement option for students with disabilities (GADOE, 2000). Resource room placement is a special education service delivery model where the student spends at least 20% of the school day in a regular classroom and is pulled out for special classes during the remainder of the school day. Many resource programs are referred to as pullout programs, and some students spend up to 79% of the school day in regular classes while still using resource services. This is the most common placement option for students with mild disabilities because it provides time for special services while teaching the student in the regular classroom as much as possible. This placement choice is legally on much steadier ground than self-contained placement because it fulfills the letter of the law exactly.

An underlying assumption of the resource room model is that services provided to students with disabilities will promote the success of these students in the general education setting. When improvements in a student's classroom behaviors, academic performance, or social functioning occur in the resource room, it is assumed that those improvements will transfer to the general education setting (Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000). However, this frequently is not the case.

A student's inability to transfer skills to the general education setting is one of the problems associated with resource or pullout placements. Many students with disabilities have difficulty transferring skills from resource classes to regular classes, and the student's poor reading skills can also pose difficulties in many classrooms (Johnston,

1994). There are teachers who refuse to accept responsibility for teaching the students with disabilities who are placed in their regular classrooms (Johnston, 1994). Another problem with the resource model is that resource teachers often employ the use of different instructional materials than those used in general classroom settings. Although these procedures are effective in promoting initial skill acquisition by students with disabilities, they may inhibit successful performance in the general education settings. Finally, communication between the resource teacher and the general education teachers is often fragmented. Communication lags and problems in coordinating curriculum between regular teachers and resource teachers can cause difficulties for students and teachers alike.

Inclusion. In an attempt to develop more efficient ways of delivering services to students with disabilities, Stainback, Stainback, and Forest (National Association of State Boards of Education, 1994) developed models of inclusive education that are broadly based. Their definition of inclusive schools suggests educating all students, regardless of differences, in general education classrooms (Stainback, et. al, 1994). Inclusive schools do not focus on how to assist any one category of students, but rather how to meet the needs of all students. Inclusive schools implement a philosophy of coordination that celebrates diversity and maintains a continuum of educational options to provide choices, and to meet the needs of individual children (Gallagher, 1997).

As early as the 1980s there grew recognition of the need to include all children in general education settings within their neighborhood schools (Brown, Ford, Nisbet, Sweet, Donnellan, & Gruenewald, 1983; Stainback Stainback, 1984, 1988, 1989; Sailor, Anderson, Halvorsen, Doering, Filler, & Goetz, 1989). At the same time, as a means to

accomplish the mission of providing services to students with disabilities in their home schools, it was proposed to merge special and regular education into a single, comprehensive, regular education system (Stainback, Stainback, & Forest, 1994).

According to Yatvin (1995), side effects of the resource pullout program have enhanced the idea of inclusion. Many drawbacks of the resource pull-out program model have been emphasized: special education resource rooms often served 12 to 15 diverse students, students brought a variety of needs from several different grade levels, the special education teacher gave very little active instruction, and instruction occurring was skill related and not tied to classroom themes (Lloyd, Weintraub, & Safer, 1997; Greenwood & Maheady, 1997).

The inclusion movement gained momentum in the 1990s fueled by a continued dissatisfaction in the field of special education for the disjointed and inefficient service delivery system, and the failure to serve all students with disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995). Students were neither successful nor included in the total school community. Supporters argued the educational merits of inclusion from several perspectives. First, the weaknesses of special education, as it currently is structured, are obvious and may be summarized by the statistics reported by The National Association of State Boards of Education (1992):

1. Forty-three percent of students in special education do not graduate.
2. Youth with disabilities have a significantly higher likelihood of being arrested than their non-disabled peers.
3. Only 13.4% of youth with disabilities are living independently two years after leaving high school (compared to 33.2 % of their non-disabled peers).

A second criticism of the current special education system deals with the issue of "labeling effects" on students with disabilities. Advocates for inclusion suggest that the very act of labeling a student as "special" frequently lowers expectations and self-esteem (Will, 1986). Further, special education placement in "pull out" programs "has left many students with fragmented educations and feeling that they neither belong in the general education classroom nor the special education classroom" (National Association of School Boards of Education, 1992). The impact of such stigmas, lack of belonging, lowered expectations, and poor self-esteem on school learning is significant (Lipsky, 1994; Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2000).

In addition to the previously mentioned problems, special education is plagued with a deficient accountability system (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995). The separate administrative arrangements for special programs contribute to a lack of coordination, raise questions about leadership, cloud areas of responsibility, and obscure lines of accountability within schools.

Accountability in special education has historically been measured in terms of external issues related to compliance with federal mandates. Until recently, students with disabilities could be exempted from mandated state testing. Recent reform efforts stipulate that students with disabilities be part of state testing as part of a comprehensive accountability system. Like its general education counterpart, accountability in special education is now shifting to internal measurements of student outcomes (Heubert, 2000).

Low expectations have created a great disservice to students with disabilities (Thurlow, 2000). The belief that students with disabilities must be protected from harm and, therefore, excluded from the general education environment has remained a

characteristic of too many educators' thinking (Thurlow, 2000). Arick and Krug (1993) found in their study involving 2,900 principals selected randomly from across the nation that those principals who had experience teaching students with disabilities or who held certification in special education had more students included in the general education environment than did the special education administrators who had no experience teaching students with disabilities nor who had certification in special education.

McLeskey and Waldron (1996) stated:

Inclusion [in the general education environment] provides a unique learning opportunity for our children; beyond the learning of reading, writing, and arithmetic is the chance to learn about humanity. In order for the practice [of inclusion] to work, classrooms that include students with disabilities must focus on issues of self-worth, acceptance, respect for others, friendship, and everyday problem solving and conflict resolution. (p. 159)

Another factor compounding the accountability problem of special education at the building level is the location of special education classrooms. Many times the special education class is housed in a portable classroom. This physical isolation minimizes communication between special education teachers and regular classroom teachers, resulting in a lack of coordination between ongoing classroom instruction and the specially designed remedial instruction (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2000).

Finally, Stainback, et al. (1994) suggest that the dual system does not adequately prepare students with disabilities for the "real world," because the "real world" is not divided into "regular" and "special." Consequently, segregated placements with limited interactions between those with disabilities and their non-disabled peers further handicap

special education students. Students with learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and attention deficit disorder need training in social skills (Kauffman, 2000). Without such training, many students will not be able to interact appropriately with their peers. The ability to develop and maintain relationships during childhood and adolescence is an important predictor of future adjustment, (Heyward, 2000).

The mission of inclusive schools includes a realization that educating students together will more adequately prepare them for living in a diverse society. Further, Morgan and Demchak (1996) argue that students cannot be truly integrated with each other unless teachers, resources and the systems of special and general education are integrated. Inclusion is based on the premise that a unified system of education must exist. Merging general and special education service delivery systems is a necessity to plan, deliver and evaluate programs more effectively for all students. Inclusion supporters advocate for shared partnerships and an approach in which all teachers are prepared and responsible for the education of all students (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998).

In summary, inclusion grew from the beliefs of parents, advocates and teachers that all students be educated in the general education setting. Stainback, Stainback, and Bunch (1994) spoke of the need to merge the two systems into one unified system of regular education structured to meet the unique needs of all students. They found that the merger involves the incorporation of all the resources and services into a single regular education system. Their rationale was grounded in the following: (1) the instructional needs of students do not warrant the operation of a dual system; (2) maintaining a dual system is inefficient; and (3) the dual system fosters an inappropriate attitude about the education of students classified as having disabilities” (p.15).

Placement Decisions

Principals are responsible for the education of the students enrolled in their schools (Charlie Duvall, personal communication, 2000). This responsibility includes insuring that placement decisions are made in accordance with the law. Conrad and Whitaker, (1997) gave four main analyses that lead to making appropriate decisions. The first of these was to determine whether the child could be educated in the general education classroom. The second was to determine whether the benefits of a more restrictive environment were greater than the benefits of general education. Third, the learning of all students was to be considered along with the disruptive effects of the students with special needs. The administrator has always had many responsibilities including the success of all students (Stevens, 1998). The final consideration was that of finding the right placement if a more restrictive environment than the regular classroom was needed.

In the legal reference book, entitled Students With Disabilities and Special Education (2000), the following statements related to the placement of students with disabilities in special education programs are found:

The IDEA requires local education agencies to provide students with disabilities in the jurisdiction, with an appropriate program of special education and related services that is individualized and reasonable calculated to confer education benefits. The placement must also take into consideration the least restrictive appropriate environment to maximize the student's contact with regular education students. The placement must comply with state educational standards, which in some cases exceed the IDEA minimum standard, and the agency may be required to locate and pay for a private school placement if it is necessary for the student to realize educational benefits, (p. 57).

With the Rules of the GBOE (GBOE, 2000) in place, those in positions of leadership, specifically principals are faced with the responsibility of providing guidance toward their implementation (Mary Phagan-Kean, personal communication, 2000).

"Leaders are people who perceive what is needed and what is right and know how to mobilize people and resources to accomplish mutual goals" (Shriberg, Lloyd, Shriberg, & Williamson, 1997, p. 4). The provision of placement in the least restrictive environment to students with disabilities is what is needed and is supported by the judicial system to back its provision (O'Neal, 2001). Principals are charged with standards of performance ("CEC Performance-Based Standards, 2001), which include "knowledge of laws and policies ... and knowledge of development and implementation of policies and regulations" (p. 14). Principals are the leaders of schools therefore, it is important for these principals to know just what their role is in the process of educating students with disabilities, including making decisions concerning placement (O'Neal, 2001).

Concerns surrounding inclusion

Not everyone is optimistic about bringing students with disabilities into the mainstream classroom setting. Tornillo (1994), president of the Florida Education Association United, is concerned that inclusion, as it is being implemented, leaves classroom teachers without the resources, training, and other supports necessary to teach students with disabilities in their classrooms. Consequently, the disabled children are not getting appropriate, specialized attention and care, and the regular students' education is disrupted constantly. He further argues that inclusion does not make sense in light of pressures from state legislatures and the public at large to develop higher academic

standards and to improve the academic achievement of students. Lieberman (1992) agrees with Tornillo's point of view:

We are testing more, not less. We are locking teachers into constrained curricula and syllabi more, not less. The imprint of statewide accountability and government spending [is increasingly] based on tangible, measurable, tabulatable, numerical results ... The barrage of curriculum materials, syllabi, grade-level expectations for performance, standardized achievement tests, competency tests, and so on, continue to overwhelm even the most flexible teachers (pp. 14-15).

By expanding the range of ability levels in a classroom through inclusion, Tornillo (1994) argues, teachers are required to direct inordinate attention to a few students, thereby decreasing the amount of time and energy directed toward the rest of the class. Indeed, the range of abilities is just too great for one teacher to adequately teach. Consequently, the mandates for greater academic accountability and achievement are unable to be met.

A poll conducted by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in West Virginia revealed that "78 percent of respondents think disabled students will not benefit from inclusion; while 87 percent said other students will not benefit either" (Leo, 1994, p. 22). Members of the AFT are specifically concerned that students with disabilities were "monopolizing an inordinate amount of time and resources and, in some cases, creating violent classroom environments" (Sklaroff, 1994 p. 29). These opponents further cite that when inclusion efforts fail, it is frequently due to a lack of appropriate training for teachers in inclusive classrooms, ignorance about inclusion among senior-level principals, and a general lack of funding for resources and training (Skarloff, 1994). The

American Federation of Teachers (AFT) (1995) has called for a suspension of full inclusion and supports a review of federal, state, and local laws and regulations governing special education. The AFT (1995) believes that placements should be determined by the needs and abilities of the child and that when disabled students are appropriately "included" in regular classes, teachers be given adequate training and support services.

One additional concern of the AFT (1995) is that school administration may view moving toward more inclusive approaches as a budgetary (cost-saving) measure than doing what is best for students. Some principals believe that if students with disabilities can be served in regular classrooms, the costs associated with special education can be reduced. However, while principals may see inclusion as a means of saving funds by lumping together all students in the same facilities, the reality is that it rarely costs less than segregated classes when the concept is implemented responsibly (Sklaroff, 1994). In order to implement inclusion adequately, more personnel are required as well as additional materials such as assistive technology and modified texts.

Regular educators are not the only ones concerned about a move toward full inclusion. Some special educators and parents of students with disabilities also have reservations. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), a large, international organization of special educators, parents, and other advocates for the disabled, issued a policy statement on inclusion at their annual convention in 1993. This statement begins with a strong endorsement for a continuum of services to be available to children, youth, and young adults with disabilities. The policy actually addresses inclusion only after

making the point quite clear that services to the disabled, including various placement options besides the regular classroom, are to be tailored to individual student need.

Many special education advocates acknowledge that the ideals on which inclusion rests are encouraging but they maintain that delivering services in the regular education classroom may be inappropriate for some students with disabilities. They argue that the current system emerged precisely because of the non-adaptability of regular classrooms, and since nothing has happened to make contemporary classrooms any more adaptable, inclusion most likely will lead to rediscovering the need for a separate system in the future (Skirtic, 1991).

In addition to a more generalized concern by some across the field of special education in relation to how inclusive practices become operationalized in schools, stronger concern about the quality of services provided through inclusion has been raised within specific disability groups. Lieberman (1992) points out that many advocates (primarily parents) for students with learning disabilities also have significant concerns about the move toward inclusion. Their concerns stem from the fact that they have had to fight for appropriate services and programs for their children and they recognize that students with learning disabilities do not progress academically without individualized attention. These services have evolved primarily through a specialized teacher working with students with learning disabilities individually or in small groups, usually in a resource room setting. Special education professionals and parents alike are concerned that regular education teachers have neither the time, nor the expertise to meet their children's needs. "The learning disabilities field seems to recognize that being treated as

an individual can usually be found more easily outside the regular classroom" (Lyon & Vaughn, 1994, p. 15).

The Principal as Instructional Leader

With the mandates in place for providing services to students with disabilities services in the least restrictive environment, it is necessary to know the leadership skills necessary to implement changes and innovative programs. It has become evident that the key to a successful school is a principal who is an effective leader. How that role has been perceived has changed in recent years. In the 1960s and 1970s the principal functioned predominately as a program manager. As we entered the 1980s, an impetus took place for principals to take a more active part in leading the instructional program of the school and focusing on staff attention to student outcomes (Hallinger 1992; Fullan 1982). Subsequently, by the mid 1980s, the standard of a renewed interest in educational improvement and documented importance of principal leadership took place. Therefore, instructional leadership became the new standard for principals.

In the early 1990s, it was obvious to many that the current system of education was not adequately preparing students. This led to a belief that there needed to be changes in the organizational structure, professional roles, and goals of the public education system in the United States (Hallinger 1992). Thus, the role of the principal changed to one that involves the staff and community in setting goals and problem solving, and becomes one of an instructional leader who can move toward change with the restructuring of the school.

Successful principals motivate the entire school community and are willing to share leadership. Bradshaw (2000) indicates that research associated with training

programs for principals reveals the key to successful schools and principals. In addition, these principals have specific skills and attitudes that make them effective and they have the knowledge to create an environment that facilitates the change process. A study by Gameros (1995) associated effective schools to the principals' involvement in services provided to students with disabilities. This study, which relied on a self-reporting measure, indicated that principals in effective schools were highly involved in the implementation of inclusive services to students with disabilities (Gameros, 1995).

The Principal's Involvement in Special Education Programs

Researchers in educational administration have consistently emphasized the importance of the role the principal has in the school. The level of involvement of the principal in innovative special education programs such as inclusion should not be overlooked. Although the principal may choose to delegate many responsibilities, the need for the building principal to have a working knowledge of special education services, laws, and programs should not be disregarded (Patterson, Marshall, & Bowling, 2000). Principals are ultimately responsible for providing the leadership for developing and monitoring inclusion.

The principal as instructional leader of the school assumes responsibility to assure the delivery of educational services to students with disabilities and meet the procedural requirements of the law (Valensky and Hirth 1992). Demands on their leadership necessitates that principals acquire an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the conceptual framework, related literature, and current practices regarding inclusive education and special education law (Williams and Katsiyannis, 1998; Gameros 1995; Velesky and Hirth 1992). Patterson, et al (2000) suggested that principals should have a

basic understanding of the various areas of disabilities such as vision-impaired, learning disabled, hearing impaired, emotionally behaviorally disordered, orthopedically impaired, and intellectually disabled. Principals should also have knowledge of the available specialized educational programs and services for special education students and the skills needed to provide supervision in the areas of screening, evaluation, placement and program development (Sage & Burello, 1994).

