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Principal and teacher actions to increase the academic achievement of students with disabilities

Barbara Liskey Driver
William & Mary - School of Education

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**PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER ACTIONS TO INCREASE THE ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Barbara L. Driver

April, 2000

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**PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER ACTIONS TO INCREASE
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

By

Barbara L. Driver

Approved April 12, 2000



**Chriss Walther-Thomas, Ph. D.
Chairperson of Doctoral Committee**



**Jill Burruss, Ph. D.
Committee Member**



**Lori Korinek, Ph. D.
Committee Member**

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**Principal and Teacher Actions to Increase
Academic Achievement of Students with Disabilities**

- ABSTRACT- This study utilized a qualitative, multiple-case study design. Data was collected in three school divisions and consisted of interviews, informal observations, and review of relevant documents related to the area of inquiry. Data was analyzed using a constant comparative method. Comparison to the literature revealed that of the four leadership components for standards-based reform-resources, goal-based action plan, professional development, and family and community partnerships-a goal-based action plan and family and community partnerships were missing from all three sites. Additionally, of the instructional components necessary for standards-based reform noted in the literature-high quality instruction, instructional accommodations, collaboration, and tailored instruction- only instructional accommodations were present in each of the three sites.

Chapter One

Introduction

In response to concerns about declining achievement levels (Finn & Ravitch, 1996; Itzkoff, 1994; Medrich & Griffith, 1992; Stedman, 1998; Stevenson & Lee, 1998), federal, state, and local educational reform policies have been designed to ensure students master high academic standards (Campbell, Voelkl, & Donahue, 1997). For example, states are developing rigorous curricular frameworks that include academic standards that define what students should know and be able to do. Large-scale assessments have been developed to measure the progress of students in meeting the academic standards. This process of “articulating challenging standards for all students and organizing curriculum, assessment, and other policies and practices to reinforce those standards” is called standards-based reform (Education Commission of the States, 1996, p. 7).

Standards-based reform is characterized by a number of changes when compared to past educational reform and accountability procedures. Reform, which once focused on inputs and processes, is now governed by achievement standards that define the knowledge and skills students must learn. Implementation of new curricula and assessments at the district and school level has been encouraged and funded by federal and state legislation and initiatives that emphasize improved academic outcomes for all students, including those with

disabilities (McDonnell, McLaughlin, & Morison, 1997). Accountability systems of the past, which focused almost exclusively on inputs such as funding and processes that included instructional methods and procedural compliance, have been replaced by ones designed to monitor outcomes (Elmore, Abelman, & Fuhrman, 1996).

Including students with disabilities in reform efforts that focus on higher academic standards represents a particular challenge for principals and teachers as they address the academic needs of all learners. Historically, special education and general education have pursued reform initiatives in a segregated fashion (Geenen, Thurlow, & Ysseldyke, 1995; National Association of State Boards of Education [NASBE], 1996). Thus, over the years, many students with disabilities have been excluded from large-scale assessments and accountability systems. As a result, information about what works best for these students in general education classrooms is negligible (McDonnell et al., 1997).

Statement of the Problem

While the literature and research suggest important leadership and instructional components related to achievement, actions of principals and teachers that best support the inclusion and academic achievement of students with disabilities in the context of standards-based reform are rarely reported (Ferguson, 1997; Waters & Cordell, 1997). Federal mandates, however, stipulate that students with disabilities be included in standards-based reform. Investigating this issue has

provided information to help close the gap between requirements of schools specified at the federal, state, and local levels and actions that help to realize the goals of standards-based reform.

Significance of the Study

Effective actions of teachers and principals related to instructional and leadership practices have been documented in the literature (Cawelti, 1987; Cotton, 1995; Goertz, Floden, & O'Day, 1996; Lambert, 1998; Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2000). Much of this literature, however, does not address special education issues such as the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education reform or specific actions of principals and teachers that increase achievement for all students in the context of standards-based reform. An even smaller amount of the literature includes research-based information (Celebuski & Farris, 1998; Louis & Miles, 1990; Massell & Fuhrman, 1994; Mitchell, 1996). No study to date specifically addressed the actions of principals and teachers that support the achievement of all students in meeting more rigorous academic standards.

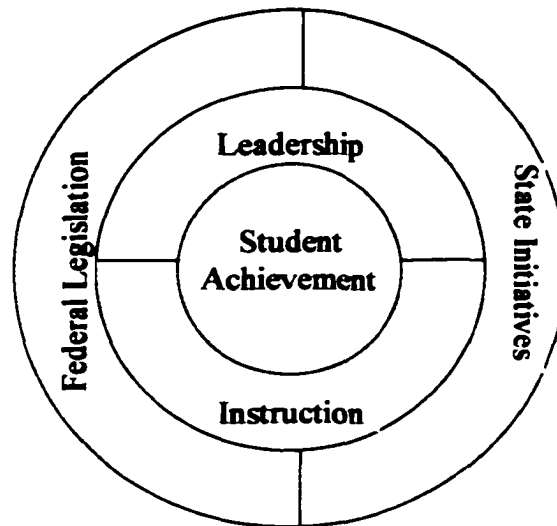
The purpose of this study was (a) to add to existing knowledge of leadership and instructional practices that lead to improved outcomes for all students, (b) to provide in-depth descriptions of the actions of principals and teachers, and (c) to analyze these actions in comparison to established

understandings about effective leadership and instructional practice. To some degree, most states are involved in standards setting and development of accountability systems to measure success at improving student achievement (Glidden, 1998). As federal, state, and local initiatives compel principals and teachers to promote the successful inclusion of all students in reform in the areas of standards and assessments, information that can begin to provide some guidance is critical.

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study was developed through review and analysis of research and literature related to the influences that have an impact on improved academic achievement within the context of standards-based reform. Reform refers to “an approach . . . that sets standards of performance in designated subject areas as a means of strengthening the content of school curricula . . . [to] improve student achievement (McDonnell et al., 1997, p. 253). As Figure 1 illustrates, four elements of standards-based reform derived from the literature form the primary influences on student achievement: (a) federal legislation, (b) state initiatives, (c) leadership methods, and (d) instructional practices. Federal legislation and state initiatives establish the parameters within which principals and teachers fashion organizational routines and classroom practices. Actions of principals (leadership)

Figure 1. Elements of standards-based reform.



and action of teachers (instructional practices) formed the focus of this study. Data from the literature and research analysis pointed to the following as critical components of the process of effective leadership and instruction for including all students in standards-based reform:

Effective leadership actions:

- 1. Supplying resources to accomplish goals (McDonnell et al., 1997; Miles & Darling-Hammond, 1997; Odden, 1999; Parker & Day, 1997; Tourgee & DeClue, 1992)**
- 2. Providing goal-related professional development (Copenhaver, 1997; Imel, 1989; McDonnell et al., 1997;**

Rainforth, 1996; Rothman, 1996; Scheidler, 1994; Sparks, 1997; Wehlage, Smith, & Lipman, 1992)

- 3. Articulating and implementing a goal-based plan of action (Goertz et al., 1996; Hesselbein, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 1996; Louis & Miles, 1990; Massell, Kirst, & Hoppe, 1997; Mizell, 1996; Schmoker, 1996), and**
- 4. Cultivating community and parent partnerships (Lashway, 1995, 1996; National Association of Elementary School Principals [NAESP], 1996; Ysseldyke, Thurlow, & Geenen, 1994).**

Effective instructional actions:

- 1. Tailoring instruction (Campbell & Campbell, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Gardner, 1987; Noyce, Perda, & Traver, 2000; Schrag, 1999; Sternberg, 1997; Vaughn et al., 2000)**
- 2. Providing high-quality instructional techniques (Blakely & Spence, 1990; Collins, 1994; Deshler & Schumaker, 1993; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; McKeown & Beck, 1999; Schumaker, Deshler, & Ellis, 1986)**

3. **Providing instructional accommodations (Benninghof & Singer, 1995; Heron & Jorgensen, 1995; Newman & Wehlage, 1993; Rosenshine & Stevens, 1986; Udvari-Solner, 1995), and**
4. **Collaborating with others (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Lambert, 1998; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Vaughn et al., 2000; West & Idol, 1987).**

Overarching Question

The overarching question for this study was: What actions of principals and teachers best support the academic achievement of students with disabilities in an era of standards-based reform?

General Design of the Study

To examine the overarching question a multiple-site, interpretive qualitative case study design was used. This design was chosen because the researcher wished to both provide thorough descriptions of the cases and conceptualize the various approaches taken by principals and teachers. Within-site and cross-site analysis using a constant comparative method of analysis was conducted (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Janesick, 1994). This information was then analyzed in comparison to the literature and research related to effective leadership and instructional practices.

Study Delimitations

This study was delimited in the following ways:

- 1. The study was limited to the actions of principals and teachers in including and supporting the achievement of students with disabilities in standards-based reform; thus, roles of other staff members such as the assistant principal, support service providers such as the speech therapist, or instructional assistants were not represented.**
- 2. The researcher selected school districts in one state because of its active engagement in standards-based reform; thus information from only one geographical area was represented.**
- 3. The researcher selected schools based on nominations from directors of special education and the assistant superintendent of instruction and/or their designees; only schools meeting nomination criteria were included.**
- 4. At each site, three general education teachers and one special education teacher volunteer were selected; therefore, all teachers were not represented.**

5. The study was designed to describe the phenomenon of standards-based reform in the voice of the participants as it existed at one point in time. Application of the results of this study is limited in terms of generalizability in that the data were not analyzed for the purpose of making projections. Rich descriptive details, however, provide a basis for readers to make determinations about the applicability of the information to other situations.

Operational Definitions

Accommodations – changes made to content delivery, materials, or assignments (Stainbeck & Stainbeck, 1992).

Accountability – the concept of holding schools, administrators, teachers, and/or students responsible for students' academic performance (McDonnell et al., 1997).

Coactive interactions – exchanges between educators that include collaborative, collegial, and hierarchical interactions (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 1993).

Collaborative interactions - teachers working in partnership characterized by mutual responsibility for students (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1995).

Content standards – standards that describe what teachers are supposed to teach and students are supposed to learn (Ravitch, 1995).

Enabling – removing obstacles that prevent individuals from meeting their commitments and providing resources and support to help them to meet their obligations (Sergiovanni, 1996).

Hands-on activities – activities that allow the manipulation of instructional materials (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 1993).

Inclusion - a situation where students with disabilities receive specially designed instruction in settings with their nondisabled peers with special education supports and services provided as needed (Vaughn et al., 2000).

Inclusive standards-based reform – reform where all students are considered part of the school community and the information about how, and whether, all students are benefiting from educational programs is essential, not simply desirable (Yell & Shriener, 1996).

Initiative - a program, project, or plan (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 1993).

Leadership - the “process by which the actions of people within a social organization are guided toward the realization of specific goals” (Krug, 1992, p. 430).

Learning strategies - instruction that helps students make connections with the general education content by teaching them how to effectively and efficiently

acquire information, store it, and demonstrate their understanding (Schumaker et al., 1986).

Managing – ensuring the necessary day-to-day support that keeps a school running effectively and efficiently (Sergiovanni, 1996).

Mission - reflects the fundamental purpose of the organization (DuFour & Eaker, 1998); provides a compass for generating direction for the school (Hesselbein, 1996).

Mission statement – articulates a school’s purpose and commitments and defines a direction for accomplishing goals (Hesselbein, 1996).

Opportunity-to-learn standards – related to sufficiency of resources, practices, and conditions necessary to provide all students with the opportunity to learn (McDonnell et al., 1997).

Performance standards – operationalize what students must do to demonstrate proficiency in knowledge and skills as outlined in content standards (National Education Association, 1997).

Pedagogy – instructional methods (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 1993).

Standards-based education – ways of thinking or operating schools that ensure that all students achieve defined and challenging standards of performance (Hill & Crevola, 1999).

Standards-based reform – the process of articulating challenging standards for all students and organizing curriculum, instruction, assessment, and other policies and practices to reinforce those standards (Education Commission of the States, 1996).

Strategy – an approach to a task (Deshler & Shumaker, 1993).

Supervising – providing the necessary oversight to ensure a school is meeting its commitments, and when it is not, to find out why and to help everyone do something about it (Sergiovanni, 1996).

Synergistic – joint actions that produce effects greater than the sum of individual actions (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 1993).

Tailored instruction – instruction that takes into account knowledge about student readiness, learning styles, and cognitive strengths (Schrag, 1999).

Unified policy - the alignment of state and local policies with the reform vision (Goertz et al., 1996).

Vision – an ideal and unique image of the future (Kouzes & Posner, 1996).

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

Concerns over declining levels of student achievement have been expressed over the past two decades (Finn & Ravitch, 1996; Itzkoff, 1994; Medrich & Griffith, 1992; Stedman, 1998; Stevenson & Lee, 1998). In response to these concerns, educators and policy makers, among others, have intensified their focus on ascertaining the best means for improving educational results (Campbell et al., 1997; Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1996; Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994; National Education Association [NEA], 1997). In a majority of states, changes in curriculum and testing have been implemented as the conduit for realizing improved educational outcomes. Thus, implementation of new curricula and assessments at the district and school level has been encouraged and funded by federal and state legislation and initiatives that emphasize improved academic outcomes for all students (McDonnell et al., 1997). These changes are part of a movement known as standards-based reform, the “process of articulating challenging standards for all students and organizing curriculum, instruction, assessment, and other policies and practices [to] ... reinforce those standards” (Education Commission of the States, 1996, p. 7).

Against the backdrop of these changes, educators are beset with issues related to implementing standards-based reform and what it might mean for schools and students, including those with disabilities. For example, standards-based reform poses challenges such as utilization of instructional practices that are both compatible with the standards and supportive of all learners. A second challenge relates to balancing established effective leadership practices, such as ensuring applicable professional development opportunities, and new leadership practices, such as successfully including students with disabilities in reforms that promote student mastery of rigorous academic standards (Goertz et al., 1996; Massell et al., 1997; McGregor & Vogelsberg, 1998). Two overarching issues, then, underscore the complexity of standards-based reform: (a) the successful inclusion of all students (i. e., students with disabilities) in standards-based reform efforts, and (b) the school level actions of educators that best support inclusive standards-based reform.

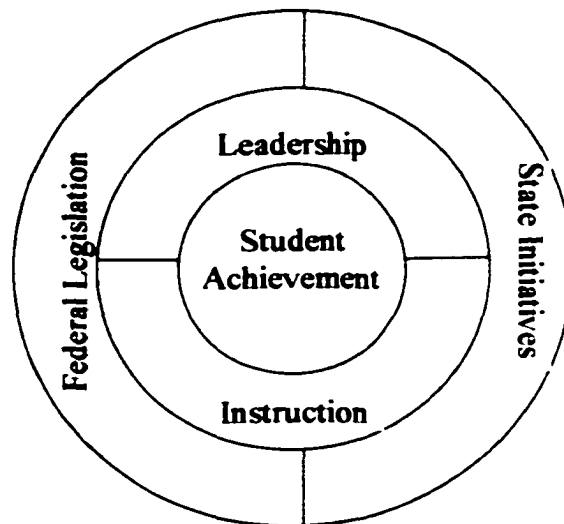
Organization of the Literature Review

Four areas of focus for this chapter are depicted in Figure 2. Federal legislation and state initiatives that provide direction for inclusive standards-based reform will be discussed. Specific leadership and instructional practices that are responsive to the direction provided at the federal and state level will be described in relation to improving student achievement. The chapter will be divided into two

sections: (a) a review of recent literature and research that supports the framework for the study illustrated in Figure 2 and provides further insight related to standards-based reform, and (b) a discussion of issues related to inclusion of students with disabilities and the actions of principals and teachers in supporting increased achievement for these students.

The chapter begins with a description of past reform efforts and influences on the current standards-based reform movement. Traditional general and special education accountability and elements of changing accountability frameworks will be described. A discussion of inclusive standards-based reform and building level and classroom-based processes supportive of improved student achievement will conclude the chapter.

Figure 2. Components of inclusive standards-based reform.



Educational Reform

Past reform efforts have focused on inputs such as funding and teacher preparation, processes including teaching methods and student grouping, and outputs such as student achievement levels and graduation rates or a combination thereof (Massell & Fuhrman, 1994). Knowledge of the factors that successfully or unsuccessfully influence the ultimate outcomes of these reforms is valuable for understanding current reform efforts and establishing appropriate strategies for effective implementation. For example, by utilizing aspects of past reforms that have improved student performance, and at the same time avoiding mistakes made in the past, principals and teachers can increase the probability that achievement can be improved in the present (Sarason, 1993).

Influences on Past Educational Reform

Major reforms in the second half of the 20th century were heralded by two significant events that drew attention to student achievement: the launching of the first Soviet Sputnik satellite and the publications of A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and A Time for Results (National Governor's Association, 1986). Following the launching of Sputnik in 1957, the capabilities of the United States to remain in a world leadership position were called into question. Public schools were blamed for creating conditions whereby the United States fell behind the Soviet Union in the race into space (DuFour &

Eaker, 1998). Educational systems responded by focusing on raising standards, particularly in mathematics and science (Kirst, 1990; Ravitch, 1995). However, pessimism about the quality of education and concerns that student achievement levels were declining persisted.

Almost a quarter of a century later another catalyst, the publication of the landmark report A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and the publication three years later of Time for Results (National Governors' Association, 1986) corroborated suspicions about low student performance. Subsequently, education reformers called for a shift from inputs and processes to a greater focus on educational outcomes (National Association of State Directors of Special Education [NASDSE], 1993b). States responded to the new focus on outcomes by raising standards for teachers and students and reconsidering the appropriateness of current assessments (Center for Policy Research on the Impact of General and Special Education Reform [CPRIGSER], 1996). In 1989, the nation's governors came together at a summit meeting to articulate national goals and standards and in doing so laid the groundwork for the development and articulation of more challenging subject matter and more stringent competency assessments attempted by many school divisions across the United States.

Unfortunately, many of the policies related to higher teacher and student standards in the past have been disjointed and have had little impact on improving outcomes for students (Ravitch, 1995). To cite a specific instance, some states granted emergency licensure waivers to minimize teacher shortages while at the same time making teacher licensure requirements more stringent in these states (Fuhrman, 1994). Despite the focus on higher standards for students, fragmented policies and practice have made translating standards into practice problematic (Marzano, 1997).

Overall, successful school restructuring that improved educational outcomes thus far has been minimal (Brandt, 1995; Fullan, 1991). Restructuring denotes long-term systematic, structural change (Baldwin, 1993). Changes in governance from central office to site-based management, changes in organizational work structures such as, roles and responsibilities of teachers, and changes in professional development policies illustrate restructuring activities. A recent study by the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools of 24 schools across the United States engaged in restructuring indicated that only about 10% of the schools had been successful in restructuring themselves (Brandt, 1995).

Critics of reform and restructuring cite many reasons for the failure of reform and restructuring attempts to make a significant impact on improving

schools. A reluctance to change is one reason. Restructuring, which implicitly means changes are needed, requires a departure from conventional ways of doing things (Brandt, 1995; Sarason, 1998). This type of educational change is an intricate process. It requires participation of those who will potentially be affected and enough time for the effects of change to be realized (Fullan, 1994; Rallis & Zajano, 1997).

A second reason why past reform movements have failed is an almost exclusively “top-down approach” to decision making (Fullan, 1991). That is, school stakeholders such as teachers and other staff and families were not provided with information and training that would facilitate the change process and promote local support for restructuring around school goals. On the other hand, many exclusively “bottom-up” strategies have not worked in the past for a variety of reasons including inadequate time to develop effective site-based decision-making teams, limited inservice to stakeholders, and poor information sharing with schools regarding state laws and regulations that have an impact on restructuring efforts (Fullan, 1994; Sheane & Bierlein, 1992). Both centralized forces in the form of state and local policies and decentralized forces such individual school improvement plans need to converge in a complementary manner to improve conditions for teaching and student learning (Fuhrman, 1999; Fullan, 1999).

Standards-based Reform

Present educational reform efforts are characterized by increased involvement of the federal government in issues related to student outcomes, a shift in focus by state-level policymakers from processes to outcomes, and reorganization of curriculum and instruction in ways that support state-defined student outcomes at local levels (Geenen et al., 1995). One of the most striking differences between past efforts to increase achievement and present reform is terminology calling for the inclusion of all students (Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 [Goals 2000], Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 [IASA], Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 [IDEA 97]).

Federal Influences on Current Standards-based Educational Reform

Recent federal initiatives have been designed to ensure that outcomes improve for all students in the nation's schools. In a departure from most past legislation devoted to general issues of education, students with diverse learning needs (e.g., students with disabilities) are mentioned specifically in two major statutes that have codified the goals of standards-based reform: Goals 2000 and IASA. A third law, IDEA 97, will also be discussed with regard to recent changes that have implications for standards-based reform.

Goals 2000: Educate America Act. This legislation outlines eight national goals addressing school readiness, competencies in nine academic areas,

citizenship, productive employment, teacher professional development, and family participation. This legislation provides a small amount of funding to states that adopt the goals for use in establishing challenging standards, professional development, and assessments. Within the legislation, specific attention is given to the inclusion of all students in reform efforts resulting from Goals 2000 initiatives: “The term ‘all students’ and ‘all children’ ... [includes] students or children with disabilities” (Public Law 103-227, Sec 3 [1]).

The Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 (IASA). This act supported the initial efforts of Goals 2000 while extending the focus on educational goals. While the federal influence of Goals 2000 is limited given that implementation responsibility is left to local education agencies, IASA contains requirements that states must meet in order to receive federal funds under Title 1, the largest federal school aid program (McDonnel et al., 1997). For example, IASA requires states to consider the unique needs of students at risk. Specifically, provisions must be made to ensure that these students do not fail to meet challenging standards because of inadequate instruction and support. Tying these requirements to the issuance of federal funds serves to reinforce the government’s policy direction toward standards-based reform.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA 97). In 1997, legislation was passed that reauthorized and amended the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act. The amended act brought many changes to the original law (the Education for All Handicapped Children Act), which guaranteed eligible children and youth with disabilities a free appropriate education. Two of these changes in the amended IDEA 97 have implications for standards-based reform. First, the amended law incorporates an increased emphasis on the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings. In states where curriculum is standards-based, students will consequently be accountable for information taught in the general education classroom. This expectation sets the stage for the second implication: IDEA 97 requires states to include students with disabilities in state and districtwide assessment programs with accommodations where appropriate. Both of these changes make clear the expectation that, to the extent possible, students with disabilities are expected to participate in the general education curriculum and in assessments required by general education accountability systems (National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities [NICHCY], 1998).

State-Level Influences on Current Standards-based Reform

Recently, many state initiatives related to increasing student achievement through higher standards have been enacted. Almost every state is engaged in standards setting to some degree although the terminology varies (e.g., goals, standards, guidelines, expectations), as does the degree of specificity of the

resulting standards (Glidden, 1998). For example, some standards are simply general outcomes for students at the elementary, middle, and high school level. Other states prescribe specifics such as literature to be covered at each grade (Massell et al., 1997; NASDSE, 1997). There are three broad types of standards: (a) opportunity to learn standards, (b) content standards, and (c) performance-based standards.

Opportunity to learn standards. This type of standard relates to “sufficiency of resources, practices, and conditions necessary ... to provide all students with opportunity to learn” (McDonnell et al., 1997, p. 23). Opportunity to learn (OTL) standards focus on inputs or the degree to which all students receive equitable and adequate instruction for learning content. Among states that have OTL policies, approaches such as tutoring programs and focusing on professional development have been used. This emphasis on sufficiency of services has made OTL standards highly controversial because of potential litigious consequences related to levels of state spending. Final Goals 2000 legislation allowed states to include this type of standard on a voluntary basis. Typically, states and local education agencies (LEAs) include only content and performance standards. Both of these relate to educational outputs by describing essential content students must know and how content mastery should be demonstrated.

Content standards. These standards “describe what teachers are supposed to teach and students are expected to learn” (Ravitch, 1995, p. 12). A content standard might be stated as “The student will write narratives, descriptions, and explanations.” Content standards outline expectations for student learning and thus provide the essential first steps for designing instructional programs. The development of content standards has been controversial. Special interest groups, policymakers, and educators have debated what information is most important for students to learn (Consortium for Policy Research in Education [CPRE], 1993; Consortium on Inclusive Schooling Practices [CISP], 1998). The complexity of this issue is apparent when considering the inclusion of students with disabilities in standards-setting discussions. States need to strike an intricate balance between articulating high expectations for all students and allowing for enough programmatic flexibility to consider outcomes for students with disabilities and other unique needs (CISP, 1998).

Performance standards. The operationalization of what students must do to demonstrate proficiency in knowledge and skills as outlined in content standards is termed a performance standard (NEA, 1997). Performance standards specify what is considered proficient in terms of performance. For example, the performance standard, “Expand and embed ideas by using modifiers, standard coordination, and subordination in complete sentences,” establishes expectations

for performance by clarifying what students must demonstrate in order to perform at the established standard.

Most performance standards require that student performance be measured against absolute standards. That is, instead of measuring performance against general categories of achievement, newer performance standards use absolute measures to gauge performance against very specific standards. This raises implications for students with disabilities. For example, absolute performance expectations leave little room for variances in student readiness and ability levels. Several alternatives to absolute performance standards include judging progress (Fuhrman, 1999) and differentiation of policies (DeBray, 1999).

Assessment. In addition to standards development, an increasing number of states are developing statewide assessments to measure student progress toward meeting new standards. Several aspects of large-scale assessments require careful consideration by states. According to Linn and Herman (1997), one of those considerations is alignment of assessments that determine how well students are meeting established standards with the standards they intend to measure. Alignment of standards and assessment is best achieved when assessment development follows standards development. This may require states to cease using previous assessments and create new ones (Linn & Herman, 1997).

Accountability in Educational Reform

The ascendant role of standards and related assessments in improving outcomes for all students requires states and districts to reconsider their accountability practices. Accountability is “The concept of holding schools, administrators, teachers, and/or students responsible for students’ academic performance” (McDonnell et. al, 1997, p. 249). According to Roach, Dailey, and Goertz (1997), accountability occurs on two levels: the system level and the student level. Traditionally, system accountability has consisted of monitoring state and district responsibilities such as maintaining compliance with regulations and providing necessary resources. Student accountability, on the other hand, has referred to the measurement of learning.

Traditional General Education Accountability

In the past, system accountability in general education has focused on inputs and processes based on the rationale that the provision and monitoring of certain resources such as per-pupil funding allocations or processes such as administering programs in compliance with regulations would lead to student learning (Roach et al., 1997). From the 1960s to the 1980s, general education accountability developed based on behaviorist notions that teachers and students could be managed through policy and bureaucratic control of inputs and processes. That is, given highly centralized management policies that quantified both the

infrastructure for schooling and educational programs, schools would become more efficient, equity in terms of resources would be achieved, and achievement for all students would improve. During the past three decades these policies included making teacher certification more stringent and mandating curricula that standardized learning. System accountability consisted of summative evaluation of programs that took these policies into account. Minimum competency testing was used for student accountability (Macpherson, 1996). In many communities results of these large-scale standardized tests have been publicly reported (Roach et al., 1997). Unfortunately, standardized tests have not been aligned with school curricula in many instances and thus have provided limited information regarding student success for purposes of program improvement (Macpherson, 1996).

Traditional Special Education Accountability

Special education accountability, like that of general education, has focused on inputs and processes. Monitoring compliance with the plethora of regulations that govern special education has comprised the focus of special education system accountability (Geenen et al., 1995). Monitoring has focused on oversight of inputs such as teacher qualifications, numbers of students qualifying for special education, and process procedures such as access to services and placement in the least restrictive environment (Roach et al., 1997; Warren & McLaughlin, 1996). The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) has served as the student accountability

tool in the past despite its limited utility. For example, Shriner, Kimm, Thurlow, and Ysseldyke (1993) examined 76 IEPs in two school districts and found significant discrepancies between IEP goals and the district curriculum. Additionally, results from a survey of state directors of special education indicated that only six states required IEPs to show the relationship of IEP goals to the state content standards (Erickson & Thurlow, 1997).

Similar to general education, special education has not gathered outcome data for the purpose of program improvement. Emphasis on compliance monitoring as special education accountability has had unfortunate consequences. One consequence is that little information has been collected and analyzed regarding quality of programs or the academic success of students with disabilities (Fraser, 1996; Geenen et al., 1995; NASDSE, 1993; Rockne & Weiss-Castro, 1994).

Differences Between General and Special Education Accountability.

As noted, general and special education has historically focused primarily on inputs and processes of education although the system in which each developed has been influenced by separate curricula, policies, regulations, and monitoring systems (Geenen et al., 1995; NASBE, 1996). While not completely incompatible, outcome accountability for general and special education is different in three distinct ways. First, student outcomes for general and special education are

assessed differently. That is, students in general education have been evaluated using standardized tests while assessment of the IEP has been the primary outcome measure for students in special education. Historically, students with disabilities have either been excluded from statewide general education assessments or their results have been disaggregated before public reporting (McGrew, Vanderwood, Thurlow, & Ysseldyke, 1995). Secondly, indicative of the group focus in general education and the individual focus within special education, outcomes of standardized tests are publicly reported as combined data while IEP outcomes are reported individually and in private usually only to those individuals on the IEP committee such as families and teachers directly associated with the student (McDonnell et al., 1997). The third difference is associated with student consequences for performance on outcome measures. While poor performance on standardized tests could lead to nonpromotion or denial of graduation for students in general education (Macpherson, 1996), there have traditionally been no such consequences for special education students when IEP goals are not achieved.

These inherent differences between general and special education accountability serve not only to contrast the two systems but also to suggest several ways in which traditional accountability systems will have to change related to new legislative requirements related to standards-based reform. Recent studies of schools involved in various approaches to standards-based reform indicate that a

balance between old and new practices supports initiatives to improve student learning (Goertz et al., 1996; Massell et al., 1997). On the whole, both general and special education will need to balance current with new practices that support the inclusion of all students in the same accountability systems.

Changing Accountability Systems

Many states had accountability systems in place prior to the standards-based reform movement. However, many states are not revising their systems to focus on student outcomes (Roach et al., 1997). According to Elmore et al. (1996), educational accountability is changing in three ways: (a) emphasis is changing from inputs and processes to student outcomes; (b) standards are being compared with outcome data for accountability purposes; and (c) incentives in the form of rewards and penalties related to outcomes are being instituted. Moreover, current research in each of the areas points to a number of caveats that need consideration by those implementing these new changes.

Focus on Outcomes

As the focus of school reform has shifted from inputs and processes to student outcomes (Massell & Fuhrman, 1994), so has the focus of accountability. This new premise for school improvement is based on the assumption that close monitoring of student outcomes will result in improved achievement levels. While few studies have addressed this relationship specifically, there is some indication

that focusing on outcomes may have the desired affect of improved student performance. For example, Tucker and Andrada (1997) found in a study of elementary schools in Connecticut that schools that expected to be accountable for sixth-grade results on a statewide test produced better performing sixth graders compared to schools that were not accountable for results.

Concomitant with the shift to outcomes is the development of the means for measuring and documenting both system and student accountability (Geenen et al., 1995). System accountability is being structured to include such components as school report cards and accreditation reviews (Elmore et al., 1996; Jaeger, Gorney, & Johnson, 1994). The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) (1996) recommended that school report cards include a profile of student achievement that includes assessment data along with other information to provide a comprehensive picture of progress toward identified standards. Additional data might contain factors related to supporting students in reaching high standards including resource expenditures dealing with curriculum and instructional practices, professional development for teachers, or methods for addressing special learning needs such as instructional accommodations (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, & Shin, 1994).

Student accountability may include scores on state or district assessments and grades (Roach et al., 1997). Presently 47 states have implemented or are

planning an assessment program (Glidden, 1998). The trend over the last decade has been toward using these assessments for accountability purposes (Erickson, 1996). According to the most comprehensive data on state assessment recently compiled, student assessment remains controversial (Bond, Roeber, & Braskamp, 1997). The type of assessment used (i.e., performance-based, multiple-choice, portfolio), content covered by the assessments, and the technical quality of instruments used for high-stakes decisions such as graduation or grade promotion are all sources of concern among educators and the general public.

Another area of controversy regarding student accountability is related to the participation of students with disabilities in assessments. Given the separateness of general and special education systems in the past, questions arise about how to include all students in one accountability system. Issues such as participation and accommodation related to inclusion of students with disabilities in accountability systems are both political and attitudinal (Elliott, Thurlow, & Ysseldyke, 1996). In a case study of how schools make decisions about the participation of students with disabilities, Warren and McLaughlin (1996) found that decision-making factors are critically linked to attitudes toward creating inclusive environments. Similarly, Seyfarth, Ysseldyke, and Thurlow (1998) surveyed administrators, teachers, and other IEP team members regarding the feasibility of including students with disabilities in assessments. Results indicated

that educators think including students with disabilities is desirable, but implementing changes will be difficult. Addressing these attitudes is important to consider in the context of changing accountability systems.

Comparison of Outcome Data to Standards

As previously noted, in new accountability systems, standards establish student expectations with which assessment results are compared. A lack of alignment between assessments and curriculum and instruction can undermine successful reform (Linn & Herman, 1997). For example, in a recent study by the RAND Corporation and the New American Schools Development Corporation (Mitchell, 1996), data were collected from 30 sites. The results revealed that 78% of principals surveyed felt that tests used for accountability purposes in their schools were misaligned with their instructional programs. Additionally, 56% of those surveyed responded that the test drove the school in directions not aligned with reform goals. Poorly aligned assessments can have wide-ranging consequences. In a recent national survey of elementary and secondary school principals conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (Celebuski & Farris, 1998), 78% of principals reported their schools used content standards to a moderate or great extent, although about half (49%) of the principals cited poorly designed assessments as a barrier to the application of high standards to all students.

To accurately reflect progress of all students toward meeting established standards, alignment of assessments with curriculum and instruction guided by academic standards is necessary (National Center on Educational Outcomes [NCEO], 1994). States are using a variety of test formats to achieve this alignment. The past 10 years have seen a trend from norm-referenced, multiple-choice test formats to formats that are performance-based and aligned with academic standards. In some instances, performance-based assessments are being used as the dominant format. Performance-based assessments, which can be administered individually or in small groups, are context-oriented and designed to allow students to demonstrate knowledge by producing a product or demonstration (McDonnell et al., 1997).

Alternative forms of assessment are being applied in lieu of traditional measures. Two alternative forms include portfolio assessment, which consists of collections of student work samples over time, and curriculum-embedded assessment, in which tasks are interwoven into teaching. High costs, in terms of money and time, often hamper implementation of these types of assessments. For this reason, a number of states are using “mixed” assessments containing a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended performance-based tasks (Bond et al., 1996).