Principals should participate in IEP meetings as often as possible. Although IDEA does not require a principal to serve as a member of the IEP team, many do so. Generally, principals are qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specifically designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities. They also are knowledgeable about the general curriculum and the availability of school resource, at least two of the characteristics that IDEA requires of the school representative on the IEP team [34 C.F.R. §300.344(a)(4)(i)–(iii)].

It is important to consider personal characteristics that affect the principal's ability to be an effective leader. Tanner, Lipscomb, & Galis found that the number of years experience of the principal was significantly related to effective practices in special education (1996). Other factors such as gender were not correlated with inclusive practices. The NAESP (2001) holds that the principal's values, beliefs, and personal characteristics inspire people to accomplish the mission of the school.

Principals must be willing to model their beliefs and care must be taken to ensure that all children are included in every aspect of the programs of the school. For example, IDEA requires that each public agency take steps to provide nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities to afford children with disabilities an equal

opportunity for participation in those services and activities, 34 C.F.R. §300.306(a). This means that children with disabilities will be able to participate in non-academic activities such as lunchroom, recess, and assemblies, as well as after school events and field trips (NAESP, 2001).

The principal should also be involved in the area of curriculum and should guide the instructional program toward the achievement of clearly defined curricular goals and objectives (Snell & Janney, 2000). The school's curriculum and instructional program will affect the ease with which principals implement legal requirements and sound practices related to educating children with disabilities (Project WINS, 2001). The curriculum should reflect the specific needs and values of the community, draw on research about how children with disabilities learn, and integrate the standards of professional subject area associations and core content as may be established by the state (ILIAD, 2001).

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) compiled Standards of Excellence related to curriculum and instruction with regards to students with disabilities. The first standard addresses an establishment of a curriculum framework that provides direction for teaching and learning. There is a common core of learning that provides children with knowledge, skills, and understandings to function effectively in a global society. The curriculum framework should outline the instructional strategies and philosophies that will be used to teach all children. In addition, the curriculum should be age appropriate and developmentally sound (NAESP, 2001). If students with disabilities are not considered in the development of general standards or the design of curriculum frameworks, or if their test scores are not included

in an aggregate district score, an even more segregated system of education might evolve (Jorgensen, 1997). It is possible that schools would do more tracking and students with disabilities would have less access to high-level curriculum than they do now. Fewer students with disabilities might qualify for a "real" high school diploma, and their future educational and career choices would continue to be limited.

Secondly, the NAESP (2001) suggests that adequate financial and material resources be provided in order support the common core of learning. The principal should assume leadership in the identification, acquisition, and allocation of resources required to support the instructional program. Wolery, Werts, Caldwell, Snyder, & Lisowski, (1995) conducted a study investigating the perceptions of special education elementary teachers (N=158) who had been involved in inclusive education. One major finding of this study was that special and general educators reported similar levels of need for resources. IDEA requires that necessary supports, aids, and services be provided to the child with a disability in accordance with the IEP [34 C.F.R. §300.347(a)(3)]. Any instructional or assessment modifications that are required for the child with a disability to participate in the assessment must be provided in accordance with the content of the IEP [34 C.F.R. §300.347(a)(5)].

Thirdly, principals must ensure that special education teachers possess the same texts, teacher's manuals, and other curriculum materials as regular education teachers to allow children with disabilities access to the general education curriculum (NAESP, 2001). Principals should encourage the purchase of materials and the development of units of study that are accessible to all children (Malloy, 1996). Keeping in mind that any service or aid specified in the IEP must be made available to the child, principals should

continue to seek opportunities for enriching and enhancing the educational program [34 C.F.R. §300.347(a)(3); 300.350(a)(1)]. While this may prove a daunting task, especially in districts where dollars are unyielding, principals should continue to advocate for money to increase services for all students (Wolery, Werts, Caldwell, Snyder, & Lisowski, 1995).

Finally, NAESP (2001) addresses effective instructional practices and staff development necessary to support students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The entire staff should be committed to providing opportunities for success to all children, regardless of special needs (Florian, 1999). The principal and staff are committed to the concept that all children can learn, though not necessarily in the same way or at the same time. The principal of an inclusive school also understands the need to educate the public that including students with disabilities in the general education setting does not mean lowering standards.

IDEA (1997) provides guidance to principals about insuring that effective instructional services for children with disabilities are provided. For example, the IEP specifies the services, supports, and aids that the child requires to participate and progress in the general curriculum. Principals should be knowledgeable about such areas and ensure that all instructional staff are fully prepared to implement required supports. Principals should be aware that each public agency is responsible for ensuring that assistive technology devices or assistive technology services, or both, as those terms are defined in §300.5–300.6, are made available to a child with a disability if required as part of the child’s special education, related services, or supplementary aids and services, as stated in that child’s IEP.

Staff development is a priority for all instructional staff that teach students with disabilities, including regular education teachers, paraprofessionals, special educators, and related service providers. A study conducted by Tanner, Linscott, and Galis (1996) investigated beliefs and inclusive practices among middle school principals and teachers in Georgia. The top three barriers to inclusion identified through this study were lack of staff, lack of shared planning time, and inadequate staff development. Also identified in this study was the need for training in instructional modifications (Tanner et.al, 1996). The principal should ensure that everyone is prepared to assist children with disabilities in achieving high standards.

Burrello and Wright (1992) identified effective practices of principals who had participated in programming for the inclusion of students with disabilities. Faculty and staff need to be provided opportunities to discuss integration in light of consensus values and belief statements. That is, instructional practices need to be aligned with the school's mission statement. In addition, a special support group of faculty and staff should be created for the purpose of brainstorming and facilitating integration, mainstreaming, and inclusion efforts. However, the fact remains that many building level principals have not been trained to work with students with disabilities and will probably not receive additional training, limiting their ability to provide support to teachers participating in the inclusion program.

There have been several studies investigating the relationship between the building principal's knowledge of special education and the type of programs available in their schools. Several studies have shown that principals who had taken two or more law classes were more supportive of inclusion (Tanner, et al., 1996; McCanney, 1992; Kluth, Villa & Thousand, 2002). Additional studies have confirmed that principals who know

how to build collaborative relationships between special and general educators, how to communicate with parents and understand assessment methodologies are more involved in special education programming in their schools. (Snell & Janney, 2000; Wagner, 1999).

It is incorrect to assume that the delivery of special education services can be transformed directly and easily from a special class model, to a resource room or consulting teacher model, simply by training and inserting new personnel in unchanged schools and systems (Krajewski, and Krajewski, 2000). Changes in service delivery must be understood and supported by principals and teachers need to be involved in the decision making process. Successful inclusive practices depend on restructured schools that allow for flexible learning environments, with flexible curricula and instruction, while maintaining high standards for all students.

The Principal's Involvement in Inclusion

The school principal may be the deciding factor as to whether a school implements inclusion as a service delivery model for students with disabilities. Wisniewski and Alper (1994) found that moving toward inclusion occurs as a result of leaders utilizing systematic procedures and identified from a review of literature five general guidelines that can facilitate successful inclusion of students with disabilities. These guidelines include developing networks, assessing resources, reviewing options, installing inclusion strategies, and providing a system of feedback and self-renewal (Wisniewski and Alper, 1994).

Two studies conducted at the University of La Verne in California examined the roles and concerns of principals when implementing inclusion. Maurizio (1998)

investigated the role that elementary principals in greater Los Angeles played in the implementation of inclusive education. Principals' concerns and modifications to the instructional program viewed as necessary for successful inclusion were also addressed. Using a series of t-tests, Maurizio further investigated existing differences between principals regarding in-services attended, principalship experience, and experience in special education. T-tests revealed significant differences in four areas based on in-services attended and four areas based on special education experience. Years of experience were not related to the role principals played in special education.

Miller (2000) replicated Maurizio's study using high school principals. The findings confirmed those of Maurizio's study with elementary schools implying that grade level does not significantly impact the principal's role in delivering special education services. The best predictors of principal's involvement, according to Miller (2000) and Maurizio (1998), are special education experience and in-service training specific to special education.

The National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCERI, 1994) at City University of New York reported six classroom practices which had allowed inclusion to succeed: multi-level instruction, cooperative learning, activity-based learning, mastery learning, technology, and peer support and tutoring programs (Lipsky, 1994, p. 5). Other factors according to Lipsky, (1994) that were determined to be "necessary for inclusion to succeed" were: visionary leadership, collaboration, refocused use of assessment, supports for staff and students, funding, and effective parental involvement (p. 5-7). These studies demonstrate the importance of the principal in the restructuring of special education programs.

As part of the multidisciplinary team, principals are in a unique position to influence and implement an appropriate inclusion program (Anderson & Decker, 1993; Hallahan & Kauffman, 2000). Specifically, principals should ensure a realistic, cooperative approach to inclusion that complies with the intentions of the law (Blackman, 1993). Principals do this by providing active, supportive involvement and by insuring that resources and support are provided in order to deliver services in the least restrictive environment (Gamerós, 1995).

Fostering ownership for all students in the building regardless of ability levels is an essential responsibility of principals (Pellicer & Anderson, 1995; Friend & Bursuck, 1996). Resistance to inclusion is common among faculty among general and special education teachers (Katsiyannis, 1994; Heyward, 2000). The principal has the ability to promote a climate that is conducive to inclusion by exhibiting positive attitudes toward the inclusive program, utilizing staff expertise, and developing a sense of team planning between general and special educators (Gamerós, 1995). Principals need to educate the staff and faculty about the possibilities and needs of including students with disabilities in general education classes.

There are many ways principals can generate more acceptance of and voluntary participation in inclusion among faculty by providing incentives for teachers who participate in inclusion. Johnston (1994) suggests more planning time, grant money for materials, in-service training, and even release time to attend conferences or observe other successful inclusion programs for students with disabilities as acceptable incentives for teachers who choose to participate in this model.

One of the most important roles the principal plays in the inclusion of students with disabilities is that of a symbolic leader (Whitaker, 1996). Generally, the principal personifies the school system. (O'Neal, 2001). The principal's support of the special and general education teachers is crucial in the implementation of inclusion. Principals should visit classrooms, spend time with students with disabilities, take time with special education concerns as well as general education concerns, and show students with disabilities that they are accepted (Bradshaw, 2000).

It is important for the principal to be proactive rather than reactive to special education concerns by accommodating special education in their building and insuring that students with disabilities have access to the general education classrooms. Tucking special education neatly away does not facilitate the inclusion process. Calmers (1993) suggested that principals take an active role and increase their involvement in the move toward inclusion by becoming the change agent. Time must be allotted for teachers to make curricular modifications and collaborate to achieve the educational goals of all students.

Models of Inclusion

Despite the commonalities found through research that examines inclusion, there has been a lack of consistency in the ways in which inclusion is implemented. Various schools utilize different models to provide inclusive services. Sasdo-Brown and Hinson (1995) found through a survey of general and special education teachers from various school districts that inclusion was implemented in a variety of ways and identified concerns associated with inclusion. These concerns included the lack of planning time, providing instructional adaptation, and further in service preparation. The principal, as

instructional leader of the school needs to be familiar with various models of inclusion in order to maximize available resources and personnel. The principal has the capability to insure that teachers' concerns are addressed. According to Sasdo-Brown and Hinson, one major factor that was linked to the success of inclusive programs was the support and knowledge of the principal in special education services.

One of the major components of inclusion is collaboration between special and general education teachers. The support of the principal has been identified as the major factor in the progression of this relationship during the collaboration process. Phillips (1995) examined the working relationships of general and special education teachers involved in inclusion. They found collaborative efforts between general and special education teachers progressed through phases from anxiety, to determining roles, to sharing planning and curriculum development, to recognizing and articulating benefits of inclusion and evaluating the overall effort. Principals need to be involved in this process and guide teachers through each phase.

Planning is vital to the success of inclusion and is particularly essential in the collaborative consultation model of inclusion (Roach, 1995). In this model, the general education teacher is viewed as the curriculum expert while the special education teacher provides consultations regarding modifications and accommodations for the diverse group of students served in the inclusive classroom (Glazer, 1997; Shriner, 2000). The principal needs to facilitate the collaboration process by acknowledging the expertise of both teachers. General educators bring rich curriculum and content-specific resources, materials, and knowledge, while special educators bring rich knowledge and resources in strategically altering instructional variables for students with disabilities (CEC, 1999).

Recognizing that each discipline is essential for building a school that embraces inclusive practices is a priority for the building principal. Time needs to be devoted to the general education concerns as well as those of special education.

There are concerns with the collaborative consultation model and the principal must encourage cooperation of general and special educators to ensure success for all students in the general education setting. Some special education teachers feel that the collaborative consultation model may result in decreased direct instruction for those students who need it most and that students with behavior and learning problems may go unattended (King, 2000). In addition, some general education teachers may resist the special education teacher coming into “their” classrooms to provide consultative services (Phillips, Prue, Hasazi, & Morgan, 2000).

Because funding is often dependent on the student’s environment, collaborative consultation can be viewed as a threat to the much needed funding of special education programs (McCormick & First, 1994). For example if a student is being served in the general education classroom using the consultative-collaborative environment, the student is not counted as receiving special education. That loss of funds can be devastating for many schools, as more personnel and resources are needed when implementing this model. The Georgia Assembly enacted House Bill 500 that did away with providing lump sums to schools based on enrollment in either general education or special education programs and replaces it with a funding program that will follow the student.

A special education student who, on a designated reporting date, is enrolled in a program for students with disabilities under this article shall be counted for such

program even during any one-sixth segment of the school day that the student may be assigned to an instructional program other than a program for students with disabilities if the assignment is based upon the agreed delivery of special education and related services as identified in the student's Individual Education Program. (House Bill 500, 1996).

The new funding weight is 2.4114 in House Bill 500 (Ga. Code, Section 20-2-152). This bill may result in less funding for special education despite the needs of the students while in the general education classroom. Principals need to be flexible with scheduling to maximize these funds.

The collaborative or co-teaching model was developed to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom and to provide the needed support to the general education teacher (Phillips, 1995). This model is based on the special educator being in the class on a daily basis. While this model may seem like the ideal method for delivering inclusive services, it is not without its problems. Scheduling is often difficult and requires the expertise of the school principal. This is especially true in middle schools where class changes are not always on a single coordinated schedule.

In any model of inclusion, the principal should clearly define the roles of each teacher and monitor the development of the collaborative relationship to help prevent any trepidation on the part of the teachers (Phillips, et al, 2000). True collaboration requires a partnership in which each partner recognizes the limits of her training and her professional biases (Powell & Hyle, 1997). Collaboration is sometimes diminished because of different motivations for teaching, confusion regarding roles and

responsibilities, lack of effort and commitment on the part of the team member, and lack of attention to social relationships and interpersonal skills (Long, 1994).

The research on both the collaborative-consultative and the collaborative teaching models have yielded some positive results. Ajchenbaum & Reynolds (1991) found that consultation has improved academic achievement among students who have disruptive behavior. Another study by Stainback and Stainback (1992) found improvements in student achievement among students whose teachers had been part of the consultative model. Common sense should tell us that having two teachers share responsibility for all students reduces the number of students at risk whether they have been identified as needing special education services or not. Principals in schools with a high number of students identified as at-risk should find this reassuring.

Regardless of the model utilized for implementation, inclusion requires much preparation. Successful planning for inclusion involves a complete collaboration of all members of the school community. These members include the general educator, the special educator, the principal, and special education director. Each member of the team has specific tasks for serving students within the framework of inclusion. The principal, as the leader of the building in which inclusion is implemented, is in the position to coordinate these tasks so that inclusion is as uncomplicated as possible. Principals cannot simply agree with the concept of inclusion for the sake of being politically correct. They must increase their level of involvement in special education programming in order to provide a quality education to all students.

Perceptions of Principals' Involvement in Special Education

As early as the 1980s, research sought to understand the similarities and differences of perceptions between principals and other school staff regarding the principal's role in special education programs. The goal was to determine principals' level and type of involvement with special education in their respective schools. This was accomplished by comparing the perceptions of regular education teachers and principals (Hines, 1982; Bonds & Lindsay, 1982; Miller, 1982). Spence (1985) examined the perceptions of principals, regular and special education teachers to determine if any discrepancy in perceptions existed.