Use of Incentives

In order to sustain outcome-based accountability, both positive and negative consequences for districts and schools are being mandated by states (Fuhrman, 1999). According to Kirst (1990), incentive systems are “designed to provide inducements for specific actions by educators” (p. 8). According to the Consortium on Inclusive Schooling Practices (1998), currently 15 states have established probation or watch lists for schools not making progress at predetermined rates, 12 states issue warnings related to inadequate performance, and in 11 states schools may lose accreditation as a result of not meeting performance or progress goals. Furthermore, almost half the states have enacted takeover or intervention laws for schools that don’t meet expected targets. In these situations, states may intervene usually along a continuum of options from warnings to school reorganization. Positive consequences such as monetary rewards or regulatory waivers whereby schools are relieved of certain regulatory requirements are used in eight states when positive gains in student achievement are produced (Anderson & Lewis, 1997).

In many states, employment of incentives is based largely on the results of state assessments (Clotfelter & Ladd, 1996). In a study of expectations of national and state policymakers regarding assessments, McDonnell (1994) found that many policymakers believe assessments serve multiple purposes by providing information

about overall student performance as well as certifying whether or not individuals have attained specific levels of mastery. Testing experts caution against the use of assessments for measuring individual performance in instances of high-stakes consequences because of the limits of measurement tools to provide a comprehensive and accurate picture of a student's knowledge base. Thus, the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing (CRESST) cautions states and local schools against "assessment that attempts to perform too many functions--student diagnosis, curriculum planning, program evaluation, instructional improvement, accountability, certification, public communication [because it will] inevitably do nothing well" (Linn & Herman, 1997, p. 17).

Kirst (1990) outlined several unresolved issues that need to be explored before incentive systems can become an effective means for improving results. These issues include correlation between test scores and student socioeconomic background, equitable distribution of monetary rewards if wealthy districts are frequent recipients, and designing incentive systems that are fair. Each of these issues points to the limited capacity of many assessments to produce valid data for use in incentive programs tied to student achievement.

To summarize, accountability systems are changing and the importance of including students with disabilities in general education accountability systems has

never been greater (Council of Administrators of Special Education, 1993). In the previous sections, several issues related to accountability systems have been mentioned. They included level of participation of students with disabilities, aligning standards with assessments, and using incentives to punish or reward progress toward established goals. Analysis of past practices within general and special education reveals unique challenges regarding the resolution of these issues and the development of a more inclusive standards-based reform initiative. The following section will explore how these issues and challenges might be addressed.

Inclusive Standards-based Reform

According to a recent study by Massell and colleagues (1997), progress of standards-based reform has been steady, yet efforts have concentrated on general education reform with little attention paid to students with disabilities. In an analysis of the inclusiveness of students with disabilities in state standards documents, Thurlow, Ysseldyke, Gutman, and Geenen (1998) found that only 13 states defined “all” to mean the inclusion of students with disabilities, and only eight states indicated that special educators were involved in standards development. Nonetheless, federal legislation mandates inclusive standards-based reform policies (e.g., Goals 2000: Educate America Act, 1994; Improving America’s Schools Act, 1994; IDEA, as amended, 1997). Inclusive standards-based reform means that “all students are considered part of the school community

and the information about how, and whether, all students are benefiting from educational programs is essential, not simply desirable” (Yell & Shriner, 1996, p. 106). Inclusive standards-based reform can be advanced through a common standards-based framework of curriculum, assessment, accountability, and unified schooling practices (CPRIGSER, 1996; Fraser, 1996; Sage & Burrello, 1994).

Common Standards-based Framework

Complementary alignment of general and special education standards-based reform goals is paramount to successful implementation of standards for all students. McDonnell and colleagues (1997) recommended that states and LEAs design standards, assessments, and accountability systems in ways that maximize participation of students with disabilities. For example, standards should be sufficiently broad to provide direction for teachers, but still allow room to address individual needs of students (Jolly, 1990; NASDSE, 1993). Special education has not played a large role in the development of standards in the past and, therefore, has not been able to provide a special education perspective relative to needs of students with disabilities (Fraser, 1996). Regardless, special education professionals must stay involved in local restructuring debates about outcomes and accountability. Since most states describe their standards as work in progress (Gandel, 1997), special educators still have the opportunity to be involved in future standards development or revisions.

In addition to aligning general and special education reform goals, assessments need to be designed that consider the performance of all students (CISP, 1996). Exclusion of significant numbers of students with disabilities from assessments in the past has made it difficult to describe the status of students with disabilities (McGrew et al., 1995); further exclusion of students with disabilities in accountability systems could lead to increased isolation of students with disabilities and their families (NASDSE, 1993). For example, if classroom teachers do not feel accountable for the performance of students with disabilities within general education standards frameworks, such students may be viewed as members of a separate system (Roach et al., 1997). The NCEO (1994) suggested that inclusive accountability practices include alternative means for indicating success of students with disabilities such as alternative assessments or achievement of IEP objectives. The need for thoughtful consideration of the actual data needed to determine success and potential barriers to collection of this information were also noted.

However, inclusion of students with disabilities in assessments increases the possibility that educators will take responsibility for these students and will develop the knowledge and skills needed to help students with disabilities achieve academic goals. The NCEO (Elliott et al., 1996) outlined criteria for maximizing participation of students with disabilities in assessments, including written guidelines for participation of students, administration of appropriate

accommodations, and reporting of results used for accountability. As mentioned, McDonnell and colleagues (1997) also recommended that states and LEAs revise policies that discourage maximum participation of students with disabilities in accountability systems.

Unified Schooling Practices

Results of a three-year study of general and special education reform indicated that professionals focus on separate reform issues and tend not to consider how collaboration might relate to inclusion of students with disabilities in curriculum and assessments (McLaughlin, Henderson, & Rhim, 1997). Current policies may create dissociation between general and special education. For example, exclusion of students with disabilities from standards policy or IEPs that do not include general education objectives may send the message that separate systems for learning exist and are acceptable (Thurlow et al., 1998). In order to include all students in educational reform, schools can no longer operate under fundamentally separate general and special education systems (Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, & Leal, 1995). Alignment of special and general education goals is critical to the inclusion of all students in standards-based reform. Developing understanding between the two systems begins when “stakeholders . . . clarify their values about learning, children, and the system. . . .” (Waters & Cordell, 1997, p. 3).

The standards-based reform movement provides a unique opportunity to unify general and special education systems. Such unification represents a striking change in the modus operandi of both systems, and while it may prove a needed catalyst for improved achievement, it requires bold changes in both organizational operations and teacher behaviors. Specifically, shared responsibility for goals of standards-based reform provides the foundation for unifying schooling practices related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment (CPIGSER, 1996). Educators need to analyze their curriculum and instructional methods relative to both the achievement of all students and the degree to which all students have access to general curriculum and programs (Jorgensen, 1997). Warger and Pugach (1996) suggested that general and special education teachers “must not approach business as usual” (p. 62). Instead of excluding students who do not “fit” current systems, teachers need to redesign schooling practices to accommodate a wide range of learners. For example, a unified curriculum in which teachers use a variety of materials and instructional grouping that allow personalized outcomes can accommodate a diverse student population.

Support for unified schooling practices can be achieved through coordination, collaboration, and collegiality (Sarason & Lorentz, 1998; Wagner, 1998). General and special education teachers have developed complementary skills within their respective systems. For example, on the one hand, general

education teachers have developed a broad perspective regarding curriculum and instruction. On the other hand, special education teachers have traditionally focused on ways to meet individual student needs (Fraser, 1996). Working together in partnership toward common goals for reform can lead to more inclusive accountability and reform.

In summary, inclusive standards-based reform requires a common system of standards, assessment, and accountability. Schools need to use these common elements to develop common goals, unify schooling practices, and build collaborative work structures. The interrelationships of standards, accountability, and the performance of all students reveal the dynamic nature of standards-based reform. The success of reform depends on alignment of each of these elements in ways that support improved academic performance.

Learning Environments That Support Achievement for All Students

Establishing state content and performance standards and aligning them with assessments provides a foundation for increased student achievement, but it is not all that is necessary to ensure improved educational outcomes (National Center on Educational Outcomes, 1994). As Darling-Hammond stated, “Setting standards may send signals about the learning that is valued by society, but it will not create the conditions for learning where they do not already exist” (1997, p. 261). The

final portions of this chapter will outline ways in which principals and teachers can create learning environments that support achievement for all students.

Hill and Crevola (1999) defined standards-based education as the “search for ways of thinking about and operating schools that ensure that all students achieve defined and challenging standards of performance” (p. 121). How principals and teachers operate at the school level contributes greatly to the success of reforms directed at improving student performance (Darling-Hammond, 1996; CPRE, 1998). The processes by which schools can best implement standards-based reform are varied and, in many regards, successful standards-based reform and school improvement is dependent on the leadership of principals (Goertz et al., 1996; Massell et al., 1997; Thompson, 1993).

Principal Actions That Support Inclusive Standards-based Reform

Responsibilities of school principals have never been more complex (Lambert, 1998; Schalock, 1998). Principals must orchestrate numerous tasks including articulate the school’s vision and mission, facilitate and monitor effective instructional practices, and supervise staff (Keyes & Udvari-Solner, 1999; Parker & Day, 1997) in a climate of nonstop change, educational reform, and public scrutiny (Bridges 1991; Waters & Cordell, 1997).

It is the principal who focuses efforts on the goals of inclusive standards-based reform that includes all students (Katsiyannis, Conderman, & Franks, 1996;

Sage & Burrello, 1994). Principals are in touch with all members of the school community and are aware of the complex relationships and restructuring needs in their school (Thompson, 1993). Thus, they can have considerable power in affecting how reform policies are translated into practice (Massell et al., 1997; Mizell, 1996) because of their ability to secure support from these various groups. This places them in an important leadership role in the orchestration of the many changes that standards-based reform necessitates.

Goal-based plan of action. Standards-based reform intended to improve achievement for all students requires changes throughout the educational system (Linn & Herman, 1997), and strong leadership plays a pivotal role in bringing about these changes (Wehlage et al., 1992). One of the first steps for leadership for more inclusive reform is the development of a plan that is guided by the vision and mission of the school and is based on specific goals related to achievement (Ball & Goldman, 1997; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Schmoker, 1996).

1. Vision and mission. At the heart of inclusive reform for improving achievement is the articulation of a vision and mission for the school. A vision is “an ideal and unique image of the future” (Kouzes & Posner, 1996, p. 95). Commonsense points to the fact that having a vision or notion of what the school wants to become is important. For example, in a study of leadership skills needed

to improve urban high schools, Louis and Miles (1990) found that effective school leaders clearly express the school's vision and use the vision to guide improvement. The vision must be articulated carefully to promote inclusion of all students in reform. Effective leaders can create commitment by involving stakeholders, modeling the vision in everyday practice, encouraging others by recognizing and celebrating efforts and contributions, and building capacity for realizing the vision (Kouzes & Posner, 1996, 1997).

A mission "reflects the fundamental purpose of the organization.... It is not how the group can do what it is currently doing better or faster, but rather why it is doing it in the first place" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 58). A mission should be arrived at collectively with all levels of the school involved in its development (Covey, 1991). The mission provides a compass for generating directions for the school especially in turbulent and ever-changing circumstances as is often the case during times of educational reform (Hesselbein, 1996). In a longitudinal study of over 1,500 schools, Newman and Wehlage (as cited in DuFour & Eaker, 1998) found that the most successful schools were guided by their mission to ensure that learning takes place for all students.

2. Goals. After establishing a vision and mission, goals become the next element in an effective plan of action. As previously described, a vision provides an image for the future and a mission reflects the purpose. Goals, which

are related to the purpose, are important because they are “the most vital ingredient of purpose” (Schmoker, 1996, p. 23). Goals move individuals and schools forward in meeting their mission and provide the basis for motivation and perseverance (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Goals can also create more effective collegial teams. Thus, working toward a common goal or purpose focuses efforts and attentions by creating situations where educators come together with a single intention. This allows teachers to “communicate meaningfully and precisely about how to improve--and how to determine if they are improving (Schmoker, 1996, p. 20). Carefully selected goals that emphasize high expectations for all students and delineate the measurements of success move schools forward in accomplishing more inclusive reform (Sparks, 1999). Schmoker (1996) offered one note of caution that without carefully considered goals only minimal progress can be expected:

Unfortunately, most schools do not make the connection between goals, motivation, and improvement. We have what is perhaps the most striking, contradictory, self-defeating characteristic of schooling and our efforts to improve it: the gap between the need-and intent-to improve academic performance in our schools on the one hand, and the conspicuous and virtual absence of clear, concrete academic goals in most school and district planning efforts on the other. (Schmoker, 1996, p. 18)

Professional development. Teachers need support for their efforts to address the academic needs of all students (Wehlage et al., 1992). Essentially, every academic subject in education has been devised, revised, or is in the process of forming standards for what students should know and do (Eisner, 1995). Professional development opportunities that allow teachers to learn subject matter reflected in the standards and to develop the skills to teach them effectively is essential (Copenhaver, 1997; Sparks, 1997).

Preparation for general and special educators with respect to the inclusion of students with disabilities is also important. Teachers need to have high expectations for all students' performance. They need to be able to link instruction with standards and support students with disabilities in general education settings in ways that enable them to meet established standards and demonstrate their understanding through assessment (Rainforth, 1996; Rothman, 1996). New skills may include knowledge of types of test accommodations that are available and allowable, writing IEP goals that align with standards, and instructional procedures that support students in achieving success (McDonnell et al., 1997). Teachers should also be involved in establishing new understandings of curriculum rather than being told to merely teach differently (Scheidler, 1994). According to Sagor (1996), "when professionals feel empowered, they tend to hold themselves to high standards of performance" (p. 4). Professional development must therefore be

ongoing, integrated, flexible, comprehensive, problem-based, and meaningful for teachers (Collinson, 1994; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Imel, 1989).

Schrag (1999) identified three dimensions of teacher capacity necessary to impact student outcomes. The first relates to teacher knowledge of subject matter. With higher expectations for student learning, teachers are required to have a deeper and more flexible knowledge base compared to basic skill approaches used in the past (Ball & McDiarmid, 1990; Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1998).

The second dimension of teacher capacity focuses on skills for addressing new standards-based reform. Ball and McDiarmid (1990) found a gap between skills teachers recognize as necessary for reform and their present ability level. Additionally, a statewide survey conducted in Kentucky by Stecher, Barron, Kaganoff, and Goodwin (1998) on the effects of standards-based assessment on classroom practices revealed that while teachers reported that they made substantial changes in classroom practice, no association was found between changes and gains on statewide assessments.

The third dimension includes teacher attitudes about subject matter, students and their success, and achievement. Attitudes toward the ability of students with disabilities and the role of the general education teacher in teaching them are also important considerations. Special education has often been perceived as a separate system and, as a result, general education teachers often do not feel

accountable for progress of students with disabilities in their classroom (Elliott & Thurlow, 1997; Roach & Raber, 1997).

Family and community involvement. Standards provide an important tool for school and community consensus about the goals and direction of reform because high achievement for students is a desirable goal in our society (Mizell, 1996). Engaging families and the general public in developing consensus regarding standards is also important for implementing and sustaining an initiative (Ysseldyke et al., 1994) and serve as a buffer against changing winds of political systems.

Responsibilities of principals “extend beyond the building into the surrounding community, to parents, civic leaders, the media, other administrators, and the school district’s central office.” (NASESP, 1996, p. 7). First, involving families and guardians in standards initiatives is critical for several reasons. Working in partnership with families by sharing information and decisionmaking facilitates clear mutual goals and shared responsibilities. This, in turn, contributes to better understanding of the purposes and needs for standards and for accountability systems. In addition, families and guardians of students with disabilities need to understand their roles as active members of the (IEP) team as well as their options related to standards and assessments such as the type of testing accommodations available for their children. Principals need to be prepared to facilitate partnerships between stakeholders within existing structures while

transforming the existing environment in ways that will support and advance shared goals of improved student achievement (Lashway, 1995, 1996).

The National Center to Improve the Tools of Educators (NCITE) (1996) offered the following suggestions for engaging the community in positive ways. First, consider what is already known about the community and its educational priorities. Surveys can provide data in this regard. Secondly, provide information related to standards and reform such as published results of organizational reviews of practice such as whether approaches are empirically validated and the accountability process for determining effectiveness of an approach. Finally, systematic input from the community regarding educational reform can provide information for the stakeholder so that controversy over misunderstandings can be more easily avoided.

Resource allocation. Almost no information is available that explicates the cost of including students with disabilities in standards-based reform (McDonnell et al., 1997). To respond to changes in school structures such as curriculum, instruction, and school organization brought about by standards-based reform, it seems reasonable that adequate resources be made available. Teachers need materials and textbooks aligned with the standards and new instructional practices that support curricular changes and needs of diverse students may require additional professional development, equipment or supplies such as books on tape

or additional computers. Provision of resources for these changes becomes a prerequisite because without the fundamental materials and equipment to teach, instructional results will be limited. Money for these types of supports may come from new money but may also require reallocation of existing resources.

To support teachers' efforts, principals may need to utilize resources in more efficient and innovative ways (Parker & Day, 1997; Tourgee & DeClue, 1992). After a review in 1993, the Texas Office of the State Auditor discovered that \$185 million could be saved each year without affecting students. Recommendations for accomplishing this included less travel, purchasing the least expensive supplies, and soliciting bids for services (Oswald, 1995). Miles and Darling-Hammond (1997) conducted a study of five urban schools related to the allocation of teaching resources. Their findings indicated a number of ways that building-level administrators can align school structures more inclusively. For example, money can be reallocated through elimination of nonteaching staff such as math or science specialists, and monies budgeted for these positions used to hire additional teachers thus reducing class size (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Odden, 1999).

Another example of reallocating resources is to increase the percentage of teachers who work with all students through either multi-age grouping or integration of special education students. Resources from special education and/or

Title 1 can be pooled to support more flexibility in grouping, promote more specialized instruction in general education classrooms, and to decrease group size for small-group instruction. Notably, student achievement improved significantly for all students in each of the three schools in the study by Miles and Darling-Hammond (1997) that implemented these changes.

Teacher Actions That Support Inclusive Standards-based Reform

Teachers have many classroom responsibilities. Meeting the needs of a diverse study body and supporting students in meeting more rigorous academic requirements calls for teachers to mediate among many tasks including “juggling the need to create a secure supportive environment for learning with the press for academic achievement, the need to attend to individual students and the demands of the group” (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 69). One way to be responsive to students’ academic needs is to use instructional methods that reflect recommended best practice.

Research provides considerable information about ways to promote effective and responsive instruction for students, including those with disabilities. This section will describe actions that promote effective instruction in four broad categories: tailored instruction, accommodated instruction, high-quality instructional techniques, and collaboration.

Tailored Instruction

Tailored instruction takes into account knowledge about student readiness, and learning styles. When teachers tailor instruction, they focus on how they will connect their goals with the needs of their student (Darling-Hammond, 1997). In 1998, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education conducted a literature review regarding inputs and processes related to student outcomes. Evidence from the literature indicated that tailored instruction, instruction geared to the needs of students, had a positive impact on student performance (Schrag, 1999). Tailoring instruction that addresses both readiness skills and learning styles results in students who are challenged at their instructional level rather than their frustration level.

Student readiness. Matching instruction to student readiness is a way to tailor instruction. When planning instruction, a first step is to determine the skills that are needed in order for the student to be successful in learning the content. For example, the goal for students might be to locate positions on a map given degrees of longitude and latitude. The teachers would need to determine the prerequisite skills, in this example discrimination between longitude and latitude, and assess students' level of knowledge.

When the requisite skills are determined, teachers next need to establish which of these skills students already possess. Vaughn et al. (2000) suggested

several ways to determine instructional readiness and needs of students. Two of these include collecting information from existing records and using skill lists to decide needs. Existing records may be formal assessments or completed activities that relate to the skills being introduced such as activities previously completed connected to the current topic. With the use of skill lists, readiness may also be determined. These lists may be a prepared record of skills to be taught, or a list of academic standards with which teachers keep running records of skills mastered. Student performance software can also provide a profile of student levels of academic functioning (Noyce, Perda, & Traver, 2000). If data do not already exist that assist in determining learning readiness, additional data collection may necessitate a pretest or other means of gathering missing information such as informal questioning.

Student learning style. Matching instruction to a student's learning style is another way to tailor instruction. Providing instruction to the extent possible students' preferred modality results in increased opportunity for students to both comprehend and retain the information they are taught (Sternberg, 1997). Two frameworks for thinking about learning styles include the work of Howard Gardner and Robert Sternberg.

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences encourages teachers to develop lessons that consider multiple modes of learning including linguistic,

visual, mathematical and kinesthetic (Gardner, 1987). For students with specific learning strengths and weaknesses, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences can, through an emphasis on what students are capable of rather than on what students are unable to do, draw attention to student potential. This focus can result in increased academic expectations for achievement for all students, which in turn can lead to actualized increased achievement (Campbell & Campbell, 1999).

Robert Sternberg's model consists of four learning abilities: memory for information, analysis of information, creativity, and practicality or the ability to put information into practice. In a study of 200 schools, Sternberg (1997) found that students who were taught in a way that matched their learning style performed significantly better than those whose instruction was not matched to learning strengths. As Sternberg noted, "By exposing students to instruction emphasizing each type of ability, we enable them to capitalize on their strengths while developing and improving new skills" (1997, p. 23).

High-quality Instructional Techniques

Practices that are designed to support students in making connections with the general education content make a difference in how students learn (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). High-quality instructional techniques are designed to make students more active and ultimately more independent in their learning. Examples include strategic instruction and constructivist teaching.

Strategies. The way in which a student approaches a task can be termed a strategy. Strategies can be both ineffective and ineffective (Collins, 1994). For many students with learning disabilities, and those with similar learning needs, development of strategies or effective approaches to learning requires explicit instruction about how to learn. Teaching students instructional strategies involves the incorporation of several instructional principles, which include making covert processing evident through modeling, emphasizing mastery learning and generalization of learned skills to other settings and tasks (Deshler & Schumaker, 1993). Modeling is a process whereby the teacher demonstrates the thinking processes involved in a task by “thinking out loud.” During modeling, the teacher shows students the metacognitive processes that are involved in making decisions and in problem solving related to the strategy. In the context of strategy instruction, each element of the strategy and the actual application of the strategy in practice situations is expected to be performed at a mastery level. This increases the potential for successful and independent application. Generalization, the process of applying the strategy in applicable ways in other comparable situations, is a final and critical element in strategy instruction. Through generalization students internalize their understandings and transfer that knowledge to other situations.

Learning strategies should complement instruction provided in general education classrooms. By matching the demands of the general education classroom with strategies that promote independent learning, support for learning is provided which leads to student success (Schumaker et al., 1986). Strategies help students make connections with the general education content by teaching them how to effectively and efficiently acquire information, store it, and demonstrate their understanding. This type of explicit instruction should provide students with the metacognitive skills to both analyze and determine what type of strategy to use and how to effectively implement it (Blakely & Spence, 1990).

Constructivist approaches. Constructivist learning is based on the notion that the student plays a major role in constructing understanding. Constructivist teaching and learning differs from traditional instruction and learning in several ways. Traditionally, teachers “transmit” information to students and students learn the “right” information as determined by the teacher (McKeown & Beck, 1999). Thus, traditional instruction often considers the learner to be the passive recipient of knowledge. Constructivist teaching and learning, on the other hand, recognizes the importance of connecting new learning with students’ prior understandings and acknowledges the student as the constructor of knowledge.

While teaching for understanding is a generally recognized as best practice (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Perkins & Blyth, 1994), there is some concern that high-

stakes accountability systems associated with standards may have a negative impact on this type of teaching and learning. According to Brooks and Brooks (1999), “Instructional practices designed to help students construct meaning are being crowded out of the curriculum by practices designed to prepare students to score well on state assessments” (p. 23).

Accommodations

Accommodations support students by enabling them to learn the general education content. Changes to content delivery including the way in which instruction is provided, materials such as textbooks, or assignments that support student inclusion in general education classrooms are considered accommodations (Benninghof & Singer, 1995; Lenz, 1998).

Accommodations to instruction. Accommodations to instruction include the way in which teachers deliver instruction to students. Accommodations should be made that modify instruction to fit the needs of students rather than planning for instruction first and then making student learning fit the way instruction is provided. Making decisions about accommodating learning at the preparation stage eliminates the need to make changes outside the general educator’s lesson plans (Udvari-Solmer, 1995). That is, when educators modify the curriculum at the initial planning stage, the need to make modifications later to permit the inclusion of students with disabilities is greatly lessened, if not eliminated. When general and

special educators share in this process, decisions about the applicability of an accommodation can be made at the “front end” and not as a decision after the fact (Heron & Jorgensen, 1995).

Accommodations to instruction can be made prior to, during, and after instruction. For example, teachers might make accommodations to the way in which they introduce instruction by providing advance organizers that highlight major points and the relationship to other content studied or by providing an outline of the content to come. During instruction, this outline could be referred to so that students were clear about the key points when these were being discussed. Other techniques for accommodating students during instruction would be to provide instructional support by linking instruction to real situations (Newman & Wehlage, 1993). This sets the stage for learning by building on what students already know. Accommodations after instruction can also occur by providing direct instruction and opportunities for frequent practice and review (Rosenshine & Stevens, 1986). Various types of review that take into account individual learning needs could be offered. For some students such review might be conducted in written form, for other students it may be conducted in oral form.

Accommodations to material and activities. Materials used by the general education classroom may need to be altered for some students with disabilities. For example, the reading level of textbooks or literature may be too difficult, which

may necessitate the purchase of textbooks on audiotape or books of high interest with low reading difficulty.

One of the ways to adjust activities is to have students work toward similar goals but vary the process by which students master the goals. To illustrate, a goal might be to improve student writing skills by having them complete a writing activity on a daily basis. There may be several options for completing the task. Students who have well-developed writing skills may be required to use complete sentences, correct punctuation, and to revise their work with the use of a thesaurus. Other students with less developed skills may begin by drawing pictures to represent the sequence of events and then write words or phrases as captions under the pictures. In the example, the goal was the same--to improve writing skills--but the process was accommodated for various students.

Instructional practices described so far have focused on instruction that is likely to meet the needs of students, including those with disabilities. While it is not considered an instructional practice, collaboration is supportive of the individualized types of instruction provided in general education classrooms that are necessary for student's academic success. Also of importance is time for reflecting on the successes of the implemented practices, plans for changes, or new types of instructional practices that are supportive of all students.

Collaboration

One goal of collaboration among education professionals is to ensure that students with disabilities receive the supports they need while remaining in the general education classroom (Vaughn et al., 2000). Teacher conceptions of practice and what they actually do in the classroom are shaped in part by the context in which they work and learn (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). Many teachers report that their main source of support comes from their colleagues. It follows that collegial and collaborative support networks within schools are important for capacity building (Darling-Hammond, 1996).

According to Lambert (1998), “Collaborative work is directly linked to school improvement . . .” (p. 17). Collaborative work structures may include co-teaching in which a general and special educator share teaching responsibilities in the general education classroom; consultation whereby a teacher may serve as a consultant to one or more teachers; or teaming whereby teachers on one grade level may work as a group, possibly with a specialist, to support the needs of students (Lipsky & Gartner, 1998).

In addition to co-teaching, teachers may work together in other ways. This might include various approaches to consulting. Consulting teacher models are based on indirect service whereby teachers meet to problem solve with one teacher considered the expert. The goal is to increase the capacity of the consultee to

effectively address similar needs in the future (West & Idol, 1987). Another model for collaboration is collaborative consultation. Teachers meet to problem solve and provide support, but this type of consultation is based on equitable relationships rather than hierarchical. As a result, neither teacher assumes the role of the expert. Teachers in successful schools collaborate to determine student needs, relate this to instructional practice, and make changes based on student needs while refining their working relationship. Reflective practice becomes an important component of collaboration.

Reflective practices. Time for reflection upon actions related to instructional and curricular practices is important to continued effectiveness (Adelman & Walking-Eagle, 1997; NEA, 1994; Raywid, 1993). Better understanding of instruction comes about as a result of opportunities to reflect, interpret, and form meaning based on engaging in dialogue with others, and exploring the meaning of events in a personal context (Stein, 1998). Courtney and Maben-Crouch (1996) found that new understandings and learning transfers more easily when teachers have an opportunity to reflect upon and evaluate their work in meaningful ways.

Summary

The research and literature point to a number of best practices for leadership and instruction to improve achievement for all students. While the

literature underscores the processes that should be in place, little information is available on how these practices are best translated in the context of standard-based reform. The next chapter will reveal the extent to which the research-and literature-supported best practices were implemented in the three sites in this study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Concerns about declining levels of achievement have led to school reform initiatives characterized by a shift from educational inputs and processes to outcomes that include student achievement of higher academic standards (Elmore et al, 1996). In a majority of states, new curricula and assessments at the district and school level have been encouraged and funded by federal and state legislation, which emphasize improved academic outcomes for all students (McDonnell et al., 1997). Federal mandates and many state-level initiatives have, for the first time, made clear the intent that students with disabilities be included in the teaching and assessment of higher standards. While research has explored distinct elements for school improvement such as leadership and instructional practices (Cotton, 1995), little information is available on how principals and teachers can respond to meeting the needs of students with disabilities in meeting higher standards. Educators, then, have to meet two new challenges that have not been addressed in research or current literature: successfully including students with disabilities in standards-based reform efforts and utilizing appropriate leadership and instructional approaches that will produce desired results in the context of standards-based reform.

These two issues were explored through exploratory qualitative multi-case study. This chapter begins with a description of qualitative multiple-case study methodology followed by a discussion of the intent of the present study and the rationale for the use of case study. Criteria for site and participant selection are explained. The data collection and analysis procedures, validity and reliability considerations, and ethical safeguards conclude the chapter.

Qualitative Case Study Method

Stake (1995) defined qualitative case study methodology as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). Through in-depth investigation and multiple data sources, case study methodology attempts to create a holistic understanding of interrelated activities from the viewpoint of the participant (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991; Stake, 1995).

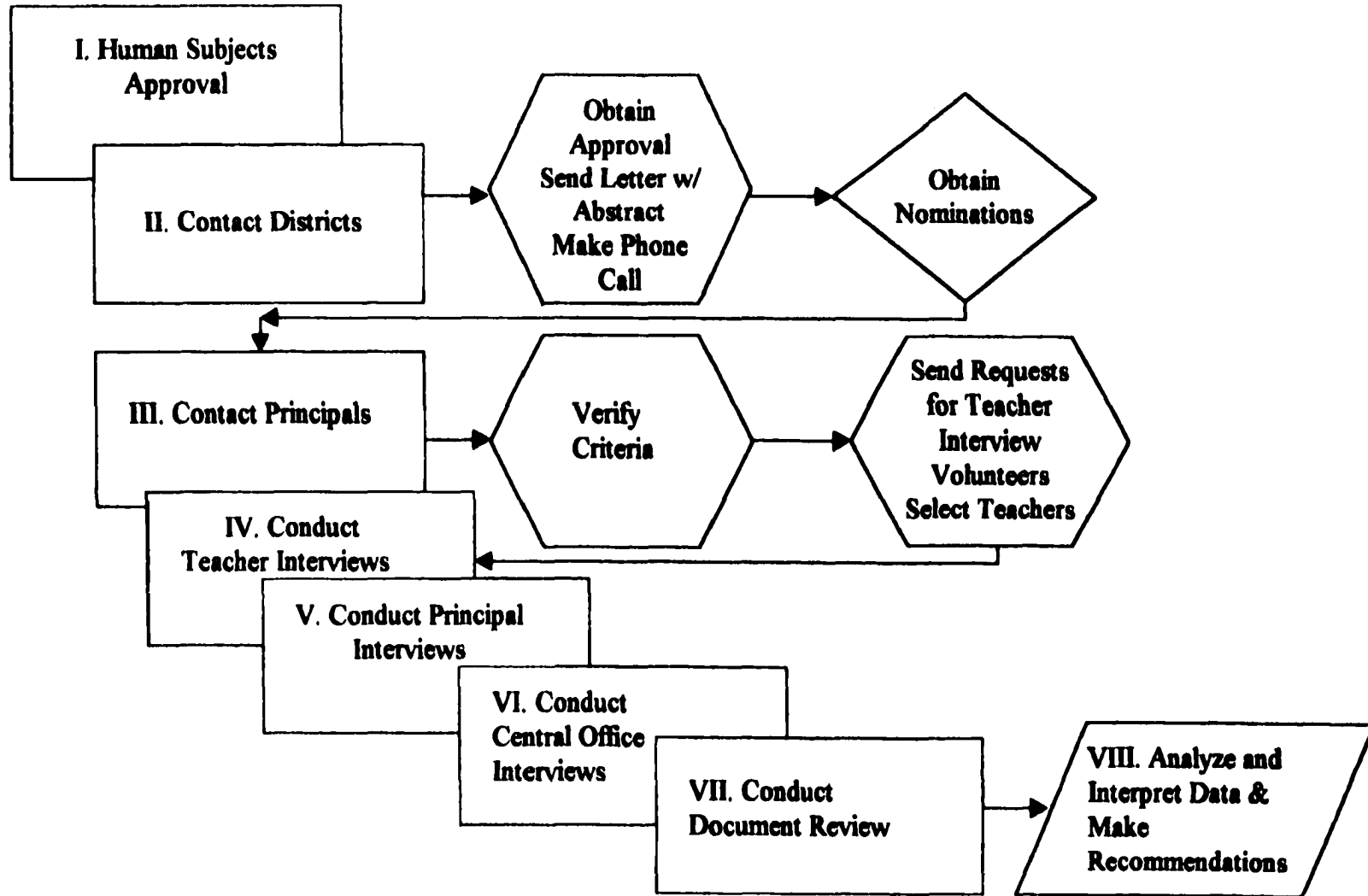
Several attributes of case study research separate it from other types of research. Yin (1994) characterized the uniqueness of case study as being able to describe “the real-life context” of a complex phenomenon. With regard to education, the issues that can be addressed through case study tend to be policy-oriented and directly affect teachers and administrators (Yin, 1994). “It is the direct policy implications of their research that sets those who do case studies apart from other qualitative researchers” (Lancy, 1993, p. 140). Merriam (1988)

identified three types of case studies in education: evaluative, descriptive, and interpretive. Evaluative case studies judge the merit of a particular program or practice by explaining causal links, describing context, or exploring outcomes. Descriptive case studies provide a detailed account of the phenomenon under study, whereas interpretive case study uses detailed descriptions to interpret the phenomenon. Case studies can be either single-case studies focusing on only one case, or multiple-case studies including two or more cases (Yin, 1994). This study utilized multiple-case study design because consistent evidence from multiple cases is generally considered more robust (Yin, 1984).