Hines (1982) conducted a study in Missouri, which compared the perceptions of elementary principals, and those of selected elementary classroom teachers in the areas of administrative planning, organizing, directing, and coordinating services for students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Significant differences were found between the perceptions of the principal and teachers concerning the four tasks related to special education programming. Hines concluded that, "Preservice and in-service programs need to be developed to better prepare principals and general educators in providing educational services to students with disabilities" (Hines, 1982, p.154)

Bonds and Lipsky (1982) studied elementary and secondary teachers to determine their beliefs regarding the principal's role in special education. The results of this study indicated that teachers believed that principals have major roles to play in the area of special education and that they perform these duties quite well. Among these roles, teachers described the principal as aiding with test interpretation, seeking alternative sources of funding for programs, reading professional journals, acquainting parents with

the provisions of pertinent laws, and offering suggestions for classroom arrangements. Areas in which teachers believed principals needed to focus additional attention included acquainting teachers with pertinent laws, conducting more classroom observations, examining scheduling practices, and serving on the placement advisory committee. Bonds and Lipsky (1982) concluded from their data that if the school is to provide more adequate services for students with disabilities, the principal is the key to success. As the research demonstrates, principal leadership will determine the success or failure of special education programs.

Several studies have looked at the similarities and differences of perceptions between principals and other school staff regarding the principal's level of involvement in special education programs (King, 2000; Miller 1992 and Bonds & Lindsay, 1992). The goal of these studies was to determine the principal's level and type of involvement with special education in their schools. While the results of these studies indicated there was no unanimous agreement among the respondents as to what the level of involvement of the principal should be in meeting state and federal guidelines, there was agreement on four groups of expectations. These expectations were: (1) to communicate goals and objectives for developing and implementing programs for students with disabilities to parents, teachers, community and students; (2) to provide in-service training related to students with disabilities; (3) to evaluate the facilities used for the education of the children with disabilities; and (4) to evaluate special education teachers.

Benson (1990) randomly surveyed 173 public school principals in the state of Kansas at all grade levels to determine their perceived current roles and perceptions of their ideal roles in special education administrative functions. Analysis of the data found

that principals in Kansas assumed certain but less than ideal responsibilities for special education in most areas. These assumptions are predicated on principal's beliefs that they should not assume full responsibility for administration of special education in their building. This study is contrary to effective schools literature, which suggests that building level principals should assume full responsibility for all aspects of education within their building (Gameros, 1995). Benson (1990) also concluded that a positive correlation exists between the number of special education classes taken and level of involvement in the delivery of special education services.

The Special Education Director

Some of the disparities that exist in principals' perceptions of their needed involvement in special education may relate to the principals' perceptions of the special education director's involvement in providing services to students with disabilities. Several studies have been conducted in an effort to enhance the understanding of the relationship between special education directors and building principals. Following the enactment of P.L. 94-142, Betz (1977) conducted a study, focusing on the involvement of the elementary principal in establishing the delivery of appropriate services to students with disabilities at the local school level. The thrust of this study was to attempt to understand the relationship between the director of special education and the building principal under the new responsibilities that accompanied the new legislation.

Using McIntyre's (1974) instrument Administering and Improving the Instructional program: Key Responsibilities, Competencies, and Illustrative Indicators, Betz surveyed 45 principals and nine special education directors. The findings of this study emphasized the need for the principal to be responsible for the day-to-day

operations of the special education programs in his building. Additionally, the study found the greatest discrepancy to be the lack of clarity in defining the interrelated authority and responsibilities of each group.

Betz (1977) determined that if principals are to be fully responsible for operating special education programs in their buildings, support for appropriate special education training is obligatory. This would include training in the selection and evaluation of special education staff as well as methods of observing special education programs. Betz (1977) concluded that the involvement level of the principal are varied and diverse in nature and that without appropriate training and knowledge, the principals' performance of their special education duties may lack depth and precision as they relate to expectations in fulfilling their responsibilities. Betz (1977) concluded that the roles of the principal are varied and diverse in nature and without necessary training and knowledge, the principals' performance of their special education duties may "lack depth and precision as they relate to their responsibilities". In other words, principals react to situations in a way that is politically correct. Furthermore, without the appropriate training, principals may not act in accordance with the law.

Robson (1990) compared the perceptions of special education directors, elementary principals, superintendents, regular classroom teachers and special education teachers. Each participant in this study was asked to describe the role responsibilities perceived and expected from the directors and from the principals. The findings indicated that directors of special education are expected to provide minimal amounts of direct service in pupil functions or personnel administration and are expected to play their major role in functions that involve boundary-spanning activities, such as dealing with

parents and groups beyond the school building. The principal is expected to assume major responsibility in direct service to pupils and in all supervisory and evaluation aspects of personnel administration. The participants generally agreed that all that takes place within the building is considered to be the major responsibility of the building principal. The special education directors were more involved in services that extended beyond the school building. Furthermore, the building principal is expected to perform the major supervisory roles in areas of direct services to students as well as supervision of special education staff.

Hayward (1990) examined the degree of responsibility that principals were assuming for special education compared to directors of special education. He believed that without strong leadership on the part of the principals, there would be a perpetuation of a parallel and separate system of regular and special education. Of the seventeen special education responsibilities that principals and directors believed constituted an administrative matrix, directors perceived that directors were responsible for sixteen of the seventeen areas of responsibility. Principals perceived that principals were responsible for only four of the seventeen responsibilities included in this matrix. Findings of this survey research indicated that principals were not assuming responsibility for special education in their schools and that principals were not a dominant influence in the governance of special education. Directors were very much in charge of special education. Hayward concluded that although the special education population represents 10% of a school population, principals are willingly abdicating responsibility for these students to the director of special education.

Groveman (1992) examined the perceptions of district triads (superintendents, principals, and directors of special education), regarding the governance of building level special education programs by surveying elementary school districts in New Jersey. The findings revealed that all three groups perceived directors as being the primary person responsible for functions of budgeting, staff development, program evaluations and referral and placement. The function of personnel was described as one that was shared between principals and directors. There were significant differences between the groups' perceptions on 27 of the 34 administrative functions. Of the sixty-four district triads, 80% were described as operating with directors either primarily or solely responsible for special education. To correct the operation of this "separate educational system" within the overall educational enterprise, it was recommended that directors of special education begin to delegate responsibilities to principals. Groveman (1992) believed that for this action to have a positive impact, general education administrators would need to receive additional training in the area of special education in order to understand what is being delegated to them.

Sullivan (1996) examined the perceptions of superintendents, directors of special education, and principals in sixty-four districts regarding the governance of special education programs. The findings of this study revealed that all three groups of system personnel believed the directors of special education to be responsible for functions of budgeting, staff development, program evaluations, and referral and placement. There were significant differences between each groups' perceptions on 27 of the 34 administrative functions. Of the sixty-four triads, 80% were operating with directors of special education either primarily or solely responsible for special education. To

eliminate the operation of separate special education programs, Sullivan recommended that directors of special education services begin to delegate responsibilities to the principals and that principals receive training in the area of special education in order to carry out their duties effectively.

Clarke (2001) conducted a qualitative study investigating the role of school principals' and their use of policies and procedures in providing Least Restrictive Environment for students with disabilities in rural South Georgia. The interviewees consisted of five special education directors and eight principals from five rural South Georgia school districts. The principals interviewed by Clark reported their roles to include assuring that students' needs were met, that the student was served in the LRE with as much time as possible in the general education classroom, and providing assistance to the student as needed. The special education directors believed that principals were more conscious of their responsibility for all children including those with disabilities because of their awareness of the laws. Principals in Clarke's study also indicated that they utilized the special education director as a resource, especially in the area of discipline.

These studies illustrate the importance of the level of involvement principals have in the delivery of special education programs. It is necessary for principals to be knowledgeable of policies, laws, and procedures that govern special education services and delivery models. Because the decision to implement inclusion is often at the building level, the level of involvement by principals is a determining factor of its success.

Principals' Knowledge of Special Education

Legislative mandates and court decisions have made principals accountable and responsible for the education of students with disabilities in their schools (Osborne, Dinities, & Curran, 1993). Research indicates that principals need training in areas of special education such as law (Behar-Horenstein, & Ornstein, 1996). This section will review various studies that examined principals training in the area of special education law and how this training affects their level of involvement in special education service delivery.

Minor (1992) conducted a study that examined principals' special education training received during their university preparation program. Principals surveyed by Minor (1992) felt that the coursework in special education taken during their administrative preparation program was limited. Ninety percent of the principals who responded indicated that they had no major or minor in special education and, 46% claimed they had taken no coursework in special education. Of the principals who participated in this study, nearly 80% felt they were unprepared to deal with special education issues.

In this study, Minor (1992) also surveyed superintendents and special education directors regarding principals' ability to supervise special education training. Eighty-eight percent of superintendents and 97% of special education directors felt that principals lacked the training necessary to implement programs in special education, (Minor, 1992). Minor (1992) also asked participants about their training regarding P.L. 94-142 to determine their confidence in understanding its intent. Slightly more than half (50.3%) felt that the training they had received on 94-142 was inadequate.

Sirotnik and Kimball (1994) re-analyzed two previous studies that had examined aspects of principals' training. The first study consisted of 23 institutions and asked students and faculty to rank order, by importance, 30 possible goals in an administrative preparation program. The item that described management of special education within the school ranked 26th out of the 30 possible goals. When student responses were analyzed regarding their perception of how well the educational administration program had prepared them for each of the 30 possible goals, the special education program description again ranked 26th out of 30.

In a second study revisited by Sirotnik and Kimball (1994), six high school principals were interviewed regarding issues related to the status of special education in the principals' certification programs. These principals offered comments that described the adequacy of their training programs in dealing with special education issues. The six principals agreed as to the inadequacy of the training they had received in special education.

From these studies, Sirotnik and Kimball (1994) concluded that in professional schools preparing educational leaders, there are not two programs, but merely one, and that special education is largely missing from the curriculum. The researchers ascertained that the attitudes of students and faculty involved in principal preparation programs had been derived from the lack of understanding regarding the importance of special education training for educational leaders.

Winkle (1994) sought to determine the level of knowledge that elementary principals possessed regarding special education and what their perceived decision-making abilities were in relation to their knowledge base. A random sample of 136

elementary principals in the state of Oklahoma were sent a survey instrument which contained an assessment of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act, 1975) knowledge base, a narrative section concerning the principals' perceptions of their preparation in the area of special education, and a section regarding demographic information on each respondent. Follow-up interviews with selected principals and the narrative section of the survey were compared to describe the similarities and differences among the respondents' perceptions and also identify themes and categories that emerged through the data collection process.

While the principals in this study overwhelmingly agreed that they had not been prepared to deal with special education issues, they felt additional coursework in the area of special education may not be beneficial. The principals further indicated that the principal's effectiveness of managing special education programs would be influenced more by their involvement in special education programming, their pursuit of continuing education opportunities, and their own styles of administrative leadership (Winkle, 1994).

Vergun and Chambers (1995) surveyed nine Oregon school districts and found the most significant need expressed by principals in managing special education programs was staff development followed by an increase in special education staff in order to provide resources to general educators. Arick and Krug (1993) randomly selected 2900 principals from across the United States to examine whether certain variables were related to the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The researchers concluded that principals who had experience teaching students with disabilities had more students included in the general education environment than those without experience.

A study designed and conducted by Robertson (1996) sought to assess the knowledge of principals with respect to special education law. Research questions addressed the principals' overall level of knowledge in the area of law and special education. A survey instrument was developed asking participants to evaluate 20 situational scenarios to determine whether a violation of the student's rights had occurred. Principals as a group did not exhibit satisfactory knowledge of law issues, with 74% of the principals scoring in the unsatisfactory level (below 70%). Elementary principals scored higher than secondary principals and assistant principals consistently scored higher than principals on each scenario with a significant difference at the high school level.

Robertson (1996) concluded that there is a vital need for principals to receive additional preparation in order to possess a basic understanding of school law and how it impacts their respective schools and school districts. He concluded that this additional training would help principals to satisfy their professional obligations and protect the rights of all individuals involved.

Georgia's Principals and Special Education

Georgia's principals are being held responsible for the educational outcomes of all students in their schools. As part of the requirements of IDEA (1997), states were to develop policies addressing access and accountability. Georgia's policies for special education services are in line with those of IDEA (1997). With the renewed thrust for inclusion (H. F. Johnson, personal communication, 2001) in the State of Georgia, principals must be able to provide "instructional leadership and ... set the climate for acceptance [along with] a positive approach to including students with disabilities in

general education" (Wagner, 1999, p. 29). According to Weatherly, (2001), the Georgia Department of Education embraces the following policies:

1. Students with disabilities shall be provided real and valid opportunities to learn through specialized instruction, related services, supplemental aids and supports;
2. All school systems shall maintain high expectations for students with disabilities and strengthen the role of parents in the education of their children;
3. School systems shall provide high quality, intensive professional development for all personnel (Weatherly, 2001).

IDEA (1997) requires local education agencies to provide students with disabilities an appropriate education. This education includes the necessary support, related services, and specialized instruction required by a student with disabilities to access the general education environment. The rules of the Georgia Board of Education (2000) added emphasis to the preference for placement of students with disabilities in the general education classroom when appropriate and expanded the requirements for a full continuum of placement options for students with disabilities.

School principals in Georgia are faced with the responsibility of insuring the rules imposed by the GBOE are implemented as intended. The courts have provided guidance regarding the implementation of IDEA and have not been hesitant about siding with parents in their litigation against school districts. The principal must be accountable for the application and enforcement of federal laws when federal agencies monitor a district's compliance with these laws (O'Neal, 2001).

In order to effectively oversee the education of students with disabilities, principals need to be aware of the regulations governing aspects of special education, including placement, an area that traditionally has been the responsibility of the special education director. The case of *Greer v. Rome City School District* (11th Cir. 1991) clearly illustrates this point. In this case, the court ruled that the IEP team had incorrectly placed a child in a self-contained classroom without first considering a less restrictive environment and ruled that the school district had not made a sincere effort to include Christy Greer in the regular education classroom. Courts and federal agencies have provided clarification that IEP's or other relevant documentation should clearly and specifically document options considered on the continuum of alternative placements and why less restrictive options were rejected. While the Greer test recognized that cost was a permissible consideration, merely measuring additional expense in a general education placement would not be sufficient to challenge the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Pitasky, 1996).

As a result of the Greer case, many of Georgia's school systems have implemented some form of inclusive services for students with disabilities, although services are not consistent across systems or even across schools within a district. According to the Georgia Department of Education (2001), it appears that only about 35 percent of students with disabilities are attending school in regular classes more than 60% of the day. Of the remaining 65 percent, 36.3 percent receive special educational services in a resource room setting and 23.5 percent are in self-contained classes specifically tailored for students with disabilities. A little over five percent of students identified as needing special educational receive services in settings outside the regular school setting

(separate school, residential facility, homebound, or hospital). While these percentages are an improvement over past numbers, Georgia is among the states with the lowest percentage of students receiving services in the general education setting.

Although Georgia has attempted to comply with the court's ruling, it appears that many districts continue to be out of compliance with the provisions of IDEA (1997). According to the 1996 Office of Special Education Programming monitoring report, Georgia failed to meet IDEA's requirement of Least Restrictive Environment. OSEP found that:

In six of the agencies visited (A, B, C, D, E, and G) special education within a full time regular education environment is not considered as a placement option for all students with disabilities. In addition, placement decisions in these agencies are based on the category of disability rather than on the individualized needs of each student. Administrators and teachers from Agencies A and D informed OSEP that the full continuum, including regular education with supplementary aids and services, was considered only for students with mild disabilities. In Agency G, an agency principal stated that full time regular education placement with supplementary aids and services is not considered as an option for all disability categories - at the elementary level, full time regular education is considered only for students with speech and language disabilities, other health impairments and visual impairments. At the high school level, full time regular education is considered only for students with learning disabilities and students with emotional and behavioral disorders. (OSEP report to Linda Shrenko, 1996).

The findings in this report indicate that five years after the Greer case, principals are still uncertain about the process of determining placement for student's with disabilities and many continue to adopt an "all or none" approach.