Rationale for Using Case Study Method

The intent of this study was to explore the actions of principals and teachers in supporting the academic achievement of students with disabilities in the context of standards-based reform. Since a case study is appropriate when a “how” or “why” question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control Yin (1984), this method was selected. Further, interpretive case study was chosen because the researcher wished to both provide thorough descriptions of the cases and conceptualize the approaches taken by the principals and teachers. This information was analyzed in comparison to literature and research related to the leadership and instructional practices. Figure 3 illustrates each step utilized in conducting this qualitative case study.

Figure 3. Research stages.



Site and Participant Selection

“The first criterion [for selection of cases] should be to maximize what we can learn.” (Stake, 1995, p. 4). Sites and participants were purposefully chosen based on criteria listed below.

District selection. Three school districts were selected based on their relative similarity with regard to demographics including size of the district, number of students with disabilities, and population density (both suburban and rural areas). After the research proposal was approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee at The College of William and Mary, the researcher contacted each school district regarding the process for gaining permission to conduct the study. After compliance with the district procedures and upon notification of approval, the researcher elicited nominations from the special education director or designee and visited sites in accordance with each district’s prescribed procedure.

School nomination process. The assistant superintendent of instruction of each school district nominated five elementary schools based on the criteria below from which the director of special education subsequently selected three. The researcher selected one school that best fit the criteria and was willing to voluntarily participate in the research. Although only one school from each district was selected for the study, the nomination of additional schools provided alternate sites in the event a nominated school did not meet the selection criteria,

chose not to participate, or dropped out of the study. The two schools in each district not chosen were notified by mail thanking them for their willingness to participate. They were informed that they had been placed on a waiting list and might be contacted should the school chosen decide not to participate. They were also notified that they may be contacted for future follow-up studies.

School selection criteria. The purpose of the nomination criteria was to identify schools that are considered exemplary with regard to the academic achievement of students with disabilities. Since the focus of this study was on the actions of principals and teachers in improving achievement for students with disabilities in standards-based reform efforts, the schools had to have demonstrated improvement related to academic performance of students with disabilities. Additionally, principals at each school needed to have had at least three years' experience as a principal at the selected school prior to the study. This three-year stipulation allowed for experience as a principal prior to the study and opportunity to become knowledgeable and respond to both the implementation of more rigorous standards and new accreditation standards. The nomination criteria was as follows:

1. The school was considered by the assistant superintendent of instruction or designee as exemplary with regard to improving the academic achievement of students with disabilities.

2. **Each elementary school must be an inclusive school as defined by: (a) students with disabilities were attending the school they would attend if they did not have a disability, (b) students were intentionally included instructionally and socially with peers who did not have disabilities, and (c) students were included with the personnel and supports necessary to fully participate in general education classrooms and attend to IEP objectives (Friend & Cook, 1996).**
3. **The principal must have been employed as the principal at the selected school for at least three years prior to the study.**

After the five schools had been selected, the director of special education selected three schools that best met the nomination criteria above. The three nominated schools in each district were visited prior to selection of one school from each district for study.

School access process. After nominations were obtained from the special education director, a letter was sent to each principal containing: (a) the date of the researcher's call to discuss the study, (b) a study abstract, and (c) a request for voluntary participation. At the time of the phone call the researcher answered any questions, determined if the principal was willing to participate, and if so, scheduled a meeting to verify the nomination criteria. After nomination criteria

was verified using the form in Appendix A, the interviews were scheduled and letters of consent were distributed.

Teacher selection process. Three general education teachers and one special education teacher from each district were selected for interview. The intent in interviewing these participants was to gain additional perspective of teachers responsible for providing academic instruction and support to students with disabilities in order to provide greater depth and detail.

After one school in each district had been chosen and the principal had agreed to participate, teachers were selected for interview. The criteria for selection was that each teacher must have had at least three years' teaching experience prior to the study, be familiar with the state standards, and be willing to talk about student achievement. All general education and special education teachers received letters informing them of the proposed study and the selection criteria. A stamped, addressed response card was attached that included: (a) space for indicating voluntary participation for those that met the criteria, (b) phone numbers of the researcher and research advisor to whom questions could be addressed, and (c) a space for a phone number or email address where the potential volunteer could be reached along with a request for dates and times most convenient for the volunteer to be contacted. Teachers who returned the postcard were contacted by the researcher to answer any questions and verify selection criteria at the time and day suggested by teacher. The first teachers to volunteer

and meet the criteria were selected. Interviews were scheduled at the time of the phone call and letters of consent were distributed.

Two alternate teachers for each selected teacher were placed on a waiting list. Additional teachers provided alternates in the event a teacher chose not to participate or dropped out of the study. These teachers were notified by letter of their placement on the waiting list and that they might be called in the event an additional teacher was needed. They were also made informed that they might be contacted for future follow-up studies.

Data Collection Procedures

Yin (1993) recommended using multiple data sources to increase the robustness of the study through converging lines of inquiry. Data collection for this study consisted of interviews, document reviews, and site observations. Semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers constituted the primary data source. Complementary, semi-structured interviews with the director of special education and the assistant superintendent of instruction, document reviews, and site observations served as additional sources.

Principal interviews. The principal interviews took approximately one hour each. During the interviews, the researcher used an interview guide to explore the study's guiding question. By design, qualitative interviewing remains flexible to accommodate questioning related to ideas and themes learned. This flexibility allows for follow-up related to new questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Therefore, if necessary, questions related to any new ideas and themes were addressed in follow-up phone calls together with necessary questions to provide additional detail and clarity associated with the previous interview. Principals and teachers were requested to inspect drafts of the interviews for accuracy after data collection was completed.

Findings and interpretations of a qualitative case study are “likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several sources of information, following a corroboratory mode” (Yin, 1984, p. 91). Additionally, use of multiple sources of data allows the researcher to determine the validity of the data (Denzin, 1978; Stake, 1995). For these reasons, teacher interviews and document reviews were utilized.

Teacher interviews. Each teacher was interviewed in a single hour-long session. These interviews allowed the investigation of alternative perspectives. During the interview, the researcher used an interview guide to explore the study’s guiding questions. Questions related to any new ideas and themes were addressed in a follow-up phone call together with necessary questions to provide additional detail and clarity associated with the previous interview (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Teachers were requested to inspect drafts of the interviews for accuracy when no more data was to be collected.

Interview protocol. The interviews were based on qualitative interview models described by Kvale (1996) and Rubin and Rubin (1995). Qualitative

interviewing should allow ideas to emerge from the interview rather than to “categorize answers according to preexisting categories from an academic literature” (Rubin & Rubin, p. 39). The interviews were semi-structured, that is, the interview guide contained core topics to be covered with suggested questions or probes (Kvale, 1996; Seidman, 1998). The same principal and teacher interview protocols were used at all of the sites. Interviews were audiotaped with participant permission and transcribed prior to data analysis. The researcher also made field notes during each of the interviews, which included descriptions of observations and the researcher’s reflections, feelings, and reactions.

Pilot interviews. In order to test the suitability of interview protocols, interview schedules, and the researcher’s interview skills related to the purpose of this study, pilot interviews were conducted (Glesne, 1999). Pilot interviews included a principal, a general education teacher, and a special education teacher. Each of the interviews was audiotaped and reviewed by a colleague acquainted with the study and qualitative interviewing. Feedback from this colleague and the pilot participants was used to make necessary changes in the interview protocol, interview schedule, and the researcher’s interview skills.

Document review. Documents can provide information related to frequencies or contingencies and can yield information regarding activities that the researcher cannot observe directly (Stake, 1995). Furthermore, documents can provide data regarding the context of the problem being investigated (Merriam,

1988). In order to further explore activities related to actions of principals and teachers in supporting achievement of students with disabilities in standards-based reform efforts, available documents such as letters, school improvement plans, school mission statements, and agendas were reviewed. Document review consisted of three stages. Stage 1 involved the collection of documents at each site after which the type of document, the date and source of the document, and whether or not it was noted by the participants was recorded on the document review form. Stage 2 consisted of further analysis to determine if information provided by the document supported information shared by the participants or offered an alternative perspective. In Stage 3, the applicability of the information derived from each document in terms of whether or not the information could be included in the study to further clarify, explain, or elaborate on the information shared by the participants was determined. Figure 4 lists the names of documents reviewed. For each site, checks indicate which documents were reviewed in each stage. Documents that were included in Stage 3 are in Appendix A. Additionally, documents that were not included in Stage 3, such as the academic standards for the state in which data was collected, but could serve to clarify the reader's understanding, can be found in the same appendix. Document review information incorporated in the study was indicated through researcher's notes and delineated in brackets.

Figure 4. Record of stages of document review for the three sites.

Document Type	Stage 1 Review			Stage 2 Review			Stage 3 Review		
	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3
1. Mission statement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. School improvement plan		✓	✓		✓	✓			✓
3. State academic standards	✓	✓	✓	✓					
4. Team roles	✓			✓			✓		
5. Meeting agendas	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	
6. Pacing guides	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
7. School report cards	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
8. School newsletters			✓			✓			

Data Analysis Procedures

The constant comparative method was used to analyze data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Jansick, 1994). The constant comparative method is designed to aid the analyst by constantly comparing units of information with another in a way that is integrated, consistent, plausible, and close to the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This method is designed for multi-site data analysis and transcends descriptive case studies (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) because it “is concerned with generation of plausible categories, properties, and hypotheses about general problems (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 104).

Miles and Huberman (1984) concluded, “data reduction occurs continuously throughout the life of any qualitatively oriented project” (p. 21). In the constant comparative method, formal analysis begins early in the study. Data analysis for this study consisted of the following stages:

- 1. After the interviews were conducted and recorded, they were transcribed in their entirety by the researcher. Each transcription was reviewed by the researcher along with field notes and document review notes. Participants were also requested to review their transcripts for accuracy.**
- 2. Within-site analysis included examination of transcribed interviews to determine coding categories based on key issues,**

regularities and patterns of words, phrases and/or behavior (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

- 3. Cross-site analysis consisted of the comparison of similarities and differences across the cases. Analysis also included the construction of a framework containing the dominant emerging themes from each site (Miles & Huberman, 1984).**
- 4. The framework proposed at the onset of the study was used to assist in interpretation of the data by comparing emerging themes from the interviews with the literature- and research-based themes included in the framework (Kvale, 1996).**

Credibility

The emergent design of a qualitative case study precludes judging the merit of the study design in a positivist sense. Guba and Lincoln (1989) equated credibility with the quantitative notions of validity and reliability. Credibility in this study was maintained in the following ways.

- 1. In the proposed study multiple sources of data were combined (triangulated) to corroborate factual data and illuminate the research questions, because “Credibility is increased when the researcher can show that core concepts and themes consistently occur in . . . [multiple] sites” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 90). Multiple sources of data combined included multiple sites, data**

- sources, and data collection techniques (i.e., site observation, principal interviews, teacher interviews, and document review).**
- 2. Development of the case study protocol helped to ensure the same procedures were followed for each participant (Yin, 1993).**
 - 3. Member checks were used to ensure data accurately reflected the perceptions of the participant.**
 - 4. Analysis of the transcribed interviews for each site was reviewed and audited by members of the researcher's Dissertation Committee. Individual case studies were also audited by peers with expertise in the areas of leadership and instruction.**
 - 5. Thick descriptions were provided to allow the reader to make judgments about the applicability of the findings (Mertens & McLaughlin, 1995).**

Ethical Safeguards

The study was conducted in a manner that protected the anonymity of the school divisions and the principals and teachers who participated in the study. Upon approval of the Human Subjects Review Committee and respective school districts and nomination, research participants were informed by letter of the purpose of the study, the main features of the design, and the duration of the research activities. Through informed consent, potential study participants were informed that participation was voluntary, they could choose to withdrawal at any

time without penalty, and their identities would be protected. All sites and participants were identified by fictitious names. Consent forms included: (a) participation was voluntary and voluntary withdrawal could occur at any time, (b) information would be confidentially maintained, and (c) participants and sites would be kept anonymous.

Chapter Four

Three Case Studies

This study was designed to investigate the actions of principals and teachers in support of the academic achievement of students with disabilities related to standards-based reform. To investigate these actions, case studies in three elementary schools were conducted in one mid-Atlantic state. The curriculum was based on state-developed content standards. Standards-based assessments were given in elementary, middle, and high school. The state is currently implementing a plan that will require tests given in grades three and five. Seventy percent of all students are required to pass each assessment in order for the schools to be accredited. This plan will determine accreditation starting in 2004.

Three school districts were selected based on their relative similarity with regard to demographics including size of district, number of students with disabilities, and population density (both suburban and rural areas). One principal, three general education teachers, and one special education teacher were interviewed at one elementary school in each district. The names of all principals and teachers as well as individual schools and districts were changed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

All case studies include data collection and analysis that incorporated interviews, observations by the researcher, examination of documents relevant to

the elements outlined in Chapter Two, and interpretations of the researcher. After the initial interviews were completed, the researcher coded each transcription for response patterns and overarching themes were subsequently determined for each site. Participants' responses related to the overarching themes will be presented in narrative form followed by interpretation and discussion of the themes. This chapter concludes with a cross-case analysis to determine common themes among each site.

In the following section, three cases are presented, organized in three parts. The first part provides background information about the nature of the site and the individuals who volunteered to participate in the study. Contained in this section are descriptions of: (a) physical setting, (b) demographics of the participants, and (c) school demographic information. The second part uses the voices of the participants to describe the issues that were heard most often. The final part includes a discussion of the emergent themes based on participant responses. Responses of participants from the central office are bracketed and in italics.

Case Study One

Oak Glen Elementary

Part One: Description of the School

Physical Setting

Oak Glen Elementary School, located a few miles from an interstate highway, is a school modern in design situated atop a hill with an expansive, well-manicured lawn surrounding it. Trees beautify the façade of the one-story brick building from which one can view rolling hills, single-family homes, and a small business district. The school's office is located directly inside the front door of the school. The work area contains a desk for the school secretary, directly behind which is located a photocopier machine. The desk is separated from the waiting area by a counter, which contains notebooks for visitor and volunteer sign-in, a basket with visitor passes, and pamphlets of information related to school activities and programs. A bookcase is behind the counter along one wall. In addition to artwork by a local artist, a tee shirt with the school logo and price tag hang on another wall. The waiting area of the office is small with no chairs made available for waiting. The floors in the office and well as the rest of the school are covered in linoleum. Teachers' mailboxes are located on one wall in the waiting area. One window allows outside light to brighten the interior. Additional rooms and work areas are located down a hall to the left of the office counter. The

principal's office is the first room on the hall and is visible from the waiting area of the office.

Participant Demographics

Along with the district's director of pupil services, and assistant superintendent of instruction, the principal and four teachers--three general education teachers and one special education teacher--from Oak Glen participated in the study. All participants are female.

The special education teacher holds a master of education degree; the general education teachers each hold a bachelor of science degree. The number of years of experience for the teachers ranged from 13 to 24, with one teacher having 8 years of service. With the exception of the special education teacher, each teacher has taught the majority of that time at Oak Glen. There has been little faculty turnover and teachers pride themselves on the number of years they have been teaching at Oak Glen. As one teacher described it, "Once they [the teachers] come they don't really leave until they retire." Low teacher attrition is ascribed as the reason for "the family-type relationship" teachers have with each other and with the students. All general education teachers report having special education students in their classroom currently.

The assistant superintendent of instruction has had 15 years' experience as an administrator. In addition to four years experience in administration, the director of pupil services has had experience as both a general and a special

education teacher. Similarly, the principal also had experience as both a general and special education teacher in addition to having 10 years of experience as an administrator. Prior to assuming her current position, Oak Glen's principal was director of pupil services, which included special education.

School Demographics/Background

Oak Glen Elementary is in a school district with 11 elementary schools, three middle schools, and five high schools. Enrollment at Oak Glen totals about 350 students and includes classes from Head Start through the fifth grade. According to the school's principal, 33% of the students at Oak Glen receive free or reduced lunch.

Three teachers are employed at each grade level from kindergarten through fifth grade. Additionally, there is a full-time physical education teacher, music teacher, media specialist, and a reading teacher. One classroom for students with emotional disabilities is also housed at Oak Glen; however, the class will be moved to another site after the current school year. An additional special education teacher provides services to 19 students with learning disabilities. Of these 19 students, seven are in grades three and five, the grades in which the standards assessment is given. All but one student is slated to take the test for the year in which data is being collected. The school's principal reports that 14% of the total student population is identified as having a disability.

The student population at Oak Glen is 95% Caucasian with the remaining population consisting of African American, Hispanic, and Asian children. One teacher commented that “Our school population doesn’t change a whole lot....” While the population mix is reported to be constant, the principal stated that “this area has grown up so with population that we’re now in like this little city here.”

Curriculum

In this district, curricular decisions are guided to a large extent by the academic standards developed by the state. According to the principal, “the standards are driving everything.” In the past year, the school worked to align existing curriculum with the state standards. Teachers are assisted by a pacing guide (see Appendix A) developed by each grade level which provides suggestions related to the rate at which the standards are to be addressed. This information is shared with the specialist teachers (i.e., music teacher, librarian, physical education teacher) so that they are also aware of the standards that are being covered and can incorporate them into their instruction.

According to the special education teacher, “Our curriculum is very geared toward the standards. We are doing all we can to meet the objectives that the children need to know for the state.” The special education curriculum also consists of highly specialized instruction separate from the state standards in such areas as reading and math.

Family and Community Involvement

Both parent and nonparent volunteers are active at Oak Glen, most often serving as tutors. Volunteers provide direct support to teachers in the classroom by working with individual and small groups of students. One teacher describes the assistive role of parent volunteers in her classroom related to helping students with disabilities in her classroom this way:

I give the children an assignment and while I'm working with those children she kind of trouble shoots. I have a couple of children, and mostly they are my inclusion [students], who have a hard time staying on task unless somebody is right there with them.

One teacher reported that a parent of a student who graduated to middle school still returns to assist in her classroom.

Parents and other members of the community have been informed about the state standards by school publications such as a newsletter, by community meetings, and by local television and radio stations. The parent of one of the students at Oak Glen is an editor for the local newspaper and occasionally writes articles on standards-related issues that arise at the school.

Student Achievement

State assessments, administered as part of the state accountability system, are the primary means of measuring student achievement at Oak Glen. The school did not pass any portion of the standards-based assessment administered the

previous year for grades three and five, the elementary-level grades in which the test is administered. Previously, the school had done well on standardized tests such as the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition (Stanford 9). The principal commented that based on standardized tests such as the Stanford 9, “our kids did well, scored high and then we take the standards-based test and since they’re geared so high, we don’t look as brilliant when you look at [those scores] as when you look at the national norm.”

This researcher was at the school on the day that the state assessment test scores for the past school year arrived. The principal informed her that, once again, the students had not met the necessary criteria for passing any section of the assessment. The school’s score in social studies was lower than it had been the previous year, a content area in which they had focused most of their instructional effort for that year.

Inclusion

When asked to define “inclusion”, study participants offered a number of interpretations. Teachers at Oak Glen explain inclusion as “the amount of time that’s on their IEP,” “The ones that have IEP’s”, and “where the kids are in all day.” According to the special education teacher, some students are included in the general education classroom 100% of the day. Services for these students are

described by the special education teacher as:

there is no time out, but I would go in. It would be 40 minutes of special education service but it's done within the regular room. And within that I'm not just going in and pulling that one student; I work with generally a group of three to four children that have gone through a full evaluation and found not eligible.

Students with disabilities receive specialized instruction both within the general education classroom and in a traditional system where the student leaves the general education classroom for instruction in a separate classroom. Lessons in the general education classroom take several forms: small-group work apart from the general education students or the special education teacher assisting students with an activity in which the students are already engaged. The special education teacher does not have a routinely scheduled time to meet with the general education teachers for purposes of planning. Instead, the special education teacher talks with the general education teacher to determine content to be covered or ways to provide accommodations for students in the general education setting.

Part Two: Response Patterns

Introduction

Participants were asked to contribute thoughts and reactions related to aspects of standards-based reform and their actions toward improving

achievement for students with disabilities. The researcher used a semi-structured interview protocol that allowed for follow-up questions based on participant answers. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The transcriptions were then analyzed to determine response patterns and emerging themes.

This section depicts the common responses derived from the staff at Oak Glen. In order to be considered a common theme, at least three of the five school-based respondents must have included the topic in their interview responses. At this site, the common responses were classified as (a) meeting needs of students through child-centered approaches, (b) professional relationships, and (c) impact on families and educators. The chart below provides a guide to study participants for reference when reading the sections that follow.

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Ethnicity/Gender</u>	<u>Faculty/Assignment</u>	<u>Yrs. At Oak Glen</u>
Bonnie	Caucasian/Female	Principal	4
Ria	Caucasian/Female	Teacher/G1	25
Kim	Caucasian/Female	Teacher/G2	21
Sheila	Caucasian/Female	Teacher/GK	13
Carol	Caucasian/Female	Teacher/Sp. Ed.	1
Darla	Caucasian/Female	Dir. Student Services	
Gay	Caucasian/Female	Asst. Sup. of Instruct.	

Figure 5 includes each of these four common themes as indicated by gray boxes under which related subthemes are listed. Each theme is described in this section.

Child-centered Approaches

When asked to describe their school, one of the first characterizations shared by each teacher was that their school was child-centered. This child-centeredness included attention to children as individuals. Ria described the school this way:

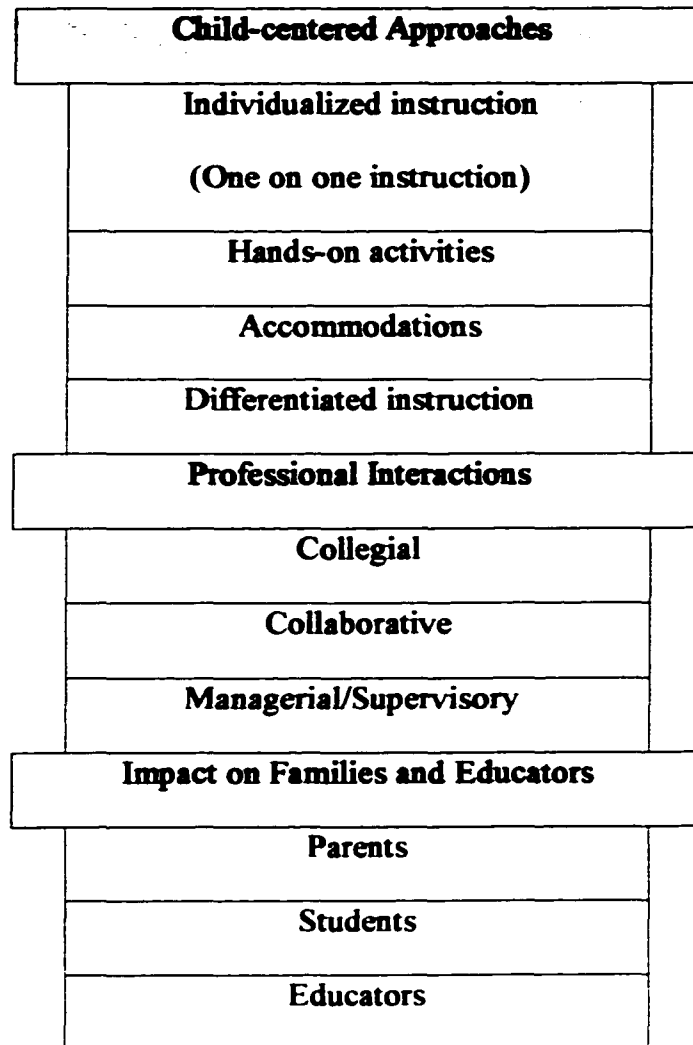
I think we are very child oriented. We know a lot about their background, we know a lot about their families, and I think that everybody wants each child to reach his fullest potential. We're just concerned about each child's welfare.

Kim concurred in stating that "We have a very family-like atmosphere, even among the teachers, and [we] care about the kids, [we're] very caring."

Attention to the needs of individual students was evident in teacher and principal descriptions of the ways in which Oak Glen determined the level of academic performance for students. Teachers made decisions about types of individualized instruction by first understanding the students' current level of achievement. Bonnie explained that all students are given:

assessments at the beginning of each school year; the teachers test the

Figure 5. Common responses and related subthemes.



children in the fall, winter and spring, they determine where they are in terms of their concepts of words, or word study, or what they're working on, what their comprehension is. And then they move from there.

According to Sheila, “[I] plan activities that are at their level. I have to think of a lot of different creative ways to get what I need from the children.” Carol, the special education teacher, considered current academic functioning levels as well.

Primarily, as far as in special education ...I pretty much start where the kids are on grade level and work through those [standards] that would go with that grade level. So I have to take all that standards stuff at the higher-grade level and kind of bring it down so that my students can read it but still do the same skills.

When asked about the specific actions taken to support children with disabilities to master the state standards, teachers’ answers fell into four categories: (a) individualized instruction, (b) hands-on activities, (c) accommodations, and (d) differentiated instruction. Each of these categories is explained below.

Individualized Instruction

Providing on-on-one instruction was one way teachers at Oak Glen provided individualized instruction. For example, Kim stated that some of her students “need certain little things that will help them.” To respond to this need, she often will “sit with him and read it to him. Or I say come back here and tell me about this.” Sheila also utilized the services of an instructional aide to provide one on one assistance by having her “work with my inclusion children. They like lots of one on one attention so they like to spend a lot of time with her.” When

students in Ria's class are having difficulties she provided "More one-on-one with the teacher or an aide. More work with an adult." She explained further that:

I think that's really important. I will introduce it to the group and get them started and lots of time pull those children and just work with them one on one or in a very small group situation or have the aide to do it.

The special education teacher also provided one-on-one assistance. Ria described the contribution of the special education teacher and the special education aide in her class as "They come in together in the mornings and they usually pull two of the inclusion kids. Just giving them one on one assistance."

Hands-on Activities

In addition to one-on-one instruction, teachers also provided hands-on activities to address learning needs of students. Teachers reported that hands-on activities and use of manipulatives were another means of keeping instruction child-centered. When asked about the types of instruction she provided for students with disabilities, Kim responded, "More hands-on things. Sometimes we do projects to show understanding." Ria provided the following examples of hands-on materials provided in her class, "We have Cuisenaire, teddy bears, counting blocks. I bought dominoes; we have lots of manipulatives available. I try to use lots of manipulatives in math; try to make it very concrete." In addition she recalled that "the county has purchased hands-on kits" for use in science.

Sheila explained her instruction in math by stating, “As far as math concepts, number recognition, we use Math Their Way. It has a lot of manipulatives, like counting M & M’s. Children learn best by being more involved with manipulatives.” While several teachers agreed that the use of manipulatives is a way to keep instruction child-centered, there still remained a concern about being able to get manipulative materials: “the thing is getting materials that would help us to teach the standards that are more hands-on. And not paper/pencil. And then the county having the money issues.”

Accommodations

Changes made to content delivery, materials, or assignments as determined by needs of students are considered accommodations (Stainbeck & Stainbeck, 1992). When teachers were asked for specific ways in which they supported increased achievement for students with disabilities, they answered first by describing ways they addressed learning needs in their classroom for the general population. Teachers responded with statements such as: “I do a lot of phonemic awareness activities.” “I have different reading groups, and usually the children that are having more trouble have a smaller reading group.” and “The one thing that we’ve been doing is team teaching science and social studies....” When asked follow-up questions related to the question of supports specific to students with disabilities, teachers most often described accommodations made for students in their classrooms. Bonnie described the following as types of

accommodations (changes made to content delivery, materials, or assignments) teachers at her school might make:

They might tape this [story] for them, or be sure someone reads to them.

Or do X number of problems on this, or they know their reading is slower, so she's only going to do a portion of them. Or we're going to pick out the ones that are most beneficial to her.

Kim explained that she met the needs of students in her classroom by providing "Just some extra special attention when I'm explaining directions on the board; I try to make eye contact with him, walk over to his desk, make sure that he's paying attention." Ria provided accommodations for two students with disabilities who:

are not able to copy from the board so we have laminated handwriting paper, and they do their work on this, and you just erase it and give them something different and the pace has been slower. Lots more repetition, lots more review.

Carol described the accommodations for the students with disabilities she instructed by:

work[ing] visually [on] concepts. And my kids, a lot of times, don't understand their vocabulary so I water down the language of science and social studies before they get in there [the general education classroom]. I

also modify their tests to help them to take in as much information as they can but not necessarily have to be able to write that essay.

Differentiation of Instruction

Each of the teachers at Oak Glen mentioned differentiated instruction as a means for addressing special learning needs of the students in their classroom. Differentiated instruction was defined by teachers as “basically meeting the needs of each child where they are” teaching kids “the same concept, but in different ways” and “It’s just the notion that not all children are at the same place at the same time learning the same way.” Sheila stated, “I think the teachers are really putting more of an emphasis on differentiated instruction and using centers and we’re even allowed to have three half days for working on our differentiated instruction units.” Ria described various ways in which differentiated instruction was implemented:

I think different teachers address that in different ways and to different extents. Some teachers spend a lot of time on doing different boardworks for different levels and having different math groups and so forth. And some may just vary a worksheet.

According to Carol, general education teachers “do a lot of differentiating when I’m not in there to help my students that are identified to succeed.”

Professional Interactions

The four teachers and the principal at Oak Glen described a number of ways in which they interacted with each other. Teachers described working with each other in collegial and collaborative ways. “Collegial interactions” were defined by displays of collective responsibility for all students. In these instances, teachers worked for the success of students with whom they did not have direct instructional contact. Collaborative interactions involved working in partnership with regard to mutual responsibility. In addition to working collaboratively with the principal, teachers also described interactions that were hierarchical. In these interactions, the principal’s actions were managerial or supervisory such as securing funds or monitoring implementation of the standards.

Collegial Interactions

Teachers worked with each other in an effort to help students even though they did not have direct responsibility for the student’s academic success. As Sheila explained:

The teachers work together to make sure the state standards for each grade are covered and reviewed prior to the state assessment we work together; like the first grade teachers will work with us to cover any of their standards that they’re going to need for third grade that maybe aren’t theirs. And second grade works with first and looks at the kindergarten to hit some of the standards that they feel they need to go over again. They’re

going back over third, second, first and K because some of the ones we do in kindergarten that may not be a first and second grade standards will be on the third grade standards test. It's like a whole school effort.

Kim added that when working with other teachers “we just pooled all of our resources and talked about some of the standards that we needed to cover and where our kids were weak – that kind of thing.”

Teachers also worked collegially through their grade level meetings. If their schedules allowed, they met during the day or, more commonly, teachers met before or after school. As the principal noted, “We work really hard on having team meetings so that you stay up with those pacing guides....”

The special education teacher also worked in collegial ways with general education teachers by providing such things as special training to interested teachers related to “the use of Touch Math and how to do the Herman phonetic reading program,” two programs designed for students with special learning needs. Overall, the special education teacher described her working relationship with the general education teachers as “more of a resource or support teacher than a teaching person.”

Collaborative Interactions

Another type of working relationship teachers described was collaborative, which were partnerships with each other in instances of shared responsibility. Bonnie reported that general and special education teachers

worked as collaborative partners related to the IEP. “They [teachers] are a part of the IEP team so they’re involved in knowing exactly what their skills are, present performance level, what the goals are going to be, and what accommodations will be done in the classroom.”

Teachers on the second-grade level team taught science and social studies whereby each teacher researched and taught a unit in one content area and then classes rotated among the teachers. When describing the planning of team teaching Kim conveyed that, “We shared all of our information with each other so we all have a complete unit now...”

[Even though the special education teacher at Oak Glen did not team-teach with a general education teacher, the assistant superintendent of instruction explained that pullout should only take “place where it is absolutely necessary.” She admitted that, “we are still growing in that; that’s not the easiest thing to do-to get teachers to team together.”]

Teachers and the principal worked collaboratively as well. For example, selected teachers and the principal worked together on a state-mandated School Improvement Team. This team met with the principal to discuss progress related to standards and to make plans for corrective action, if necessary, in order to make continuous progress. Both special and general education teachers are members of this team. The principal reported that the team at Oak Glen is the only elementary

school in the district to include a special education teacher on their School Improvement Team.

In addition to working collaboratively where teachers and the principal worked with mutual levels of responsibility, the professional relationship between the teachers and the principal was also one whereby the principal interacted with the teachers on a management or supervisory level.

Managerial/Supervisory Interactions

When asked by the researcher to describe the ways in which the principal supported the achievement of students with disabilities, the teachers were not able to describe any specific actions taken by the principal specifically for students with disabilities in response to standards. However, the teachers reported ways the principal supported and assisted them in their efforts to improve achievement. The four types of supportive assistance included: (a) professional development, (b) monitoring standards implementation, (c) securing funds, and (d) advocating for students with disabilities.

Professional development. Both general and special education teachers mentioned that inservices made available by Bonnie helped them in their jobs as teachers. Carol and Ria described two inservice opportunities. One had to do with “computer technology on things that fifth graders would need to know [for the standard’s assessment].” Another related to having “people come in and talk about economics and looking at materials.” Sheila and Kim described Bonnie’s

supportive assistance in terms of providing information in the way of professional development, “we have lots of inservice and meetings and things like that on ways we can better support the kids or activities that we can do” and “on different things as far as how to teach the seven different ways. The seven different ways to learn – kinesthetic, art, drama, the different ways.”

[The director of special education mentioned that general education teachers did not attend the same staff development workshops as the general education teachers.]

Monitoring standards implementation. When asked to describe the ways she had addressed improving academic performance for students with disabilities related to the state’s standards, Bonnie began by describing the progress of her staff in coming to understand the implications of the standards and students with disabilities. She explained that “we are slowly getting around to where they understand that all kids are going to take this [test]; therefore, you are going to need to include them in your instruction if you have a student for the majority of the day.” She related that for her to make sure this happened, “It’s a matter of just staying on top of it.” She added that implementing the standards for students with disabilities also required “holding special education teachers accountable for the standards where in the past they were going by the IEP. Just that awareness at this school.”

Teachers explained that Bonnie monitored the implementation of the standards by “Just stressing that we do need to pay attention to the standards.” and “Just making sure that we knew all the standards that we were required to have our kids know. Like at the beginning making sure that we were covering them in our lesson plans and our units.” Sheila added that “She pops in and out of the classroom and makes sure that everything is going okay.”

Funding. The year in which data were collected at this site was the final year in which Oak Glen received funding for participation in a district-supported project designed to provide extra resources in the content areas of math and language arts. Bonnie had worked with the PTA to get financing related to the standards for the following school year. According to Kim, Bonnie was responsible for “Some of the money we’re getting the beginning of next year. How the PTA is allocating money. She suggested that teachers get so much to spend for ‘standards’ materials.” Ria added that “the money they give us will sort of bridge what we’re not getting from the county any longer and also help to take care of standards needs.” Ria also corroborated the principal’s support in purchasing necessary materials, stating that “Bonnie has tried to buy things to support the standards that probably we would not have had in the past, and we have been given money to buy materials for the media center that will meet the standards.”