Professional Development Initiatives In Georgia

According to Phillip Pickens, Georgia's Director of Exceptional Students, Georgia's principals are responsible for all students and programs in their schools (Pickens, personal communication, 2002). Davis Nelson, Deputy Superintendent of Georgia, issued a memorandum to district superintendents strongly suggesting that training in LRE be provided to principals and teachers in their districts. According to this memo, "It is essential that local school systems make LRE training opportunities available to ensure that teachers and administrators are fully informed about their responsibilities for implementing the requirements of LRE and are provided with technical assistance and training necessary to assist them in meeting this requirement" (D. Nelson, personal communication to school superintendents, 2000).

Several training modules have been developed to address the needs of educating Georgia's principals and general educators in creating schools that will educate a diverse society. Valdosta State University developed a comprehensive instructional package for principals and teachers on inclusive practices. Using Best Practices to Build Inclusive Schools for Students with Diverse Learning Abilities was a three-year project funded by the Office of Special Education Programs in Washington D.C. The purpose of the six modules included in this package was to teach educators to apply innovative practices that expand opportunities for meeting the needs of students with diverse learning abilities in inclusive neighborhood schools.

The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities has been instrumental in providing technical assistance in inclusive education to Georgia's schools. For example, the council sponsored the Better All Together regional conference that brings researchers from around the country to Georgia to discuss inclusive education.

Project WINS (Winning Idea Network Schools) was funded by the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities in July of 1998. Project WINS is charged with building the capacity of Georgia's schools to educate an increasingly diverse population of students, including those with significant disabilities in general education classrooms and settings. Located at Kennesaw State University, Project WINS works regularly with staff at the Georgia Learning Connection, The Georgia Department of Education, Valdosta State University, Georgia Project on Assistive Technology, and the Georgia PTA. While programs such as these are to be commended for their efforts, the fact remains that very few principals are aware of such training and have not received training in delivering special education services.

Summary

If principals are to be responsible for the education of all students in their schools, including those with disabilities, they will need to increase their level of involvement in the delivery of special education services in their schools. While special education directors are the designated experts in Georgia's counties, principals must provide the visionary leadership necessary to provide a quality education for students with disabilities that meets the standards imposed by federal and state legislation. With a student population that is comprised of a variety of learning styles, backgrounds, and ability levels, teachers will need to be more flexible in their instruction. This flexibility will

require leaders that are committed to and highly involved in providing the best education for all learners. Without question, the principal's involvement is pivotal in the implementation of any educational innovation. New legislation such as IDEA (1997), the A+ Educational Reform Act of Georgia (2001) and the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind, 2001), confirms the responsibility of the principal in the education of children with disabilities. If principals are to be accountable for progress made by students with disabilities, they must increase their involvement level in all areas that affect how and where students with disabilities are educated.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The number of school districts reported to be involved in implementing inclusive practices increased more than 200 percent from 1994-1995 (NCERI, 1995). Sage and Burrello (1994) noted that the principal had such an impact on instructional practices that his or her leadership played a major role in the success of a school's special education program. Increased responsibility of principals for all programs, including special education, comes at a time when administrative training provides minimal information on special education programs (Malloy, 1996). Even though the trend in Georgia toward more inclusive practices has resulted in a call for major changes in teacher education programs, there have been few changes requiring principals to be competent, knowledgeable, or take coursework related to special education administration. The purpose of this study was to discern Georgia's principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery.

Included in this chapter is the research methodology with the following subsections: research design, research questions, instrumentation and research procedure, method, and participants.

Research Design

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the overall design of the study: the participants, the instrument used, and method employed to collect the data and the

manner in which the data will be analyzed. To perform this study, two research approaches were utilized: quantitative and qualitative.

The quantitative research included descriptive research design, investigation that measured the characteristics of the participants on specified variables.

Specifically, the quantitative research of ex-post facto nature was used since there was no manipulation of any variable. As Sprinthall (1994) explains:

...the researcher does not manipulate the independent variable. Rather, the independent variable is assigned. That is, the subjects are measured on a trait they already possess and then are assigned to categories on the basis of that trait. These trait differences (independent variables) are then compared with measures that the researcher takes on some other dimension (dependent variable). p. 247

This type of research was used to investigate the effects of selected characteristics of the participants and their schools on the level of involvement of principals in special education service delivery.

In addition to quantitative research, a qualitative approach was utilized to acquire data that cannot be acquired by a quantitative instrument. As Creswell (1994) states, "It is advantageous to a researcher to combine methods to better understand a concept being tested or explored" (p.177). The addition of a qualitative component in this study will allow participants to provide and share information that is pertinent to principals' level of involvement in special education.

Research Questions

In completing this study, the researcher attempted to answer the following overarching question: What are the perceptions of principals and special education teachers in Georgia regarding principals' level of involvement in special education programs in their schools? The following related sub-questions were also addressed:

1. What differences exist in the perceptions of principals and special education teachers regarding principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery?
2. What is the relationship between selected characteristics of principals and their level of involvement in special education service delivery?
3. Is there a relationship between selected characteristics of principals' schools and the level of involvement of school principals in the delivery of special education programs?
4. What relationship exists in the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery and his or her background in or knowledge of special education?
5. What training do special education teachers and school principals perceive school principals need in the area of special education program delivery?

Instrumentation

Because the information to be collected was not directly observable and the researcher was unable to interview participants individually, the survey method was the method of choice for gathering the data necessary for this study. Gall, Borg, and Gall, (1996) contend that the purpose of using surveys is:

To use questionnaires or interviews to collect data from participants in a sample about their characteristics, experiences, and opinions in order to generalize findings to the population that the sample is intended to represent. (p. 289).

The survey format, along with the addition of a free-response section for participants to provide individualized information, provided effective means for collecting data for this study.

Accordingly, the research for this study was conducted using a 34-item questionnaire based upon a survey developed by Joseph Sisson for his study: *Elementary Principals' Involvement With Special Education Programs in Their Schools* (2000). Sisson determined the level of involvement that principals have with special education programs in their schools by reviewing four sources which addressed the roles of principals and special education: *The Compliance Manual* (Chalfant & Pysh, 1980) and three doctoral dissertation studies (Benson, 1990; Barlow, 1987; and Hughes, 1983). Areas that were frequently mentioned in these publications were identified, which resulted in a list of possible responsibilities. Additionally, Sisson conducted interviews with elementary principals and a special education director and developed a list of questions that were sorted into the categories of curriculum, personnel, and program administration.

In order to insure content validity, Sisson sought the expertise of selected university faculty, principals, and special education directors. A sample questionnaire was personally delivered to each participant, and feedback was solicited related to the instrument's content. Sisson also sought specific information on the

“Directions” for accuracy and usefulness. With this information provided, Sisson revised the instrument to improve its form and content. The revised survey was pilot tested among a sample consisting of seven principals, one special education director, and one university faculty member. All of the participants in the pilot study returned the survey.

After careful review of the content of Sisson’s survey, this researcher concluded that it could be successfully employed to obtain the information necessary for this study. This researcher contacted and obtained permission to use and modify the format of the research instrument. The instrument as developed by Sisson contained thirty items. The instrument used in this study includes 24 of the 30 Likert scale items as originally exist in Sisson’s survey. Six of the items were designed to collect information about principals’ university preparation courses. Because these items were not relevant to the present study, they were omitted in the revised instrument. The revised instrument also included items that requested information pertaining to principals, teachers, and their schools. In addition, a separate section consisting of seven items used to assess principals’ knowledge of special education was included.

Because the intent of this study was to compare perceptions of two groups, parallel surveys were developed with wording tailored to each group. To insure content validity, an item analysis consisting of the research questions, the literature, and the questions on the instrument used to measure the data is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Item Analysis		
Part I		
Item #	Research/Researchers	Question
1-4	King, (2000); Miller (1992); Bonds & Lindsay, (1992); Betz, M. (1977); Bolman, L. & Deal, T. (1994); Benson, J.S. (1990); De Clue, L. (1992); Gameros, P., (1995); Hallinger, P. & Heck, R. (1996); Hayward, J. (1990); Ingram, P. (1997); Morgan, C. & Demchak, M. (1995).	Subquestion 2
5 & 6	King, (2000); National Association of State Boards of Education (1992, October); National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion. (1994); National Council on Disability. (1995); Osborne, A.G., Di Mattia, P., & Curran, G. (1993) Hines, (1982); Bonds & Lindsay, (1982); Miller, G. (1982). Spence (1985).	Subquestion 4
Part II		
Item #	Research/Researchers	Question
1-4	Skrtic, T. M. (1991); HB1187 A+ Education Reform Bill. (2000) Fullen, M., (1993); Krajewski, B. and Krajewski, L. (2000); U.S. Department of Education (2001).	Subquestion 3
Part III		
Item #	Research/Researchers	Question
1-5	Anderson, R. & Decker, R. (1993); Benson, J.S. (1990); Bonds, C. & Lindsay, J. (1982); Burrello, L.C., & Wright, P. T. (Eds.). (1992); De Clue, L. (1992); Gameros, P., (1995); Ingram, P. (1997); National Council on Disability. (1995); Osborne, A.G., Di Mattia, P., & Curran, F. (1993); Phillips, L. (1995); Sage D. & Burrello, L. (1994).	Overarching Subquestion 1
6-12	Benson, J.S. (1990); Bonds, C. & Lindsay, J. (1982); Carlberg, C., & Kavale, K. (1980); Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. (1994); Hirth, M. & Valesky, T. (1991); Phillips, (1995); Sage & Burrello, (1994); Johnston (1994).	Overarching Subquestion 1

TABLE 1 Continued

Part IV		
Item #	Research/Researchers	Question
25	Hirth, M. & Valesky, T. (1991); . Barnet, C., & Monda-Amaya, L.E., (1998); Gameros, P., (1995); Ingram, P. (1997); Krajewski, B. and Krajewski, L. (2000; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, (1999).	Subquestion 4
26	IDEA 1997; Barnet, C., & Monda-Amaya, L.E., (1998); Gameros, P., (1995); Ingram, P. (1997); Hallahan & Kauffman, (2001).	Subquestion 4
27	Hirth, M. & Valesky, T. (1991.; Barnet, C., & Monda-Amaya, L.E., (1998); Krajewski, B. and Krajewski, L. (2000); National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2001).	Subquestion 4
28	Barnet, C., & Monda-Amaya, L.E., (1998); D Gameros, P., (1995); Ingram, P. (1997)yal A.B., Flynt S.W., & Walker-Bennett D., (1996), Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, (1999).	Subquestion 4
29	Hirth, M. & Valesky, T. (1991); Clarke, 2001; Dyal A.B., Flynt S.W., & Walker-Bennett D., (1996); Krajewski, B. and Krajewski, L. (2000); Weatherly, (2001).	Subquestion 4
30	Hirth, M. & Valesky, T. (1991); Barnet, C., & Monda-Amaya, L.E., (1998); Hallahan & Kauffman, (2001); National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2001).	Subquestion 4
31	Hirth, M. & Valesky, T. (1991). Barnet, C., & Monda-Amaya, L.E., (1998; U.S. Department of Education. (1999); Krajewski, B. and Krajewski, L. (2000) Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, (1999) Weatherly, (2001); O'Neal, (2000). Pitasky, V. M. (1996).	Subquestion 4
32	Weatherly, (2001); National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2001). Pitasky, V. M. (1996).	Subquestion 4

Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study to determine content validity of the survey. Three principals and nine special education teachers were asked to react to the survey and provide feedback. Of the three principals, one had teaching experience in special education. The nine special education teachers consisted of one male and eight female, varied in their years of experience and education level, and represented three surrounding counties.

The researcher provided each of the twelve participants a verbal explanation of the study's purpose. The surveys were personally delivered to each participant by the researcher. A letter reiterating the purpose of the study was attached to each survey. These individuals were asked to read the directions carefully and complete the survey. Since the instructions for completing the survey were being evaluated and assessed for accuracy and usefulness, no further verbal directions were provided.

Participants completed all questions on the survey. Several wrote comments in the margin of the survey. The researcher met with the group of teachers and scheduled meetings with individual principals to clarify their feedback regarding the survey. The teachers provided feedback that (1) the survey directions were understandable, (2) the questions seemed to cover areas that required principals to be involved, and (3) the survey made sense to them. One suggestion made by the group of teachers was to change the wording of the statements to "The principal of my school..." rather than making ambiguous statements. The principals suggested slight wording changes in the directions, and suggested using phrases rather than acronyms

to insure consistency in answers among principals. These changes were incorporated into the revision of the survey. The average time for completion of the survey was 15 minutes. Copies of the principals' questionnaire and teachers' questionnaire are provided in Appendix B.

Scale Reliabilities.

The four scales in this study included curriculum involvement, personnel involvement, program/administration involvement and knowledge base. A Chronbach's Alpha coefficient for the entire sample ($N = 220$) was computed and yielded the following coefficients: curriculum ($\alpha = .92$), personnel ($\alpha = .92$), program/ administration ($\alpha = .96$) and knowledge ($\alpha = .85$). A Chronbach's Alpha coefficient for the special education teacher only sample ($n = 87$) was also computed and yielded the following coefficients: curriculum ($\alpha = .93$), personnel ($\alpha = .91$), program/administration ($\alpha = .94$) and knowledge ($\alpha = .81$). In addition, a Chronbach's Alpha coefficient for the principal only sample ($n = 133$) was computed and yielded the following coefficients: curriculum ($\alpha = .89$), personnel ($\alpha = .91$), program/administration ($\alpha = .96$) and knowledge ($\alpha = .87$).

Participants

The target population for this study was principals, and special education teachers across all grade levels employed in the public schools of Georgia. Because principal involvement in any educational reform movement has been shown to vary across grade levels (Hausman, Crow & Sperry, 2000), the researcher surveyed elementary, middle, and high school principals. According to statistics supplied by the Georgia Department of Education (2001), Georgia has 1813 schools consisting of

421 middle schools, 299 high schools and 1093 elementary schools. A sample consisting of 200 principals representing all three grade levels was selected randomly. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), the determination of sample size should take into consideration several factors including the type of research, the number of variables studied, and financial constraints.

In order to insure that grade levels were represented in proportion to the percentage of those schools in Georgia, principals were selected by using a stratified random sample. Using a table of four-digit random numbers generated by SPSS, the researcher selected a proportional sample from each of the three levels of schools. Fifty high schools principals were selected first by listing and assigning a three-digit number to each school. This list was exported to SPSS and random cases were selected. Using this same procedure, 50 middle schools were selected. Because elementary schools outnumbered middle and high schools 2:1 in Georgia, 100 elementary schools were randomly selected using the same procedure described in the selection of middle and high school principals. Principals of the selected schools were asked to participate in the study.

Once schools were selected, the researcher contacted each school to obtain the name of the special education teacher in the school. If a school had more than one special education teacher, the names of all teachers were obtained. The teachers were then assigned a two digit number and one teacher was selected randomly by using a random number generator. If a school only had one special education teacher, then that teacher was asked to participate. This procedure yielded a sample of 200 special education teachers across all grade levels.

Sixty-seven percent of the principals responded (n= 133). All of the surveys returned by principals were usable. Forty-nine percent of the special education teachers responded (n=96). Of the 96 surveys that were returned, 87 were usable. Eight surveys were not usable because more than one-third of the questions were left unanswered. One survey was missing a page when returned. The overall response rate for both groups was 58 %.

Procedures

After permission to conduct the study was obtained by the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board, the researcher mailed a cover letter to each participant explaining the objectives of the study and providing assurance of anonymity, along with a copy of the survey, and a stamped self-addressed envelope. Each survey included a code to allow for follow-up requests from the nonrespondents.

As recommended by Creswell (1994), a postcard was sent to the participants who had not responded after fourteen days, followed by a second letter, survey, and self-addressed envelope after another two-week period. The data collection procedure was concluded at the end of a six-week period.

Data Analysis

The information was organized, classified, and analyzed with the intention of gaining insight into the perceptions of principals and special education teachers regarding the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery. It was also the intent of this researcher to determine which factors influenced the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery.

In order for the researcher to analyze the survey data, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (1999) was used. First, descriptive statistics were used to identify the characteristics of the principals and their schools. Also, measures of frequency and central tendency were utilized to investigate whether principals had received training regarding the special education components of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997), the “No Child Left Behind” (2001) and the A+ Education Reform Bill (2001). The independent variables for the study included gender, years of experience in current position, area of teaching certification, and highest degree earned. Selected characteristics of schools such as grade level, number of students, geographic location, number of special education students, and percentage of free and reduced lunch were also identified as independent variables. Measures of frequency and central tendency were utilized to discover the extent of the principals’ involvement in special education service delivery.