Student advocacy. Teachers described advocacy as one of the ways in which Bonnie supported student achievement. Sheila described her as being “very supportive as far as if you need extra help in your classroom – an aide. I have an aide in my classroom one hour a day, five days a week because I had so many children who were considered at-risk.” As Ria stated, “Our principal is very child-oriented. [She spends] a lot of time on children’s rights and treating children with respect.”

The teachers also described how Bonnie advocated specifically for students with disabilities. For example, Sheila explained that Bonnie “works very closely with our special education teachers and with the classroom teachers to make sure the kids’ needs are being met. For example, Carol described Bonnie as “very much an advocate for our students to be in the regular room to the maximum extent possible.” For example, if a class with a child that needed behavioral support was going on a field trip, the principal would secure

a parent volunteer that’s really strong within the school system to go with those children so they can participate fully in all of our events we have in school. [She’s] very supportive as far as behavior plans that we’ve set up. Carol also described Bonnie as being “Very supportive with the IEP process with sitting in and helping to explain the testing and where the county is coming from as far as standards’ testing.” Additionally, she described Bonnie’s support for

including students with disabilities in general education classrooms in her efforts to:

have a committee, an inclusion team committee, which consists of three special education teachers and four regular education teachers. And having us sit down and write up our goals for inclusion. Kind of our inclusion statement where we stand as a school.

Impact on Families and Educators

Both the principal and teachers were asked about their reactions and feelings related to the effect the standards and the related assessment had on students and families and on them. Their responses are described in separate sections for parents, students, and educators.

Impact on Parents or Guardians

The principal, Bonnie, had the most experiences related to how families responded to the state standards and the related assessment. She reported:

I'm definitely hearing it from their parents' perspective because of the amount of work or just there's so much going on and that they have so much work--things to review and to understand the work and catch back up on the skills. I know one fifth grade teacher went back through and did review sheets. So every night the child had review sheets and their child was having to spend time at night getting those done. And they're saying at what cost? Can't kids be kids?

Bonnie continued:

A lot of parents have been very concerned because now students that didn't do well will end up having to go to summer school this summer. It's tough for parents to say you have done well in school, but yet you didn't do well on the standards assessment. I hear parents talking to them. [The kids are saying], "I don't want to come to school."

Ria reported she had found in regard to parent reaction to the standards that, "Many of them have been shocked at some of the things the kids have had to learn." However, despite these feelings, many parent were "very accepting."

Carol, the special education teacher, described additional apprehension related to the standards for her parents of students with disabilities. She pointed out that for parents it is "all of a sudden they find out my child has a learning disability, now we have a standards test issue to deal with. She described the parents of her students as being "very with-it parents. They ask in IEP meetings, what happens when Johnny gets to eleventh grade and he can't do this? And he doesn't get a regular diploma? What is my child going to do?" Carol expressed concerns about the "parent issue, and what do you tell the parent because you don't know where Johnny's going to be as he gets older."

The principal and the special education teacher not only had concerns with regard to the negative impact the standards and assessment had on parents, but they often had direct experiences with the negative impact the standards, and

particularly the related assessment, had on students. Both the principal and the special education teacher were directly involved in administering the assessment to students and observed students crying and otherwise under stress.

Impact on Students

Teachers and principals described the immediate and observable impact the standards and assessments had on students such as their reactions to the testing situation. They also made predictions about the ultimate long-term consequences the standards might have on students' later educational experiences.

Current effects. None of the general education teachers taught in grades in which the standards assessment was administered; therefore, they did not have first-hand knowledge about the impact of the standards and assessments on children. The principal, however, described from her perspective the pressure placed on students:

because they know if they don't pass these [assessments], that they expect then they have to stay back a grade. Or they don't advance and they also worry about having summer school. So they are placing lots of stress on themselves regarding really wanting to do well.

She added, "We had one little girl who just cried as soon as the test booklet was opened."

The special education teacher recounted a similar experience. "The stress level..." on students is a concern. She continued,

I had two that broke down and cried. We were on the first question of the reading test with headphones, and they broke down and cried because the sample was three sentences long to listen to and when they flipped the book to number one, it's a page to listen to. That was the hardest part, I had a lot of children in tears because they don't have the memory skills to keep all that, particularly dates and things like that, that were on the test. The principal summed up her concerns for students in this statement: It's just a wrongful, hurtful thing--I think for the standards the intent is good, but I think it was derived by people who really didn't know much about education. I think that kids with disabilities are the ones that are going to suffer the greatest in terms of feeling the pressure.

[The director of special education explained that she felt that experiences with the standards test had been "devastating" for students with disabilities: "I don't think this does well for the children's self-esteem to say you can't pass the [test]."
The assistant superintendent explained, however, that "[Principals] don't have any choice in terms of whether [students with disabilities] will be included or not."]

Predicted future effects. When asked to predict the future experiences of students with disabilities as a result of increased academic standards, Ria expressed her concern:

As long as they expect those children to take the standards-based assessment, I think it's going to force them out of school earlier. You're going to have children that are not going to be able to obtain those skills and they're going to say why bother. And probably even children that are not that low functioning, because kids that fall in between the cracks and have no extra help are going to get frustrated and give up. They are just going to know they can't achieve that.

Sheila expressed a similar concern related to the ability of students with disabilities to pass the standards-based assessment:

if you have a child who learns in a different style or has a hard time with that written task, you're just going to have a hard time getting what's [in his head] out on paper. A child who has a hard time with auditory processing or memorizing strings of numbers is going to have a hard time. And if that's one of their weak areas and that's what you're testing them on, they may never get above that 70%, a passing score.

[The assistant superintendent of instruction explained that in the future students "will see themselves as failures and give up on school and drop out. It's happening in elementary school where that ultimate failure—I'm not going to succeed in school-is being pushed down."]

Impact on Educators

With regard to the way in which standards and the related assessments were being implemented in the state, teachers and administrators responded with concerns about both the standards and the standards-based assessment that served as the accountability tool. The principal described the reaction of her staff to the implementation of standards-based reform in her district as:

slowly coming around with all of this, this is really here, this is really published, people are really talking about it. So it's changed behavior; they have changed their behavior and anytime you change you feel it. So they definitely had growing pains this year.

For teachers these "growing pains" had resulted in feelings such as panic, stress, and pressure. Teachers expressed concerns about the standards and the related assessments as a point of origin for these feelings.

Concerns regarding standards. Teachers and the principal were asked about both the positive impact of the state standards and about their concerns with regard to the implementation of standards-based reform. While teachers mentioned some anticipated positive outcomes, they spoke at length regarding the concerns they had about the standards and the assessment that measured standards mastery. Concerns included increased emotional stress, unrealistic difficulty level, inability to meet individual needs, and detrimental changes in instructional practice.

Increased emotional stress and pressure. Bonnie stated that with regard to meeting mandated passing requirements for standards mastery she is “not the least bit concerned about it.” But when asked how teachers were responding to the standards at Oak Glen, she empathized with the teachers:

It hasn’t been a matter of just teachers deciding ‘okay I’m going to use this standard.’ It was a matter of finding the materials, purchasing the materials, having time to read through them, adapt them, and turn them into quality levels for children. And that’s not happened overnight.

Ria explained that:

I think every teacher is going to approach [the standards] differently, but I think they are all going to have that inner pressure that they need to add up. Especially if it comes down to the point they’re publishing the report cards and people are going to compare schools. I think the teachers that always feel pressure are going to feel more pressure because if you really are interested in your kids and you really want them to do their best, you’re going to feel pressure.

Sheila reported that because she is a kindergarten teacher, she feels less stress related to the standards than teachers in other grades did. She stated, “I think the grades where they’re tested feel a lot more pressure maybe than some of the others. I know our third- and fifth-grade teachers have felt a lot of stress this year.”

For Carol, the reaction of teachers to the implementation of higher academic standards at Oak Glen was one of panic. "I mean it really has been panic." She added that this had to do with trying to effectively meet the needs of students with special learning needs. "I guess the biggest concern for the faculty is what do you do with Johnny who is in fifth grade, reading second." She added,

We are doing all we can do to meet the objectives that the children need to know for the state. Being in special education, that's hard when you have children reading two or three grade levels behind to try to keep up with those science and social studies standards when they don't have the language skills to do that.

Unrealistic difficulty level. Several teachers and the principal expressed unease about the level of difficulty related to the standards. Bonnie explained her point of view regarding the difficulty of the standards: "I don't know that we need such high standards for all children in the state." Ria stated also that, "I don't think the standards are minimum. I think they are very high standards." She provided the following example:

On thing that's difficult for students is understanding the difference between goods and services. They don't understand that well at all --the natural resources. I see my really top kids as really grabbing that. The below-average kids don't understand it at all; the average kids are still throwing in some things that aren't natural resources.

Sheila mentioned, “I think some of the concepts are just too advanced for children. I have a gray area about what is the best thing to do.”

Knowing “the best thing to do” also posed a problem for the special education teacher. Processing deficits of her students and the need for students to retain significant amounts of information over the long term was a concern. She addressed this concern by focusing her students on test taking.

[What I do is] more teaching to the test. When you get into the fourth and fifth grade standards in science and social studies, if you’re learning disabled student has memory deficits, that becomes a big issue, because it’s cumulative from what they’ve learned first grade through.

Inability to meet individual needs. For the teachers who were interviewed, the inflexibility of the standards made it difficult to address individual needs. Ria and Kim expressed similar thoughts related to their perceptions about the application of the standards to all but a minute fraction of the student population. When asked about her concerns regarding the implementation of the standards, Ria replied that one of her concerns was “the emphasis on everybody having to achieve the same thing.” She continued, “We’re not all meant to do the same things. And I think it does put a lot of pressure on educators and kids both.”

Kim concurred, “I think that’s what bothers me most, that everyone has to pass everything.” She continued ...

I think that I've sort of felt that all of a sudden we have to have all of these skills covered and our kids know them no matter what level that they are. And that all of our kids need to know them. All of our kids aren't alike. Sheila expressed her concern about the unconditional expectation that virtually all students meet the specified standards this way:

The only thing is, I don't think you can put all kids in a little box and say this is the only thing we're looking for. I think sometimes that is what people tend to do now with the standards.

Bonnie described both her concerns about meeting individual needs and about the outcome she feared for students for which the requirement to meet the higher academic standards might be inappropriate.

I'm saying we have a third grader here who's still just working on beginning [sounds], figuring out how things are put together in terms of getting their skills together and be able to read. We need to be concentrating on teaching that child to read. And I think for him to know what an omnivore is is not what's the most important thing to that child. And not all kids fit that. You do different things for different people. We want kids to be the best they can be, but for many kids this is just another slap in the face that you don't exactly fit in with how we teach or expect you to learn.

[The special education director explained that special education was not included in initial decisionmaking about the standards, which may account for the inappropriateness. “We have not been part of the development; we have not been part of looking at accommodations, they have not included special education which I think is interesting.”]

Detrimental changes in instruction. Teachers and the principal reported on the instructional impact the standards had on instruction. Almost all the respondents listed a heightened focus on the standards and the diminished use of what in the past was considered “fun” instruction. The principal explained the converse relationship between standards implementation and instructional practices:

We just need to be sure that our curriculum is matching these standards. And so teachers have taken that very seriously this year. Of course last year, they probably did lots of units on dinosaurs. I don't think I even saw a dinosaur this year.

Ria substantiated Bonnie's observation in saying that, “we have had to get rid of some units that we like to do just for fun because we haven't had time for them, unless you can tie them into a standard. Sheila also reported hearing “comments like, I can't do some of my fun units because it's not a standard. So that's out the window and I can only do this because it's a standard. Kim stated that,

Sometimes we feel pressured to do just the standards and then not do some of the fun things with kids that we used to do. Some of the units that we used to do, the little fun things. Well, I'm sorry we don't have time for that. We need to get these standards in. It's like getting the standards in and then knowing all of the things and lots of time we don't have time to stop and say, let's just read this book because it's fun.

An additional issue shared by the teachers concerned the pace at which standards needed to be presented in order to introduce them all prior to the related assessment. Kim described this task as one that created "pressure." I think everyone wants our kids to do well. I think the main thing is this pressure, it's trying to get all of these standards [covered]." She was also apprehensive about "doing everything that I need to do. And then if the kids don't do well, it reflects back on the teachers. Like I said, sometimes we have to cover so much material in a certain time."

Bonnie mirrored the concern about covering information, stating that the standards have:

changed the focus. Where before teachers were just trying to do what was best for each child, now they feel they need to just rush, rush, rush, rush to cover everything so by the end of May we're ready for the test.

When asked how she made decisions about when to move on to new content Kim explained that moving on was determined usually by "time

constraints. If I've spent so much time on it and I've got to get so many other things finished, I just go on. Sometimes whether they've gotten it or not." Kim also explained how standards changed the focus of teachers from past priorities,

We started it, differentiated instruction, two years ago and we sort of slacked off a bit because we are trying to make sure all the standards are done. I think we've been concentrating more on standards this year than we have on differentiating. Like last year we did a lot of that. It's fun and it's really different. But it takes a lot of planning.

In order to assist in the appropriate introduction of standards, Bonnie related that, "We did pacing guides at the beginning of the year so each grade level could say here's what we're going to cover. Ria further described the purpose of the pacing guide. "We did a pacing chart where first grade goes back and reviews kindergarten and we tie those standards in." So hopefully that will help them retain the information."

Concerns about standards-based assessment. While the standards-based assessment is of necessity interrelated with the standards, teachers spoke of concerns related specifically to the assessment. One concern was associated with what teachers perceived to be a one-dimensional focus on memorization of facts. Sheila related:

I feel a lot of it is memorization, some things that children might not need to know later. Now I feel like you're asking kids to memorize a lot of stuff

that has no meaning them. I'm just not sure how I feel about them having to memorize that and remember it for four years to take a test on it.

She continued with an additional concern:

This is the only thing we're looking for; this is the only thing we're doing, because this is what we're tested on. We're not looking to see how creative a child is, or what their strengths and weaknesses are, we're looking to see if they can do these things right here and that's all we're looking for.

For Ria, knowing that her students with learning needs would be taking the assessment required her to begin to rethink some of her decision-making approaches:

It's really hard I think this year. In the past I've never really worried about promotion and retention, but with the standards, that has been a real concern. One of the children this year I am very concerned about because when you think about inclusion you think about the children getting lots of help and working at their own level throughout school. But then you know that when they hit third grade they are going to have to do something as far as the standards are concerned.

Bonnie and Sheila also expressed concerns related to the assessment and students

with disabilities. Said Bonnie:

I'm distressed because we do not want to discriminate. We are going to give them equal access to the test of course. So the idea that we're going to have all kids taking that test but it's not developmentally appropriate is bothersome for me.

Sheila's perspective was different in that she would like to:

see a separate test. I think for the kids with disabilities, the feeling is overwhelming. It's kind of been presented to us that the standards test, even though some of our children are performing significantly below grade level, it's practice with the hope of getting them caught up so that when they get to high school, and when the standards tests really count toward graduation, they'll at least be familiar with the test-taking process.

Part Three: Emergent Themes

Interpretation and Discussion of Themes

Analysis of common responses derived from transcribed interviews revealed several emerging themes. Themes were examined and divided into overarching themes and subthemes. Multiple sources were used to interpret the themes, including related field notes, observations of the researcher, and applicable comments of the participants. Both the overarching themes and related subthemes that became apparent through data analysis will be discussed in this section. Each theme will be discussed in light of these interpretations.

Child-centered Approaches

A predominant theme among all participants at Oak Glen was related to the child as the heart of professional obligation. Being “child-oriented” and “caring about kids” was a trademark characterization of the school according to its staff. Child-centered approaches included individualized instruction, hands-on activities, accommodations, and differentiated instruction. Associated with a child-oriented approach was a desire by the teachers to help each student to “teach his fullest potential.”

Paradoxically, the child-centeredness that teachers described was not substantiated for students with disabilities. The student-centered approaches described by the teachers often did not include explicit consideration of students with disabilities despite their inherent special learning needs. For example, when asked to describe their actions related to what they did to improve academic achievement for students with disabilities, none of the teachers, including the special education teacher, referenced how they addressed specific needs of students with disabilities in their answer. Rather, they described interventions they would employ with any child that might have academic difficulty such as “sitting with him and reading,” providing “more hands-on things,” or providing “certain little things that will help them.” Only after being asked again by the researcher to address students with disabilities did teachers mention specific actions such as

accommodating student needs such as “having different reading groups” or “taping a story.”

Accommodations

In response to the second inquiry, the common response by teachers was that the specific needs of students were met through accommodations to the materials used in class. Examples of accommodations for students with disabilities included audiotaping stories, assigning fewer problems than expected of other students, providing laminated handwriting paper, and modifying tests. Teachers did not mention accommodations to their instruction that would take into account processing weaknesses of students with disabilities such as providing advance or graphic organizers, for example, nor did they mention teaching students independent learning skills or specific strategies that would allow them to compensate for their disability as described in the literature (Deshler & Schumaker, 1994; Schrag, 1999).