The dependent variables were clustered by topic as categorized in Part III of the survey. The curriculum cluster included five items; the personnel component contains 7 items; and the program administration cluster contains 11 items. To analyze the data contained in Part III, the researcher assumed an equal interval scale and applied numerical weights to each response as follows: 0- no involvement, 1-low involvement, 2-moderate involvement, 3- high involvement. Thus, the highest score indicated that the principal was highly involved and 0 indicated no involvement.

The cluster of seven items in Part IV of the survey indicated the principals’ knowledge base in areas identified as important in special education programming. To analyze the data in Part IV of the survey, the researcher assumed an equal interval

scale and applied numerical weights to each response as follows: 0-no knowledge. 1- somewhat knowledgeable, and 2- extremely knowledgeable. In addition, a question was included in Part IV of the principal's survey to determine if the principal had received training on Georgia's A+ Education reform Bill, the No Child Left Behind legislation or the accountability specifications of IDEA 1997. Principals simply checked yes or no indicating their participation in training.

The major research question- What are the perceptions of principals and special education teachers in Georgia regarding principals' level of involvement pertaining to special education programs in their schools? The question was answered based upon the respondents' answers to Part III of the instrument. Measures of central tendency for each item in Part III were determined for principals and special education teachers.

Subquestion 1- What differences exist in the perceptions of principals and special education teachers regarding principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery? In depth statistical procedures were necessary. Inferential statistics consisting of t-tests for independent samples were utilized to determine whether differences existed between the mean scores of principals and special education teachers on each dependent variable. The level of significance applied was $p \leq .05$.

Subquestion 2- What is the relationship between selected variables of principal characteristics and the principals' involvement in the delivery of special education service? This question was addressed by analyzing the data provided through the principals' responses using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). Analysis

of covariance tests the main and interaction effects of categorical variables on a continuous dependent variable, controlling for the effects of selected other continuous variables, which covary with the dependent (Trochim, 2002). Only main effects were tested in these models due to small sample sizes.

Three variables of principal characteristics (gender, teaching certification, and experience) from section I of the instrument were used as covariates across the three dependent variables of curriculum, personnel, and program administration duties. Education level was entered as a factor because it was the only categorical variable with more than two levels. The level of significance applied was $p \leq .05$.

Subquestion 3 - To what extent do selected variables of a principal's school affect his or her level of involvement in special education services delivery? The question was addressed by analyzing the principals' data with ANCOVA. Selected school characteristics (grade level, percent of free and reduced lunches, school location, student population, model of service delivery, and number of special education students in the school) served as the independent variables for each dependent variable cluster to determine whether a relationship existed between the dependent and independent variables. Because the service delivery models (resource, inclusion, and self-contained) were not mutually exclusive, a variety of combinations could be present in each school resulting in small and unequal variance in group sizes. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the most frequently occurring combination of service delivery models. The variable service delivery model consisted of the following three combinations: resource and self-contained; resource, self-contained, and inclusion; and others, consisting of any other combinations that

may occur. The variables of free and reduced lunch percentage, number of students, number of special education students, and grade level were entered as covariates while the variable service delivery model was entered as a factor. To facilitate analysis of school location, two dummy variables were created. The first, called suburb was coded 1 if the school was located in a suburban location and 0 if the school was located outside a suburban area. The second indicator variable was labeled urban and was coded 1 if schools were located in an urban area and 0 if otherwise. The level of significance applied was $p \leq .05$.

Subquestion 4- What relationship exists in the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery and his/her knowledge of special education?

This question was addressed by analyzing the principals' responses to the cluster of seven items in Part IV of the survey using a Pearson Product Correlation. The level of significance applied was $p \leq .05$.

Subquestion 5- What training do special education teachers and school principals perceive as needed by school principals in the area of special education program delivery? Part V of the survey contained open-ended items related to training that might increase principals' level of involvement in special education services. Responses to the questions in Part V were categorized and frequency counts were conducted synthesizing patterns of answers and placing them into groups of responses.

Summary

The intent of this study was to analyze the level of involvement of Georgia's principals in special education programs in their schools. It was also intended to analyze the effects of selected characteristics of principals and schools on the principal's level of involvement in special education service delivery.

The data were collected by means of self-reported surveys sent to principals and special education teachers selected randomly. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) in order to answer the research questions posed.

CHAPTER IV

REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine principals' level of involvement in special education programs in their schools by surveying the perceptions of principals themselves and those of special education teachers. Also studied were selected characteristics of principals and their schools in order to see what relationship these variables had on their level of involvement.

Principals across all grade levels were surveyed as principals' involvement in special education programs may vary across grade levels. Data were collected on the principals' level of involvement through self reports and reports of special education teachers.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following major research question: What are the perceptions of principals and special education teachers regarding principals' level of involvement in special education programs in Georgia's schools? The following related sub-questions were also addressed:

1. What differences exist in the perceptions of principals and special education teachers regarding principals' involvement in the delivery of special education service?

2. What is the relationship between selected characteristics of principals and their level of involvement in special education service delivery?
3. Is there a relationship between selected characteristics of principals' schools and the level of involvement of school principals in the delivery of special education programs?
4. What relationship exists in the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery and his or her knowledge of special education?
5. What training do special education teachers and school principals perceive as needed by school principals in the area of special education program delivery?

Participants

The analysis of data concerning research participants was based upon the following information. A random sample of 200 principals consisting of 100 elementary principals, 50 middle school principals, and 50 high school principals was selected to participate in this study. Two hundred special education teachers were also selected across grade levels in the same proportion as principals, in order to compare the perceptions of the two groups on the principals' level of involvement in special education programs.

Analysis of selected characteristics of the participants and their schools were conducted and a summary is presented in Table 2. Of the 87 teachers that responded, 81% were female (n=70). Approximately 70% of the teachers had earned degrees beyond the bachelor's degree (n=60). Sixty-eight percent of the teachers were certified in special education (n=59). Approximately 70% of the teachers who responded had completed degrees beyond the bachelor's level.

Table 2

Comparison of Special Education Teachers and School Principals for Selected Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Teachers <i>n</i> = 87		Principals <i>n</i> = 133		χ^2
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Percent Female	70	80.5	63	47.4	24.09*
Special Education Certification	59	67.8	25	18.8	53.54*
Work at K – 5 th Grade School	26	29.9	68	51.1	9.70*
Work at 6 th – 8 th Grade School	28	32.2	30	22.6	2.51
Work at 9 th – 12 th Grade School	32	36.8	37	27.8	1.96
Resource Room Model	69	79.3	124	93.2	9.47*
Self-Contained Class Model	71	81.6	105	78.9	0.23
Inclusion Model	50	57.5	66	49.6	1.30

Note: *N* = 220.

* *p* < .05.

Of the 133 principals who responded, 63 or 47% were female. Eighteen percent were certified in special education (*n*=47). Seventy-one percent of principals had specialist degrees. Although the research questions did not focus on the demographic characteristics of the teachers, analyses were conducted and a chi-square was computed to determine how the principals and teachers differed with respect to education level, experience, certification areas, and gender. The results of these analyses are discussed in Chapter V. Tables 2 and 3 display the demographic comparisons for the two groups

based on chi-square tests of significance. Table 4 provides additional comparisons using t-tests for independent means.

The principals in this study when compared to the special education teachers were less likely to be female and have a special education certification. However, these principals were more likely to work in a K to 5th grade school and work at a school that used a resource-room teaching model. The principals in the study had more education (Table 3) but typically worked in smaller schools (Table 4).

Table 3

Comparison of Special Education Teachers and School Principals for Education Level and School Location

Characteristic	Teachers <i>n</i> = 87		Principals <i>n</i> = 133	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Education Level ^a				
Four-Year Degree	26	29.9	1	0.8
Master's Degree	35	40.2	17	12.8
Specialist Degree	24	27.6	95	71.4
EdD/PhD Degree	2	2.3	20	15.0
School Location ^b				
Urban	19	21.8	27	20.3
Rural	40	46.0	48	36.1
Suburban	28	32.2	58	43.6

^a $X^2(3, N = 220) = 80.36, p < .001$

^b $X^2(2, N = 220) = 3.10, p = .21$

Table 4

Comparison of Special Education Teachers and School Principals for Work Experience, School Size and Number of Special Education Students.

	Teachers		Principals		
	<i>n</i> = 87		<i>n</i> = 133		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> (218)
Years of Work Experience	8.1	5.2	8.6	5.9	0.66
School Size	1063.9	575.7	901.9	510.6	2.19*
Number of SE Students	85.0	52.6	75.7	41.4	1.45

Note. (N = 220)

* $p < .05$

SE = Special Education

Because the findings and discussion for each subquestion would lead to a more complete answer of the major research question, the subquestions were explored first rather than the order that is more customary. This development of findings and the discussion of those findings allowed a fuller understanding of the topic.

Subquestion 1: What differences exist, if any, in the perceptions of principals and special education teachers regarding principals' involvement in the delivery of special education service?

Findings

To address this question, a series of *t* tests for independent means were used to compare the teachers' and the principals' perceptions. The results of the *t*-tests are in Table 5. For all three comparisons, curriculum, personnel, and program administration duties, the mean perception rating for the principals was statistically higher than for the special education teachers.

Table 5

T-test Comparison of Perceptions of the Principal's Involvement and Knowledge Between Principals and Teachers

	Teachers		Principals		
	<i>n</i> = 87		<i>n</i> = 133		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> (218)
Curriculum Involvement ^a	1.0	0.9	1.7	0.8	5.79*
Personnel ^a	1.4	0.8	2.0	0.8	5.50*
Program/Administration ^a	1.4	0.9	2.0	0.9	4.93*

Note. *N*=220

* *p* < .05

^a Scale: "0" = "No Involvement" to "3" = "High Involvement"

In section III of the survey instrument each participant was asked to respond to 24 items, divided into areas identified in the literature as important in the delivery of special education services. Significant differences were found in all three of the categories accounting for 19 of 22 items on the survey. With regard to the categories of curriculum, personnel, and program duties, principals perceived themselves to be more involved with special education programs in their schools than the special education teachers reported.

The significantly different results between principals and special education teachers on individual survey items are presented in Table 5 and are summarized as follows:

- I) Curriculum Principals stated they were more involved in issues relating to curriculum than was perceived by special education teachers. Significant differences were found between principals and teachers on all items in this category $p < .001$. The greatest mean difference existed on question 4: attending IEP meetings. Principals perceived their involvement level to be of a moderate involvement, while special education teachers perceived the principals to be involved at a low level of involvement
- II) Personnel Principals described themselves as being significantly more involved in issues relating to personnel than was perceived by special education teachers on all items included in this category, $p < .001$. The greatest mean difference existed on item 12, orienting special education staff to the school.

III) Program administration Responsibilities Significant differences, $p < .001$ were found between the perceptions of principals and special education teachers in 10 of 12 program/ administrative activities: No significant difference was found in principals' perceptions and those of special education teachers regarding the principals' level of involvement in approving placements for students with disabilities in their schools.

Subquestion 2: What is the relationship between selected characteristics of principals and their level of involvement in special education service delivery?

Findings

Four principal characteristic variables were included in this analysis (gender, years of experience, education level and type of certification). The ANCOVA univariate analysis results are summarized and presented in Tables 6, 7, and 8.

As Table 6 shows, principals did not differ statistically in the level of involvement in curriculum after controlling for highest degree earned. The mean differences shown in Table 7, indicate that principals with a specialist degree reported the highest level of involvement in the area of curriculum, and principals with a master's degree reported the lowest involvement level. The principals' involvement level for the group with a master's degree was not statistically different from either the principals who held a specialist degree or doctorate degree. Overall, the educational level of the principal did not produce higher involvement levels in the area of curriculum. These results indicate that the more education received by a principal does not significantly increase the principals' involvement level in special education in the area of curriculum.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Principals' Education Level

Education Level	Mean	SD
Master's Degree (n = 18)	1.33 ^a	1.36
Specialist Degree (n = 95)	1.78 ^a	1.80
Doctorate (n = 20)	1.70 ^a	1.64

Note. ANOVA F= 2.15, MSE .650, p= .121, ns

TABLE 7

ANCOVA results for Principals' Level of Involvement in Curriculum Controlling for Gender, Teaching certification, Experience, and Education Level

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Gender	4.705	1	4.705	7.242
Area Certification	.417	1	.417	.641
Experience	.340	1	.523	.471
Education Level	2.791	2	1.396	2.148
Error	82.508	127	.650	
Total	480.680	133		
Corrected Total	90.508	132		

$R^2 = .09$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .05$)

*p < .05

Results of the ANCOVA are presented in Table 7. Only gender and experience were statistically related to the principals' level of involvement in curriculum.

Gender was statistically associated with the principals' involvement level in the area of curriculum indicating that female principals reported a higher level of involvement in the area of curriculum than their male counterparts. Female principals had a mean of 1.90 while male principals had a mean of 1.54 in the area of curriculum

involvement. Experience was also statistically associated with the principals' involvement in curriculum. The more experience principals had in their position, the higher their level of involvement. The covariate of teaching certification was not a significant predictor variable of the principals' level of involvement in the area of curriculum.

Personnel

As Table 8 indicated, principals differed statistically in their level of involvement in the area of personnel. Results of the ANCOVA for personnel are shown in Table 9. Only educational level of the principals was related to personnel involvement.

The adjusted means for involvement in personnel, and the mean differences among the three groups, shown in Table 10, indicated that principals with a specialist degree reported the highest level of involvement in the area of personnel, and principals with a master's degree reported the lowest involvement level. The principals' involvement level for the group with a master's degree was statistically different from either the principals who held a specialist degree or doctorate degree. Principals with a specialist degree were not statistically different in the level of involvement than principals who held a doctorate.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Education Level and Involvement Level in Personnel

Education Level	Mean	SD
Master's Degree (n = 18)	1.59	.79
Specialist Degree (n = 95)	2.12	.78
Doctorate (n = 20)	2.09	.63

Note. ANOVA $F = 4.20$, $MSE = .58$, $p = .02$

TABLE 9

ANCOVA Results for Level Of Involvement in the Area of Personnel by Principal Demographics

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Gender	1.18	1	1.18	2.04
Area Certification	.71	1	.71	1.23
Experience	.14	1	.14	.24
Education Level	4.80	2	2.40	4.17*
Error	73.18	127	.58	
Total	635.49	133		
Corrected Total	79.80	132		

$R^2 = .08$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .05$)

* $p < .05$

Table 10

Multiple Comparisons of Principals' Involvement Level in Personnel by Education Level

Comparison	Mean Difference	Standard Error
Master's vs. Specialist	-.53*	.20
Master's vs. Doctorate	-.51*	.25
Specialist vs. Doctorate	.002	.19

Note. Mean comparisons based upon ANCOVA adjusted means controlling gender, teaching certification, and experience.

$p < .05$, where alpha is adjusted using the Bonferroni method.

Program Administration

Overall, the educational level of the principal was related to the principals' level of involvement in the program administration area (Table 11). Mean scores for principals having a specialist degree were 2.02 while principals having a master's degree had a mean score of 1.40. Principals with a doctorate reported the highest level of involvement in the area of program administration duties. These results indicated that the principals with higher degrees were significantly more involved with special education service delivery in the area of curriculum.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics for Education Level and Involvement level in Program Administration Duties

Education Level	Mean	SD
Master's Degree (n = 18)	1.40	.99
Specialist Degree (n = 95)	2.02	.86
Doctorate (n = 20)	2.14	.68

Note. ANOVA $F = 4.81$, MSE .68, $p = .01$

Table 12 illustrates the principals' level of involvement in the area of program administration based on specified demographics of the principal. As illustrated in Table 12, gender was a significant predictor of the principals' involvement level in program administration duties. Females rated themselves higher in this area than male principals. The mean score for female principals was 2.19, while male principals had a mean score of 1.73. Neither area of certification nor years of experience was a significant predictor of the principals' level of involvement in the area of program administration.

TABLE 12

ANCOVA Results for Level of Involvement in the Area of Program Administration by Principal Demographics

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Gender	7.22	1	7.22	10.60*
Area Certification	.43	1	.43	.64
Experience	.98	1	.98	1.44
Education Level	6.48	2	3.24	4.76*
Error	86.45	127	.68	
Total	608.37	133		
Corrected Total	101.88	132		

$R^2 = .15$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .12$)

* $p < .05$

The ANCOVA results found in Table 13 includes the significance of the main effects variables selected for the model. The table also illustrates the observed variability for the model of $R^2 = .15$ and an adjusted $R^2 = .17$, indicating that 15% of the observed variability of the principals' level of involvement in program administration could be explained by the independent variables chosen for the model specification.

Table 13

Multiple Comparisons of Principals' Involvement in Program Administration by Education Level

Comparison	Mean Difference	Standard Error
Master's vs. Specialist	-.66*	.22
Master's vs. Doctorate	-.69*	.27
Specialist vs. Doctorate	-.002*	.21

Note. Mean comparisons based upon ANCOVA adjusted means controlling for gender, experience, and teaching certification.

* $p < .05$, where alpha is adjusted using the Bonferroni method.

Subquestion 3: Is there a relationship between selected characteristics of principals' schools and the level of involvement of school principals in the delivery of special education programs?

Findings

This question was addressed by analyzing the data provided through the principals' responses using Analysis of Covariance. Six independent variables were utilized to examine this question. These variables included the age ranges for the students, the percentage of free and reduced cost lunches, number of students, number of special education students, type of special education teaching model utilized and location. The continuous variables were investigated for multicollinearity and are summarized as follows.

The correlation between number of students and number of special education students was $r = .43$, $p < .05$. Given the size of the correlation, multicollinearity was not a problem for the models that follow.

Three separate regression analyses were conducted. The three variables Curriculum, Personnel Involvement, and Program Administration Involvement were the

dependent variables. For each analysis, the following blocks of variables were entered.

In the first block, the following variables were entered: the grade level, percentage of free and reduced price lunch, number of students, and number of special education students.

In the second block, the following variables were entered: model of service delivery, and a dummy variable representing school location.

A custom model specification, which allowed selection of the main effects and interactions that best fit the data was utilized for the analysis. The model specification included the level of involvement in each of the three identified areas (curriculum, personnel, and program) as dependent variables. The fixed factors included the model of special education service delivery in the principals' school and grade level of school. The covariates specified in the model included number of students in the school, number of special education students, percent of free and reduced price lunch, and location of school (urban or rural). The custom model allowed the researcher to specify factor by covariate interactions if necessary.

Curriculum

The adjusted means for involvement in curriculum, provided in Table 14, and the mean differences among the three groups, shown in Table 16, indicated that the principals' involvement level in the area of curriculum was related to the model of special education service delivery in their schools. The group that utilized a continuum of special education services in their schools had a higher mean score than the group that utilized the resource, self-contained only model.

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics for Principals' Involvement level in Curriculum by Special Education Delivery Model

<u>Special Education Delivery Model</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Resource, Self-contained, Inclusion (N=48)	1.75	.63
Resource and Self-contained (N=54)	1.41	1.01
Others (N=31)	2.17	.46

Note. Principal Data Only

ANOVA $F= 11.35$, $MSE .57$, $p= .00$

Results of the ANCOVA are presented in Table 15. Although not statistically significant, the number of special education students ($p=.06$) and percentage of free and reduced lunch ($p=.07$) was somewhat related to the principals' level of involvement. There was a main effect for the variable delivery models $p=.00$ indicating that principals were less involved in schools which utilized the self-contained model for special education service delivery. In the area of curriculum, no main effect was found for the school characteristics of grade level, school location, and number of students in the school on the principals' level of involvement.

TABLE 15

ANCOVA Results of Level of Involvement in the Area of Curriculum by School Characteristics

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Location	.40	1	.40	.70
Grade	.550	1	.55	.97
Students	.907	1	.91	1.60
SpecEd	.00016	1	.00016	.003
Percent	1.84	1	1.84	3.26
Delivery models	12.84	2	6.42	11.35*
Error	70.15	124	.57	
Total	480.68	133		
Corrected Total	90.51	132		

$R^2=.15$ (Adjusted $R^2=.12$)

* $p<.05$

Table 16

Multiple Comparisons of Principals' Involvement in Curriculum by Special Education Delivery Model

Comparison	Mean Difference	Standard Error
R. Sc, I vs. Others	.43	.18
R, SC vs. R, SC, I	-.34	.15
R, SC vs. Others	.77*	.18

Note: R, SC, I- Resource Self-contained, inclusion

R, SC- Resource, Self-contained

Note. Mean comparisons based upon ANCOVA adjusted means controlling for number of students, number of special education students, grade level, percentage of free and reduced lunch and location.

* $p<.05$, where alpha is adjusted using the Bonferroni method.

Personnel

As shown in Table 17, the variable service delivery model was statistically associated with the principals' level of involvement in the personnel area of special education service delivery.

The results found in Table 18, the test of between subject effects includes the significance of the main effects variables selected for the model. The table also illustrates the observed variability for the model of $R^2 = .15$ and an adjusted $R^2 = .12$, indicating that 15% of the observed variability of the principals' level of involvement in curriculum could be explained by the independent variables chosen for the model specification. Principals were more involved in the area of personnel in schools that were located in rural areas ($p=.03$). The number of students in the school was somewhat related to the principals' level of involvement in personnel ($p=.05$). The number of special education students was not significantly related to the principals' involvement level in the personnel area of special education. Neither grade level of school nor percentage of free and reduced price lunch was statistically associated with the principals' involvement level in personnel.

Table 17

Descriptive Statistics for Principals' Involvement level in Personnel by Special Education Delivery Model

Special Education Delivery Model	Mean	SD
Resource, Self-contained, Inclusion (N=48)	2.30	.52
Resource and Self-contained (N=54)	1.55	.84
Others (N=31)	2.51	.50

Note. ANOVA $F= 21.70$, $MSE= .42$, $p= .00$

Table 18

ANCOVA Results for Level of Involvement in Personnel by School Characteristics

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Location	.00	1	.00	.05
Grade	.01	1	.01	.18
Students	1.38	1	1.38	3.38
SpecEd	.01	1	.01	.02
Percent	.01	1	.01	.24
Delivery models	25.63	2	12.82	31.34*
Error	50.71	124	.41	
Total	635.49	133		
Corrected Total	79.80	132		

$R^2=.37$ (Adjusted $R^2=.32$)

The adjusted means for delivery models provided in Table 19 and the mean differences among the three groups indicated that in schools that utilized a combination of delivery models the principal's involvement level is higher than in schools that utilize only the resource/self-contained model. The mean for principals' level of involvement in schools that use the continuum of services was not statistically different from the others category. The mean level of involvement for principals in schools that utilized the "others" category was the highest when compared to the three groups in the area of personnel.

Table 19

Multiple Comparisons of Principals' Involvement in Personnel by Special Education Delivery Model

Comparison	Mean Difference	Standard Error
R. Sc, I vs. Others	-.24	.16
R, SC vs. R, SC, I	-.75*	.14
R, SC vs. Others	-.99*	.15

Note: R, SC, I- Resource Self-contained, inclusion

R, SC- Resource, Self-contained

Note. Mean comparisons based upon ANCOVA adjusted means controlling for number of students, number of special education students, grade level, percentage of free and reduced lunch and location.

* $p < .05$, where alpha is adjusted using the Bonferroni method.

Program administration Duties

As shown in Table 20, the variable special education service delivery models was statistically associated with the principals' level of involvement in the program administration area of special education service delivery.

The results found in Table 21, the test of between subject effects includes the significance of the main effects variables selected for the model. The table also illustrates the observed variability for the model of $R^2 = .30$ and an adjusted $R^2 = .25$, indicating that 30% of the observed variability of the principals' level of involvement in program administration could be explained by the independent variables chosen for the model specification.

Whether schools were located in suburb or rural areas was not a statistically significant predictor of the principals' involvement level in the program administration duties. Neither the number of students in the school nor the number of special education students were significantly related to the principals' involvement level in the program

administration area of special education. Percentage of free and reduced price lunch was not statistically associated with the principals' involvement level. Grade level of school was somewhat related to the principals' involvement level in the area of program administration duties of special education ($p=.07$).

Table 20

Descriptive Statistics for Principals' Involvement level in Program Administration

Special Education Service Delivery Model	Mean	SD	N
Resource, Self-contained, Inclusion	2.20	.52	48
Resource and Self-contained	1.48	1.033	54
Others	2.39	.63	31

Note. ANOVA $F= 18.60$, $MSE= .58$, $p= .00$

Table 21

ANCOVA Results for Level of Involvement in Program administration by School Characteristics

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Location	.70	1	.70	1.21
Grade	1.96	1	1.96	3.38
Students	1.42	1	1.42	2.45
SpecEd	.25	1	.25	.43
Percent	.36	1	.36	.62
Delivery models	21.54	2	10.70	18.60*
Error	71.79	124	.58	
Total	608.37	133		
Corrected Total	101.88	132		

$R^2=.295$ (Adjusted $R^2=.250$)

* $p<.05$

The adjusted means for delivery models provided in Table 22 and the mean differences among the three groups indicate that in schools that utilize a combination of delivery models, the principals' involvement level is higher than in schools that utilize the resource/self-contained model. The mean for principals' level of involvement in schools that use the combination of resource and self-contained was not statistically different from the others category. The mean level of involvement for principals in schools that utilized the "others" category was the highest when compared to the three groups. These results indicate that schools that utilize a continuum of services in special education service delivery have principals who are more highly involved in special education.

Table 22

Multiple Comparisons Principals' Level of Involvement in Program Administration by Model of Special Education Service Delivery

Comparison	Mean Difference	Standard Error
R, SC, I vs. others	-.23	.19
R, SC, I vs. R SC	.74*	.17
R, SC vs. Others	-1.01*	.18*

Note: R, SC, I- Resource Self-contained, inclusion

R, SC- Resource, Self-contained

Mean comparisons based upon ANCOVA adjusted means controlling for number of students, number of special education students, grade level, percentage of free and reduced lunch and location.

* $p < .05$, where alpha is adjusted using the Bonferroni method

Subquestion 4: What relationship exists, if any, in the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery and his or her knowledge of special education? was answered by analyzing the principals' responses to the cluster of 8 items in Part IV of the survey with the multiple regression method. A series of Pearson Product correlations compared eight indicators of background and knowledge with the principals' involvement in curriculum, personnel, program/administration plus the principals' total knowledge score. Inspection of Table 23 revealed all eight variables to be positively related to involvement and knowledge. These correlations were all significant at the $p < .001$ level.

Table 23

Relationship Between Principal's Background and Knowledge of Special Education with Special Education Service Delivery.

	Curriculum	Personnel	Program	Knowledge
Certification Areas ^a	.58	.56	.61	.73
Assistive Technology ^a	.65	.61	.62	.75
Allowable Caseloads ^a	.79	.80	.79	.86
Proper SE Documentation ^a	.77	.76	.79	.88
Discipline of SE Students ^a	.40	.45	.50	.59
Scheduling of SE Students ^a	.57	.60	.72	.81
Changes in Laws ^a	.37	.47	.57	.57
Accountability Training ^b	.32	.35	.39	.42

Note. Principal Data Only (n = 133).

^a Scale: "0" = "No Knowledge" to "2" = "Extremely Knowledgeable"

^b Point-Biserial Correlations: "0" = "No" "1" = "Yes"

SE = Special Education

** $p < .001$

Because knowledge was found to be such a strong predictor of the principals' involvement, a second analysis of subquestion 2 was conducted to determine what relationship existed if any between knowledge and the other independent variables. Knowledge was added to the model as a covariate using ANCOVA univariate analysis procedure.

Table 24 shows the results of the additional analysis that considered the association knowledge had on the principals' level of involvement in curriculum. The R^2 increased from .09 to .72 indicating that after the addition of knowledge to the model, 72% of the variability in the principals' involvement in curriculum could be explained. In personnel, the observed variability of the principals' level of involvement increased from 8% to 70% (Table 25). For the area of program administration (Table 26) the finding was similar with the observed variability of the principals' involvement increasing from 15% to 80%. This finding suggests the more knowledge the principal has in special education service delivery and related areas, the more involved he/she becomes in the areas of curriculum, personnel, and program administration development.

Table 24

ANCOVA Results for Principals' Level of Involvement in Curriculum Controlling for Gender, Teaching certification, Experience, and Education Level

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Gender	.01	1	.01	.05
Area	.00	1	.00	.00
Experience	.05	1	.05	.22
Education Level	.29	2	.15	.66
Knowledge	56.92	12	4.74	21.32*
Error	25.58	115	.15	
Total	480.68	133		
Corrected Total	90.51	132		

$R^2 = .72$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .68$)

* $p < .05$

Table 25

ANCOVA Results for Principals' Level of Involvement in Personnel Controlling for Gender, Teaching certification, Experience, Education Level and Knowledge

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Gender	1.42	1	1.42	7.49*
Area	.01	1	.01	.26
Years	.58	1	.58	3.05
Knowledge	49.32	1	49.32	260.33*
Education Level	.17	2	.01	.44
Error	23.87	126	.19	
Total	635.49	133		
Corrected Total	79.80	132		

$R^2 = .70$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .69$)

* $p < .05$

Table 26

ANCOVA Results for Principals' Level of Involvement in Program Administration Controlling for Gender, Teaching certification, Experience, Education Level and Knowledge

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Gender	.00	1	.00	.00
Area Certification	.36	1	.36	2.20
Years	.01	1	.01	.35
Know	65.76	1	65.76	403.61*
Educate	.56	2	.28	1.72
Error	20.53	126	.16	
Total	608.37	133		
Corrected Total	101.88	132		

$R^2 = .80$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .79$)

* $p < .05$

Subquestion 5: What training do special education teachers and school principals perceive as needed by principals to increase the principals' level of involvement in the area of special education program delivery?

This question sought information regarding types of training needed by school principals that might increase their level of involvement in special education service delivery indicated in Part IV of the survey. Table 27 presents the summary of responses for this question. Thirty-two of the 87 teachers responded to this question. Of the 32, twenty-four indicated that principals needed training in certification areas. Fourteen indicated that principals needed training in allowable caseloads. Ninety percent of the

teachers that responded to this item indicated that principals needed additional training in the laws relating to special education.

Of the 133 principals that returned surveys, 23 responded to this question. Principals most often cited that they needed more training on laws relating to special education (n= 12). Four principals stated that they needed training in special education documentation. Two principals indicated that they needed training in areas of certification. When given the opportunity to provide additional information relating to the principals' level of involvement in special education, teachers provided more information than principals. Teacher number 18 commented, "Principals go to the training and pretend that they really care and will do what is right and required by law.

They come back to school and tell the staff that we're doing this because we have to or we'll get in trouble." Teacher number 64 commented, "The only time principals are involved with special education is when they are going to get rid of a student. They always find the time to attend tribunals but they can't come to IEPs." Teacher number 11 stated, "My principal is the reason we have inclusion at our school. She used to be a special education teacher. We get time for planning and paperwork so no one is overwhelmed." Teacher number 41 stated "We have tried to use the inclusion model and our principal refers to it as intrusion."

Two principals, numbers 47 and 112 commented that they had delegated special education duties to their assistants. Principal number 56 commented that "I know I need to be more involved with special education especially now with all the new laws, but I don't feel like I am knowledgeable enough to be of any assistance."

Table 27

Teachers and Principals' Perceptions of Needed Training by Principals in Special Education

Area of Training	Number of Times Mentioned	
	N	Percentage
1. Certification areas		
Teachers	24	32
Principals	2	23
2. Caseloads/Class segments		
Teachers	14	44
Principals	0	0
3. Documentation		
Teachers	26	81
Principals	4	17
4. Special Education Law		
Teachers	27	84
Principals	12	52

The major research question was: What are the perceptions of principals and special education teachers regarding principals' level of involvement in special education programs in Georgia's schools?

Findings

To assess the special education teachers and principals' perceptions on the level of involvement of principals in special education programs, the researcher began by analyzing participants' responses to Part III of the survey consisting of items related to curriculum, personnel, and program administration duties. A mean score for each cluster of items was calculated with zero indicating no level of involvement to three indicating a high level of involvement (Table 6).

In the area of curriculum, mean scores for the teachers were 1.02 while principals had a mean score of 1.71 indicating that principals perceived their level of involvement to be greater than the perceptions of special education teachers. Similarly, in the areas of personnel and program administration duties mean scores indicated that principals perceived their level of involvement to be greater than the perceptions of the special education teachers. Mean scores for special education teachers in the area of personnel were 1.43 while principals had a mean score of 2.04. In the area of program/ administrative duties principals' mean scores were 1.95 while special education teachers had a mean score of 1.36. The means and standard deviations for individual survey items can be found in Table 28.

Table 28

Descriptive Statistics for Individual Survey Items

Item	Teachers N=87		Principals N=133	
	M	SD	M	SD
Addressing concerns	1.08	.98	1.81	.97
Providing input	1.13	1.13	1.94	1.02
Curriculum development	.80	.95	1.50	.87
Attending meetings	1.05	1.14	1.86	.97
Teaching strategies	1.02	1.06	1.45	1.11
Collaborative techniques	1.07	1.03	1.58	1.14
Interviewing	2.09	.97	2.43	.82
Evaluating SE teachers	1.85	1.08	2.60	.71
Promoting awareness of law	1.53	.89	2.20	.99
Designating inclusion	1.32	.98	1.92	1.00
Staff development	.99	1.02	1.51	1.03
Orienting SE staff	1.12	1.22	2.08	.96
Recruiting SE Teachers	1.54	1.70	1.93	1.09
Promoting acceptance of SE	1.85	.98	2.44	.92
Input as Team member	1.02	1.07	1.99	1.00
Guiding co-teaching teams	1.18	1.12	2.00	1.09
Reviewing modifications	1.40	1.06	1.99	1.01
Discipline of SE students	1.14	1.06	1.74	.99
Training for general ed	1.36	1.62	2.04	1.04
Placement of SE students	1.70	1.01	1.99	1.04
Planning for services	1.44	1.14	1.73	1.07
Reviewing progress	1.10	1.06	1.78	1.06
Testing of SE students	1.21	1.11	1.86	1.13

Summary

The data gathered in this study were analyzed to examine principals' level of involvement in special education programs in their schools by surveying the perceptions of principals themselves and those of special education teachers. To do this, the researcher solicited information related to the principal's involvement in three areas of special education service delivery. Information was also gathered relating to principals' knowledge of special education services and whether the principal had received any training in legislation related to accountability for special education students.

The researcher also studied the extent to which selected principal characteristics and school characteristics affected the principal's level of involvement in special education services in their schools. A discussion of the practical significance and implications of the findings of this study are included in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The original intent of The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) was to ensure that all children with disabilities receive a free, appropriate education. The actual outcome or product of the education was not a primary focus. Lawmakers and advocates assumed that guaranteed access and individualization would ensure good educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Unfortunately, as educators have examined the outcomes of special education, they have realized that for many youth with disabilities, the outlook was not optimistic. Reform efforts at the federal, state, and local level have begun to address the limitations of special education. The principal as the school leader is the person held accountable for the educational progress of all students. The principal needs to be involved in the delivery of quality special education to students, insuring that where appropriate, students with disabilities should be included in general education classrooms. Educational service delivery models for students with disabilities have been changing since the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (P.L. 94-142). Recently, educators have begun to embrace the concept of inclusive schooling as most appropriate for delivering services to students with special needs.

This study compared the perceptions of Georgia's principals and special education teachers concerning principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery in their schools. Also studied were selected characteristics of

principals and their schools in order to see what relationship these variables had on their level of involvement. The researcher attempted to find if the differences existed were related to the principals' level of involvement in the three areas of special education services.

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the level of involvement of Georgia's school principals in special education service delivery in their schools. The dependent variables were three specific categories related to service delivery for students with disabilities: curriculum, personnel, and program administration duties. Comparisons were made between principals' self-perceptions and those of special education teachers to investigate whether there was any difference in the perceptions of the principals' level of involvement between the two groups.

The analysis of data in this study revealed that principals rated their level of involvement in special education significantly higher than special education teachers did. The independent variables collected from principal data revealed that principals were rated as having a higher level of involvement based on gender, education level, and experience. Education level was related to the principals' involvement in the area of personnel while gender was related to the principals' level of involvement in program administration duties surrounding special education. Select characteristics of the principals' schools revealed that the number of students in the school, the type of model used for the delivery of special education services, and the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch were related to the principals' level of involvement in special education services. The principals' level of involvement in the

three areas was highly correlated with knowledge. Of the 133 principals who responded, only 32% reported having any training regarding accountability for students with disabilities.

Subquestion 1. What differences exist, if any, in the perceptions of principals and special education teachers regarding principals' involvement in the delivery of special education service?

Discussion

The review of literature revealed that the principal needed to be involved in three categories of special education programs: curriculum, personnel, and administrative duties. Section III of the survey instrument asked each participant to respond to 24 items, divided into areas identified in the literature as important in the delivery of special education services. Significant differences were found in all three of the categories accounting for 19 of 22 items on the survey. With regard to the categories of curriculum, personnel, and program duties, principals perceived they were involved to a greater extent with special education programs in their schools than the special education teachers reported. The significantly different results between principals and special education teachers are presented followed by a discussion of the possible explanation for the difference in the two groups.

Curriculum

Principals stated that they were more involved in issues relating to curriculum than was perceived by special education teachers. Significant differences were found between principals and teachers on all items in this category. The greatest mean difference existed on question 4: attending IEP meetings. Principals perceived their

involvement level to be of a moderate involvement, while special education teachers perceived the principals to be involved at a low level of involvement. This is consistent with the literature (Snell & Janney, 2000; NAESP, 2001; Wolery, Werts, Caldwell, Snyder, & Lisowski, 1995; Tanner, Linscott & Galis, 1996). While principals have been strongly encouraged to attend IEP meetings, Georgia has no existing directive to specify their involvement (Clarke, 2001).

Personnel

Principals described themselves as being significantly more involved in issues relating to personnel than was perceived by special education teachers on all items included in this category. The greatest mean difference existed on item 12, orienting special education staff to the school. As found in the review of literature, principals often report a higher level of involvement in the area of personnel than teachers (Sisson, 2000; Miller 1998; Maurizio, 2000). Maurizio (2000) found that principals were involved more in the area of personnel than other areas of special education.

Program Administration Responsibilities

Significant differences were found between the perceptions of principals and special education teachers in 10 of 12 program/ administrative activities: No significant difference was found in principals' perceptions and those of special education teachers regarding the principals' level of involvement in approving placements for students with disabilities in their schools. Both the teachers and the principals perceived principals to have low to moderate involvement on this item. As one principal stated, "It is not the job of one person to approve placements for a student." However, according to O'Neal (2000) and Weatherly (2001), principals do

need to be involved in the process. The case of Greer v. Rome City School District (11th Cir., 1991) illustrates the need for the principal to be involved in placement decisions. This finding also supports the literature (Burello & Wright, 1992; Krajewski & Krajewski, 2000).

Discussion

When making comparisons between groups, it is important to remember that perceptions are relative to the experiences the members bring with them. Different characteristics attribute to differing perceptions. A chi square analysis was done for the purpose of determining specific differences between the two groups. Tables 2 and 3 in Chapter IV displayed the demographic comparisons for the two groups based on chi-square tests of significance. Table 4 provides additional comparisons using *t* tests for independent means.

The principals in this study when compared to the special education teachers were less likely to be female and have a special education certification. However, these principals were more likely to work in a K to 5th grade school and work at a school that used a resource room teaching model (Table 2). The principals in the study had more education but typically worked in smaller schools (Table 3).

The disparity between special education teachers and principals may relate to differences in the perceptions of what “involvement means to each group”. Special education teachers may have different expectations about the principal’s responsibilities. Special education teachers may base their perceptions of the principal’s involvement in special education based on the individual nature of special education and the needs of each individual student. Principals may perceive that they

do everything possible to keep the special education program running smoothly. Differences in perceptions between principals and special education teachers may result in conflicts and miscommunication between the two. This situation could contribute to diminished effectiveness in the management and leadership of special education programs within schools. These findings were consistent with the findings of Miller (2000) and Maurizio, (1998).

Subquestion 2: What is the relationship between selected characteristics of principals and their level of involvement in special education service delivery?

Discussion

Variables of principal characteristics included in this study were: gender, years of experience, education level and type of teaching certification. A series of multiple regressions yielded significant differences in the following areas:

Gender

According to data collected from the principals, women rated themselves higher on the three dependent variables of curriculum, personnel, and program administration. However, statistical analysis revealed that gender was not a significant predictor of the principal's level of involvement in the delivery of special education services. These findings were similar to those found in the studies done by Miller (2000) and Maurizio (1998). Gender was not a predictor of the principals' involvement level in special education service delivery in either Miller's study or Maurizio's study.

Years of Experience

Years of experience did prove to be a significant predictor of the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery. This finding is consistent with the findings of Maurizio, (1998) and Miller, (2000). In the two previous studies, the principals' participation in inservice related to special education. Specifically, Miller and Maurizio found that principals with an average of 15 years experience were more supportive and involved in special education service delivery.

Education Level

Education level was found to be a predictor of the principal's level of involvement in special education service delivery, especially in the area of personnel. This is consistent with the findings of Gameros (1995). As principals' education level increases, their level of involvement in special education service delivery increases. The increased involvement level of principals in personnel could be related to recent legislation regarding the number of observations principals must complete on teachers employed in their schools. Principals are responsible for completing three observations on all teachers and therefore are more involved in personnel issues overall.

Type of teaching certification

The type of teaching certification of the principal was not significantly related to the level of involvement in special education service delivery. This would not be what one would expect and was not consistent with the literature (King, 2000; Miller 1992 and Bonds & Lindsay, 1992). Certification in special education has in other studies, been a predictor of the principals involvement level in special education

service delivery. One explanation for this finding could be the relatively small number of principals that held a certificate in special education.

Subquestion 3: Is there a relationship between selected characteristics of principals' schools and the level of involvement of school principals in the delivery of special education programs?

Discussion

The variables of principals' schools included: age ranges for the students, percentage of free lunches, number of students, number of special education students, type of special education teaching model utilized and school location. School characteristics were predictors of the principal's level of involvement. Specifically, the number of students in the school and the type of model of special education services used in the school was related to the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery. One would expect a principal to be more involved in schools where the inclusion model was the delivery model. The definition of inclusion lends itself to a higher involvement of the principal. The only studies that examined the relationship of school characteristics to the principals' level of involvement confirmed that grade level of the school was not found to be correlated with the principals' involvement (Maurizio, 2000; Miller, 1998).

Subquestion 4. What relationship exists, if any, in the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery and his/her knowledge of special education?

The eight indicators of background and knowledge were highly correlated with the principal's involvement in curriculum, personnel, and program

administration. A follow-up analysis on subquestion 2, with knowledge included as an independent variable, demonstrates the significance of special education knowledge in the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery. This was consistent with previous research (Winkle, 1994; Sisson, 2000; Hallahan & Kauffman, 2001). Previous studies that have examined various training approaches for principals in the area of special education demonstrated that principals grow in capabilities and sensitivity with regard to special education when they were provided appropriate experiences and knowledge. DeClue (1990) concluded that principals who were perceived as more effective in managing special education in their schools were actively involved with special education programs in their schools.

Local school districts assume the risk for due process hearings or any other litigation related to compliance with special education law. It is not the university or the state department of education nor even the principal who pays for this defense; it is the local school district. The local school district stands to benefit from being proactive in regard to facilitating adequate preparation of principals in the area of special education. If principals are appropriately prepared and understand the legal implications, as well as the programmatic elements of special education, their knowledge may assist their school district in avoiding costly lawsuits or due process hearings. Possessing a more thorough knowledge base would provide for more effective decision making on the part of the principals, which should benefit all students and programs. A leader who understands the nature of special education programs, the individual needs of students and the legal parameters in this area can better protect the resources of the school district and provide for better educational

experiences for all students. It could be argued that principals who are more involved in special education also become more knowledgeable. Therefore, it is difficult to know whether principal knowledge of special education precedes their involvement level or vice versa.

Subquestion 5: What training do special education teachers and school principals perceive as needed by school principals in the area of special education program delivery?

Discussion

The following discussion is based upon individual participant responses to open-ended items in Part V of the survey. Thirty-two of the 87 teachers responded to this question. Of the 32, twenty-four indicated that principals needed training in certification areas. Fourteen indicated that principals needed training in allowable caseloads. Ninety percent of the teachers that responded to this item indicated that principals needed additional training in the laws relating to special education.

Of the 133 principals that returned surveys, 23 responded to this question. Principals most often cited that they needed more training on laws relating to special education (n= 12). Four principals stated that they needed training in special education documentation. Two principals indicated that they needed training in areas of certification. Based on the teachers' detailed responses to the second open-ended question which asked for any additional information related to the principals' level of involvement, it may be concluded that teachers feel very strongly about the principals' lack of involvement in special education. Principals provided little feedback on this item. The comments by two principals that they delegated special

education duties may have been a personal justification for their lack of involvement in services provided to students with disabilities. The study conducted by Sisson (2000) related the delegation of special education duties to the principals' lack of knowledge regarding special education services. Overall, the information provided through this item indicated that there was no middle ground in this area. Teachers felt very strongly about the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery while principals indicated that they had absolved themselves of the responsibility by assigning the responsibility to assistant principals.

Conclusions

Conclusions drawn from the results of this study include:

1. Special education teachers and principals differ on the perceptions of the principal's level of involvement in special education service delivery.
2. Specific demographic characteristics such as education level and gender were related to principals' perceptions of their level of involvement in special education service delivery:
3. Knowledge of special education is the strongest predictor of the principal's involvement level with special education service delivery.
4. School characteristics such as socioeconomic status, grade level, and the number of special education students in the school were to a great extent, related to the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery. However, these variables were

not consistently related across areas of curriculum, personnel, and program administration.

Implications

It is the hope of this researcher that the findings in this study will identify reasons for Georgia's school principals' involvement in special education. The question of appropriate preparation was addressed by Sirotnik and Kimball (1994), who, following a national study of 23 administrator preparation programs, concluded that "special education and its relationship to general education is treated wholly inadequately, if at all, in programs designed to prepare school administrators, and it would appear that special education has no place at all in these programs" (p. 616). Lovitt (1993) noted that administrators receive little information on (a) analyzing and defending the philosophical and normative basis for arguments favoring different delivery systems (i.e., inclusive education); (b) identifying students with special needs; (c) organizing appropriate curricular experiences; and (d) facilitating relationships, responsibilities, and inservice training with and between general and special education teachers. Administrators must receive preparation in appropriate instructional approaches for students with disabilities. Future research should investigate what information administrators receive in preparation programs, along with what information is required to lead inclusive schools. Based upon the findings of this study, the following points should be considered.

1. Principals need more adequate training in special education service delivery.
2. Georgia needs to develop a consensus for the expectations of school principals regarding their special education duties.
3. Georgia needs to establish standards of involvement for principals relating to special education services.
4. Principals need to be provided information related to legislation in a timely manner.

Dissemination

The participants, most importantly, should review the results of this study. Georgia's principals and special education teachers need to be aware of the differing perceptions regarding the principals' level of involvement in special education service delivery. It is also important for special education directors, state department personnel and superintendents to be made aware of the findings in this study. For those who might be interested, the findings of this study will be available online at the following web address: www.gapprincipalsandinclusion.info

The differences in the perceptions of the principals' level of involvement in special education indicate a lack of communication between teachers and principals. In order to provide quality services to students with disabilities, steps need to be taken to clarify the expectations of principals regarding their level of involvement in special education service delivery. The Georgia Department of Education along with local districts need to specify and clearly articulate the responsibilities of the principal for the education of all students in their building.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based upon the findings of this study:

1. The Georgia Department of Education should develop a task force made up of principals, special education teachers, and parents to determine the specific activities and responsibilities expected of school principals in the delivery of special education services in their schools.
2. Further study should be conducted to determine the special education content necessary to prepare principals for managing and leading special education in their schools.
3. A comprehensive study should be conducted to determine the type and amount of in-service training being offered to principals by local education agencies.
4. A study should be conducted to determine if states that require special education training for leadership endorsement have less due process hearings and litigation relating to special education training.

The purpose of this research was to study the perceptions of teachers and principals regarding the principals' level of involvement in the delivery of special education services and what factors if any were related to the principals' involvement level. While limited in scope, this study illustrates the need for a consensus of the involvement level of principals in special education. An understanding of specific variables related to the principals' involvement level is a good starting point for providing principals with direction and training in the field of special education.

Principals in Georgia need to participate in activities that will increase their knowledge of special education service delivery. Modules such as those provided by Kennesaw State University and Valdosta State University should be expanded across Georgia to insure principals are aware of their needed involvement in the delivery of special education services. Providing needed training and the implementation of policy designating the principal responsible for day-to-day special education tasks is a starting place for the provision of a quality education for students with disabilities in Georgia's schools.

If inclusive practices are to be implemented in schools, much work will need to be done to prepare administrators for the changes that must take place. "Nearly all school district role descriptions stress the instructional leadership responsibilities of the principal facilitating change, helping teachers work together, assessing and furthering school improvement" (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998). If they are to be the instructional leaders and the developers of a school wide vision to implement truly inclusive schools, principals need to have a clear understanding of both additive and generative changes that must take place. Reform on this scale "cannot work by simply integrating special needs students into schools as they exist today" (National Association of State Boards of Education, 1992, p. 4).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PERMISSION TO USE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF PERMISSION TO DR. SISSON

March 9, 2002

Dr. Stephen Sisson
7978 N. Zarragoza Drive
Tucson, AZ 85704

Dear Dr. Sisson,

I am a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia. I am conducting research for my dissertation, and I am interested in obtaining your permission to use your survey. I can assure you that the survey will be used only to collect data necessary for my study.

I intend to collect and analyze data regarding the level of involvement of Georgia's principals in special education service delivery. I will survey a sample of Georgia's school administrators and special education teachers selected randomly. Upon completion of the study, the results will be documented on a website that may be accessed by the participants. If you are interested in the results of my study, I will be more than happy to send you a copy of my findings.

I would greatly appreciate your permission to utilize the survey instrument you developed.

Respectfully,

Marie Klofenstine

APPENDIX B

SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

APPENDIX B
PRINCIPALS' QUESTIONNAIRE
**The Level of Involvement of
Georgia's Principals in Special Education Programs**

This survey is designed to understand the extent Georgia's principals are involved in special education programs in their schools. Please complete the questionnaire and return it to the researcher in the envelope provided. Information gathered through this study will be available in August 2002 at the following web address: www.principalsandinclusion.info

Part I. Please mark the appropriate response that best describes you.

1. Gender ☐ Male
 ☐ Female

2. How many years have you been in your current position? _____

3. Highest Degree Earned:

_____ 4 year degree (BA/BS)
_____ Master's Degree
_____ Specialist Degree
_____ EdD/PhD
_____ Other (specify) _____

4. What is your area of teaching certification?

_____ special education _____ other

PART II. Please mark the response that most closely describes your school.

1. The school houses the following grade levels:

_____ K-5
_____ 6-8
_____ 9-12
_____ Other (please indicate)

2. What is the percentage of free and reduced lunch at your school?

3. The geographic location of the school is best described as:

_____ Urban _____ Rural _____ Suburban

4. Approximately how many students are in your school? _____

5. Approximately how many special education students are in your school, overall? _____

6. Please indicate the model of special education service delivery currently used in your school for students with disabilities. Please check all that apply.

_____ Resource room _____ Inclusion _____ Self-contained

PART III.

- A. Curriculum** Please circle the response that most closely corresponds with your level of involvement in the following tasks. Use the following scale:

*0-No Involvement 1-Low Involvement
2-Moderate Involvement 3-High involvement*

	No Involvement	Low Involvement	Moderate Involvement	High Involvement
1. Meeting with special education staff to talk about their needs, concerns, or curriculum issues on a regular basis.	0	1	2	3
2. Providing input as a disciplinary team member.	0	1	2	3
3. Reviewing curriculum development for special education programs in my school	0	1	2	3
4. Attending IEP meetings	0	1	2	3
5. Providing special and general educators training in current strategies designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities	0	1	2	3

- B. Personnel** Please circle the response that most closely corresponds with your level of involvement in the following tasks. Use the following scale:

*0-No Involvement 1-Low Involvement
2-Moderate Involvement 3-High involvement*

	No Involvement	Low Involvement	Moderate	High Involvement
6. Providing training in collaborative strategies to faculty	0	1	2	3
7. Interviewing and recommending certified applicants for special education positions in your school.	0	1	2	3
8. Evaluating special education staff in your school	0	1	2	3
9. Ensuring that all educators are aware of special education's legal requirements and procedures	0	1	2	3
10. Designating the teachers who will participate in the inclusion program	0	1	2	3
11. Suggesting topics for staff development and in-service training for special education staff	0	1	2	3
12. Orienting new special education staff to the school.	0	1	2	3

C. Program/Administration Responsibilities Please circle the response that most closely corresponds with your level of involvement in the following tasks. Use the following scale:

*0-No Involvement 1-Low Involvement
2-Moderate Involvement 3-High involvement*

	No Involvement	Low Involvement	Moderate Involvement	High Involvement
13. Recruiting special education teachers for vacant positions in your school.	0	1	2	3
14. Actively promoting the acceptance of special education programs by teachers in your school.	0	1	2	3
15. Providing teachers who collaborate in your school guidance and input regarding instructional issues.	0	1	2	3
16. Ensuring that modifications as outlined by the IEP are implemented by general education teachers in your school.	0	1	2	3
17. Working with teachers in your school to help them better address special education discipline issues in the classroom.	0	1	2	3
18. Providing training for teachers in your school who teach students with disabilities	0	1	2	3
19. Establishing positive relations with parents of students with disabilities in your school.	0	1	2	3
20. Approving placements for students with disabilities in your school.	0	1	2	3
21. Developing a plan to effectively provide services to students with disabilities in your school	0	1	2	3
22. Reviewing the progress of students with disabilities in your school	0	1	2	3
23. Participating in decisions made regarding individual students' participation in state mandated testing in your school	0	1	2	3

Part IV. Knowledge

On a scale of zero to three with zero being an area that you have no knowledge of and two being an area that you have a great degree of knowledge, please rate the following as to how knowledgeable you are in the specified area.

	No Knowledge	Somewhat knowledgeable	Extremely Knowledgeable
24. Certification Areas/EBD, SLD, OI, OHI, etc.	0	1	2
25. Assistive technology	0	1	2
26. Allowable caseloads/class segments	0	1	2
27. Proper special education documentation	0	1	2
28. Discipline of special education students	0	1	2
39. Scheduling of special education students	0	1	2
30. Changes in the law; i.e. accountability, standards	0	1	2
31. In 2001, President Bush signed into law legislation that addresses high standards for all students. This is in addition to Georgia's A+ Education Reform Bill and IDEA 1997. Have you received any training that addresses higher accountability for students with disabilities? _____ Yes _____ No			

Part V.

32. Referring to the seven items listed in Part IV, please list any training that might be advantageous to help you in increase your level of involvement in special education.

33. Please provide any additional information about the your level of involvement in special education programs that you wish to share with others.

Thank you again for your participation!

TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

The Level of Involvement of Georgia's Principals in Special Education Programs

This survey is designed to understand the extent Georgia's principals are involved in special education programs in their schools. Please complete the questionnaire and return it to the researcher in the envelope provided. Information gathered through this study will be available in August 2002 at the following web address:
www.principalsandinclusion.info

Part I. Please mark the appropriate response.

1. Gender _____ Male
 _____ Female

2. Number of Years in Present Position: _____

3. Highest Degree Earned:

_____ 4 year degree (BA/BS)
_____ Master's Degree
_____ Specialist Degree
_____ EdD/PhD
_____ Other (specify) _____

4. Area of Teaching Certification:

_____ Special Education _____ Other

5. Please indicate the model of special education service delivery currently used in your school for students with disabilities.

_____ Resource room _____ Self-contained _____ Inclusion*

PART II. Please mark the response that most closely describes your school.

6. The school houses the following
grade levels:

_____ K-5
_____ 6-8
_____ 9-12
_____ Other (please indicate) _____

7. The geographic location of the school is best described as:

_____ Urban _____ Suburban _____ Rural

8. What is the total population of your school? _____

9. Approximately how many special education students are in your school?

PART III.**A. Curriculum**

Please circle the response that most closely corresponds with your school principal's level of involvement in the following tasks. Use the following scale:

0-No Involvement 1-Low Involvement
2-Moderate Involvement 3-High involvement

	No Involvement	Low Involvement	Moderate	High Involvement
1. The principal of my school meets with special education staff to talk about their needs, concerns, or curriculum issues on a regular basis.	0	1	2	3
2. The principal of my school provides input as a disciplinary team member.	0	1	2	3
3. The principal of my school reviews curriculum development for special education programs in my school	0	1	2	3
4. The principal of my school attends most IEP meetings	0	1	2	3
5. The principal of my school provides special and general educators training in current strategies designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities	0	1	2	3

B. Personnel

Please circle the response that most closely corresponds with your school principal's level of involvement in the following tasks. Use the following scale:

0-No Involvement 1-Low Involvement
2-Moderate Involvement 3-High involvement

	No Involvement	Low	Moderate	High
6. The principal of my school provides training in collaborative strategies to faculty.	0	1	2	3
7. The principal of my school interviews and recommends certified applicants for special education positions in my school.	0	1	2	3
8. The principal of my school evaluates special education staff in my school.	0	1	2	3
9. The principal of my school ensures that all educators are aware of special education's legal requirements and procedures.	0	1	2	3
10. The principal of my school designates the teachers who will participate in the inclusion program.	0	1	2	3
11. The principal of my school suggests topics for staff development and in-service training for special education staff.	0	1	2	3
12. The principal of my school orients new special education staff to the school.	0	1	2	3
13. The principal of my school recruits special education teachers for vacant positions in my school.	0	1	2	3

C. Program/Administration Responsibilities

Please circle the response that most closely corresponds with the principal's level of involvement in the following tasks. Use the following scale:

*0-No Involvement 1-Low Involvement
2-Moderate Involvement 3-High involvement*

	No Involvement	Low Involvement	Moderate Involvement	High Involvement
14. The principal of my school actively promotes the acceptance of special education programs by teachers in the school.	0	1	2	3
15. The principal of my school provides teachers who collaborate guidance and input regarding instructional issues.	0	1	2	3
16. The principal of my school ensures that modifications, as outlined by the IEP, are implemented by general education teachers.	0	1	2	3
17. The principal of my school works with teachers to help them better address special education discipline issues in the classroom.	0	1	2	3
18. The principal of my school provides training for teachers who teach students with disabilities	0	1	2	3
19. The principal of my school establishes positive relations with parents of students with disabilities.	0	1	2	3
20. The principal of my school approves placements for students with disabilities.	0	1	2	3
21. The principal of my school develops plans to effectively provide services to students with disabilities.	0	1	2	3
22. The principal of my school reviews the progress of students with disabilities.	0	1	2	3
23. The principal of my school participates in decisions made regarding individual student's participation in state mandated testing.	0	1	2	3

Part IV. Principals' Knowledge Base

On a scale of zero to three with *zero being an area that you believe the principal has no knowledge of* and *two being an area that you believe the principal has a great degree of knowledge*, please rate the following as to how knowledgeable you believe the principal of your school to be in the specified area.

*0-No Knowledge 2- Somewhat knowledgeable
3-Extremely knowledgeable*

	No Knowledge	Somewhat Knowledgeable	Extremely Knowledgeable
24. Certification Areas/EBD, SLD, OI, OHI, etc	0	1	2
25. Assistive technology	0	1	2
26. Allowable caseloads/class segments	0	1	2
27. Proper special education documentation	0	1	2
28. Discipline of special education students	0	1	2
29. Scheduling of special education students	0	1	2
30. Changes in the law; i.e. accountability, standards	0	1	2

Part V

31. Referring back to the seven items listed in section IV, please list any training that might be advantageous to help increase their level of involvement in special education.

32. Please provide any additional information about the principal's level of involvement in special education programs that you wish to share with others.

Thank you again for your participation!

APPENDIX C

INITIAL LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

APPENDIX C

INITIAL LETTER TO PRINCIPALS and SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

4725 Walton's Circle
Evans, Georgia 30809

March 5, 2002

Dear Colleague:

My name is Marie Klofenstine. I am a special education teacher at Riverside Middle School in Evans, Georgia and am currently conducting research for my dissertation in the doctoral program in the College of Education at Georgia Southern University. My research focuses on the roles and level of involvement of Georgia's principals in special education. As a special education teacher, I believe this study will contribute valuable information regarding principals' involvement level in special education service delivery.

This letter is to request your assistance in gathering data for this study. My study will address the principal's background as well as school characteristics. Currently there is no information available that would affirm the role of the principal in Georgia's public schools. There is no penalty should you choose not to participate, but should you agree you will be providing valuable data.

If you agree to participate, please complete the enclosed questionnaire and mail it back in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided. Completion of the questionnaire will be considered permission to use your results in the study. While the envelope is coded to help with distribution needs, the questionnaire responses are entirely confidential. No one will be able to identify your response from other participant responses. While none of the questions are designed to solicit sensitive information, you may refuse to answer any of them.

If you have questions about this research project, please call me at (706) 863-3608. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study they should be directed to the IRB Coordinator at the Research Services and Sponsored Programs at (912) 681-5465.

Let me thank you in advance for your assistance in this study. The results should allow me to provide the education community valuable information that is currently unavailable.

Respectfully,

Marie Klofenstine

APPENDIX D

FOLLOW UP LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

APPENDIX D

FOLLOW UP LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

4725 Walton's Circle
Evans, Georgia 30809

March 12, 2002

Dear Colleague:

My name is Marie Klofenstine. I am a special education teacher at Riverside Middle School in Evans, Georgia and am currently conducting research for my dissertation in the doctoral program in the College of Education at Georgia Southern University. My research focuses on the roles and level of involvement of Georgia's principals in special education. As a special education teacher, I believe this study will contribute valuable information regarding principals' involvement level in special education service delivery.

This letter is to once again request your assistance in gathering data for this study. My study will address the principal's background as well as school characteristics. Currently there is no information available that would affirm the role of the principal in Georgia's public schools. There is no penalty should you choose not to participate, but should you agree you will be providing valuable data.

If you agree to participate, please complete the enclosed questionnaire and mail it back in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided. Completion of the questionnaire will be considered permission to use your results in the study. While the envelope is coded to help with distribution needs, the questionnaire responses are entirely confidential. No one will be able to identify your response from other participant responses. While none of the questions are designed to solicit sensitive information, you may refuse to answer any of them.

If you have questions about this research project, please call me at (706) 863-3608. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study they should be directed to the IRB Coordinator at the Research Services and Sponsored Programs at (912) 681-5465.

Let me thank you in advance for your assistance in this study. The results should allow me to provide the education community valuable information that is currently unavailable.

Respectfully,

Marie Klofenstine

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW-UP POSTCARD TO PARTICIPANTS

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW-UP POSTCARD TO PARTICIPANTS

**TIME IS RUNNING OUT!**

Please don't forget to return your survey

Have you completed the Principals' Involvement in Special Education Survey? If not please do so!

- To provide information about the principals' level of involvement in special education.
- Your response is needed to make the study more meaningful.
- All responses will remain confidential!

Marie Klofenstine
4725 Walton's Circle
Evans, Georgia 30809

APPENDIX F

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Georgia Southern University
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Phone: 912-681-5465
Fax: 912-681-0719

Ovrsight@gasou.edu

P.O. Box 8005
Statesboro, GA 30460-8005

To: Marie Klofenstine
Leadership, Technology and Human Development

Cc: Dr. T.C. Chan, Faculty Advisor
Leadership, Technology and Human Development

From: Mr. Neil Garretson, Coordinator
Research Oversight Committees (IACUC/IBC/IRB)

Date: March 20, 2002

Subject: Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After an expedited review of your proposed research project, and subsequent revision of the protocol, titled "The Level of Involvement of Georgia's Principals in the Delivery of Special Education Programs," it appears that the research subjects are at minimal risk and appropriate safeguards are in place. I am, therefore, on behalf of the Institutional Review Board able to certify that adequate provisions have been planned to protect the rights of the human research subjects. This proposed research is approved through an expedited review procedure as authorized in the *Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects* (45 CFR §46.110(7)), which states:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter. If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the exempted research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior to initiating any such changes or modifications**. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, please notify the IRB Coordinator so that your file may be closed.