Individualized Instruction

Providing one-on-one or small-group instruction was frequently mentioned by teachers as a means for addressing needs of students with disabilities or other students in need of special attention. While in some instances the teacher mentioned that she or the special education teacher might provide this instruction, in every case an instructional aide was named as being as likely to be the instructor for these groups. Ergo, the adult with the least specialized training

was often assigned to work with students that had the most specialized academic needs.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction as a means for meeting a variety of learning needs was mentioned by both the principal and the majority of the teachers. When asked about differentiated instruction, teachers' responses lacked specificity with regard to what defines differentiation and how to translate it into practice. For example, teachers' definitions varied from "meeting students where they are" to "teaching kids the same concept, but in different ways." Examples of differentiation varied little from examples of accommodations. Some teachers "vary a worksheet" while other teachers had "different math groups" or "did different board work for different levels of students." Like the examples of accommodations, these examples of differentiated instruction represented changes in practice that required minimum advance planning, preparation, or deliberation related to implementation of the most advantageous intervention to address specific and unique learning needs.

It should also be noted that another term that lacked specificity with regard to meaning was "inclusion." Teachers defined inclusion in very broad terms: "the amount of time on their IEP" and "the ones with IEP." Another teacher saw inclusion as "where the kids are in all day." These definitions reflect understandings that are based on inclusion as a person or place rather than a

philosophy whereby students with disabilities are entitled to the same rights to be educated in general education classrooms as their typical peers. Additionally, neither of these definitions revealed a level of personal accountability for granting educational consideration to students with disabilities.

Professional Interactions

Teachers and the principal described three arrangements in which they worked: (a) collegial, where they worked for a common good regardless of their level of accountability for students; (b) collaborative, where responsibility for students was shared; and (c) managerial or supervisory, where the principal assisted teachers in their efforts to increase student achievement related to the standards.

Collegial/Collaborative Interactions

Overall, while collegial and collaborative work structures at Oak Glen did not work against each other, neither were these partnerships synergistic. That is, even though teachers and principals worked together, the outcomes as reported by the interview participants did not indicate that their working relationship led to increased effectiveness for the team members or improved academic outcomes for students.

Teachers described working in a collegial fashion related to making sure the standards were covered. For example, teachers came together “in a whole school effort” to make sure that all standards were introduced or reviewed per

grade level as necessary. Throughout the year teachers continued to meet around this issue at grade level meetings “to stay up with pacing guides” which were designed to prescribe the rate of introduction of new standards.

Moreover, teachers described working collaboratively through team teaching although the teachers did not co-plan or share in the delivery of instruction. Teachers and the principal were members of a School Improvement Team where participants met to “discuss progress related to the standards and plan for corrective action.” This team determined needed professional development and shared information from district-wide meetings. [Researcher’s note: Review of a document outlining the purpose of the School Improvement Team indicated that of the seven responsibilities for these teams in this district, three focused on determining needs and three focused on determining related “inservice”. Connection between professional development and student achievement was noted once.] The third type of professional relationship was managerial /supervisory and will be discussed separately in the next section on leadership.

The stated purposes of these relationships were primarily to make sure that the standards were being “covered” rather than on ways to improve educational outcomes or instructional or leadership effectiveness. The focus on the system inputs (standards) rather than processes (instructional and leadership effectiveness) or outcomes (improved achievement) made it difficult to consider

the variety of components that lead to improvement in student academic achievement.

Managerial/Supervisory Interactions

Building-level leadership practices were primarily supportive (managerial/supervisory) rather than directive. Neither the teachers nor the principal was able to describe a school-instituted initiative, program, or plan that specifically addressed the unique needs of students with disabilities or served as a means of responding to poor student performance on the standards assessment. The principal's actions were supportive and tended to highlight the implication that the teachers were ultimately accountable for the school's success. For example, supportive actions included monitoring teacher implementation of the standards, materials related to the standards, and allowing teachers to attend professional development workshops concerning the standards.

Impact on Families, Students, and Educators

Responses of teachers and the principal at Oak Glen included some positive comments related to the issue of standards. For example, teachers mentioned that "Raising our standards is a good idea" and that having a common curriculum was important for "a modern society for kids who are moving around more and moving from school to school."

On the whole, however, responses related to the impact of standards were predominantly not positive. Families were reported to be concerned with the

amount of work that students needed to do in preparation for the standards assessment. Work required to study for the standards-assessment in addition to homework was leaving little time for anything else in the evenings. Additional stress was placed upon some parents because their children became so stressed at test time that they became physically ill.

However, while parents were under stress, students and teachers were bearing the brunt of the consequences. Students felt stress related to the actual participation in taking and passing the assessments. Teachers reported that they worked hard at making sure all the standards were covered prior to the test. The pace required to cover all the standards left little time for teachers to reflect critically on their practices in terms of their effectiveness related to meeting the academic needs of students including those with disabilities. Teachers were aware that the standards have changed their instructional practices in ways about which they were not comfortable. These included having to move on to new content “whether they’ve gotten it or not,” differentiating instruction less, and having to wait until after the standards assessment to incorporate “fun” into their lessons.

Case Study Two

Pine Hills Elementary

Part One: Description of the School

Physical Setting

Pine Hills Elementary School is a modern building in a suburban neighborhood. The one-story, brick school is fronted by a large paved parking lot. To one side is a fenced playground with several large pieces of equipment painted in primary colors. The school is surrounded on three sides by small, single-family homes situated on small lots. A four-lane highway is just beyond the playground along which are located several small businesses.

The school office felt very inviting. The waiting area contains a bench along one wall and a child-sized table with three chairs on another. A large fish tank with several fish is situated beside the table and chairs. Beside the door is a podium with a sign-in book for visitors and volunteers. A steady stream of adults signed in and out during each visit made by the researcher. Two desks for secretaries are located behind a counter, which separates them from the waiting area. Filing cabinets are located in the two back corners of this area. Windows are featured along the back wall of the office, which looks out over the parking lot. To the right of the counter is a hallway along which is located the assistant principal's office, the principal's office, and a conference room.

Participant Demographics

The principal and four teachers, three general education teachers and one special education teacher, participated in the study. In addition, central office personnel represented by the division's director of pupil services and assistant superintendent of instruction were interviewed. All participants are female. Each teacher interviewed at Pine Hills holds an undergraduate degree in addition to their certification to teach, with the exception of one general education teacher who also holds a master of education degree in middle school education. The number of years of experience for the teachers range from 8 to 10 years with the special education teacher having three years of experience. The principal has 18 years of experience as a general education teacher in addition to 12 years of experience as an administrator. The assistant superintendent of instruction and director of pupil services each has 23 years of experience. The assistant superintendent of instruction holds a doctorate in administration whereas the director of pupil services holds a master of education degree along with certifications to teach general and special education.

School Demographics/Background

The division in which Pine Hills is located has 10 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 4 high schools. Enrollment at Pine Hills totals about 550 students and includes classes from kindergarten through fifth grade.

There are five teachers per grade level. Three special education teachers are also employed along with two guidance counselors and a media specialist. Teachers at Pine Hills are described by the principal as being “good” and educators that “care very much.” She added: “They have had a history of doing lots of creative things with children [such as] multi-age grouping.” Teachers describe the faculty as “a really great group of people that you feel like you can really ask a lot of each other,” who “really care very many about students,” and are “a real good blend that meets the needs of the students.”

According to the school’s principal, 33% of the students at Pine Hills receive free or reduced lunch. Furthermore, of the total population of 550 students, 86 students, or 16%, are identified as having disabilities. The ethnic breakdown is represented by 67% Caucasian with the next highest ethnic category being African American at 29%. The remainder of the population is made up of students of Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian descent.

A local tourist industry creates seasonal transience. The kindergarten teacher stated that “we have a very transient population with our children who are lower socioeconomic.” The principal added:

We spend a fair amount of our time at the beginning of the year getting to know many of those children who are needy who are new. And by the end of the year they may not even be here.

Pine Hills also has two multi-age classes that include a combination of first and second grade. In addition, the school offers an extended year program from the beginning of August to the end of June for students who need additional academic support. Students with disabilities are not eligible for this program. After-school tutoring programs offered by teachers are also provided.

Curriculum

The fifth-grade teacher described the curriculum as, “pretty standard. We follow all the guidelines that are given to us from the school board.” According to the principal, “we follow the county’s curriculum and that curriculum has recently been realigned with the standards, so the curriculum that is taught right now matches [the state standards].” To assist teachers, the division has developed a curriculum guide that incorporates the standards into the existing division curriculum.

The special education teacher mentioned that as far as the “countywide [curriculum], we don’t have any difference there. We do try to use the division curriculum. We attempt to teach the children where they are in the curriculum.” She added that in using the division curriculum, “Retention [of information] is a problem and that’s very scary with the standards because everything can’t be taught the week before the standards.”

Family and Community Involvement

Teachers and the principal described the local community as being primarily made up of families with children. Parents and the community have been informed about academic standards by local newspapers and school-generated letters and meetings. Community members are actively involved at the school. One teacher noted that “we also have a community church that comes. We have gone to them and trained the tutors and then they come and they tutor our children.”

The principal estimates that 125 parent volunteers are involved in some way at Pine Hills. Two teachers mentioned using parent volunteers in their classroom. In terms of family involvement, one teacher stated that “the families that support us, support us very well.” Another teacher stated that “to get the additional classroom support she needed she tries to get a lot of parent support as far as parent volunteers.”

Student Achievement

Pine Hills Elementary did not pass any of the standards-based assessments for the most recent year for which results are available. The principal described the school as having “truly a diverse group of students so that teachers are really worrying with a wide range of students in their classes.” She further described the achievement levels in her school:

There's a quarter of the population in each of the four quartiles on any standardized test. Which means that we truly do have 25% of our students who are in the upper quartile who are very bright gifted students --we have a good size participation in the gifted program for the county. And then the reverse is true that we have a strong 25% that are in the very bottom quartile. They are needy children. They move a lot so that the 25th percentile changes, but we always have a group in that percentile.

In terms of helping students to achieve, one teacher noted: "The motivational part is just so hard because if they're not motivated from home it's just real hard for us to try to get them to want to work and to do their best here at school."

When asked to talk about student achievement, the special education teacher was the only one who mentioned students with disabilities. She explained that from her perspective academic achievement for her students is "amazing in some instances for sure. By the time they're in fourth and fifth grade, we see huge giant leaps made in their progress in school."

Inclusion

When asked to define inclusion, the principal stated that:

in an inclusion class, I would look at the total number of students who had a special education label and place them in maybe one but usually two

regular classrooms and they would be the inclusion classes for that grade level.

The fifth-grade teacher interviewed for this study described her class as, “the inclusion class. I have five special education children.” She further explained, “when they asked me if I would take the inclusion kids, I said I will take everything except behavioral and emotional [disabilities]. I personally don’t believe they belong in the public school.”

The special education teacher described an inclusive setting at Pine Hills from a special education perspective:

here we rarely pull a child out of a classroom. If he has been identified as a child needing special education, we try to go to the classroom and meet that child’s needs within the classroom without having to remove them into a one on one or small group situation. *[The special education director noted that she believed that even though the district claimed to be inclusive, educators still talked in terms of special education “programs” rather than an “array of services.” Of note is that during the week the special education director was interviewed, the principal at Pine Hills decided to combine students with behavioral disabilities in one self-contained class. This was implemented without communication with the district’s special education department.]*

Part Two: Response Patterns

The chart below provides a guide to study participants for reference when reading the sections that follow.

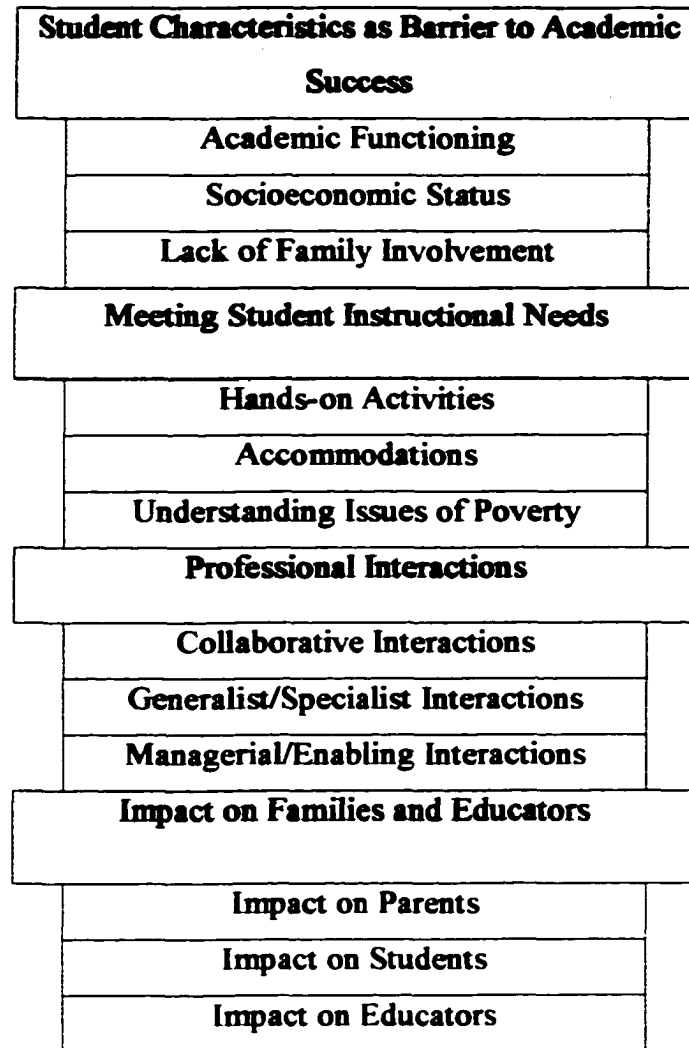
<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Ethnicity/Gender</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Yrs. At Pine Hills</u>
Marge	Caucasian/Female	Principal	8
Mandy	Caucasian/Female	Teacher/GK	8
Pat	Caucasian/Female	Teacher/Sp. Ed	2
Rita	Caucasian/Female	Teacher/G5	1
Tonya	Caucasian/Female	Teacher/G1-2	2
Carla	Caucasian/Female	Dir. Student Services	
Trish	Caucasian/Female	Asst. Sup. of Instruct.	

At this site, the common responses are classified as: (a) student characteristics as barriers to academic success, (b) meeting student instructional needs, (c) professional interactions, and (d) impact on families, students, and educators. Figure 6 includes each of these four common themes as indicated by gray boxes under which the related subthemes are listed. Each theme is described in this section.

Student Characteristics as Barrier to Academic Success

When asked to characterize the school, each teacher and the principal began by describing student characteristics. These characteristics included academic functioning levels of students, the socioeconomic status of students, and

Figure 6. Common responses and related subthemes.



the level of involvement of the students' parents.

Academic Functioning

In describing Pine Hills, Tonya stated:

overall I'd say it is an interesting cross section of students. You have your students with a lot of ability and then you have a very small area in the middle and then we have quite a large group of students that need additional help.

In terms of academic functioning, other teachers described the lack of readiness for learning with which many students entered school. Mandy related:

We have half-day kindergarten. And so my morning kids come from the affluent neighborhoods... they've had more opportunities and we can't look that in the face and say that doesn't exist because it does exist for most of them. And then in my afternoon class come most of my socioeconomically low students.... So I find that academically my morning class, 90% of them, are much stronger and they come to school ready to learn, they have the readiness skills. They are up on their colors and numbers and letters, the listening to story ability and all those things. The afternoon, they're just completely at a different area. And it's usually 90% of them who have the academic problems there.

Teachers also had concerns about the impact of school readiness and academic potential would have on student performance on the standards-based assessment. Rita related:

We're talking about a population where almost 50% or more of these kids are at risk. We all say they should be retained. But quite honestly when it comes down to it the kids have to take the standards test. I can tell you right now that 50% of my class isn't going to pass.

She added:

We're going to do everything that we can possibly do but we are not going to set our standards as high as some of the other schools that don't have this same specific problem. You're going to do everything possible that you can for those individual students and then be realistic.

With regard to the standards assessment, Mandy responded that "We've not done so well. But that's okay. We're not bothered by that because we know who we service."

Socioeconomic Status

Teachers described the student population as being disparate in terms of socioeconomics. Rita described the school as comprised of "both high and extremely low socioeconomics. There's not a whole lot in the middle." This was corroborated by Mandy: "[we have] our upscale neighborhoods and lower socioeconomic neighborhoods. It seems we lack in the middle."

Mandy explained that at Pine Hills, “We have many, many children who come from the lower socioeconomic.” Tonya further explained, [This] comes across whenever they take the standards-based tests. When you are looking at a school and you say well this school has 80% that are achieving at this level and our school has 60%, then you can look at that whole area and say but this group doesn’t come in to school ready to learn. They don’t come in at the same place.

Marge also noted that “having them go over the pass rate [was not] a realistic goal for the clientele here.”

In discussing the socioeconomic background of the students, Rita observed that the students begin school “already behind” academically. She described her position:

I’m not a miracle worker; I can’t wave a magic wand and pour all the information into their little heads. So they are here in fifth grade. They just don’t have all the building blocks to learn all the information. I see that daily in here. It sounds so hopeless.

Lack of Family Involvement

In describing students, teachers also spoke of the lack of involvement of their parents. Tonya expressed her concerns about parent support in taking note of

the fact that:

about 45% of the students have some kind of a situation where education isn't a priority. If you try to contact the parents they're not available or you make a conference and they don't come. Or you get a paper back that says we didn't have a chance to do the homework. It's almost like you have to teach the child how to help the parent know that that's important.

Pat mentioned: "I don't know that they [parents] are always able to help their children." She further explained that it was her belief that:

Most kids' parents really do want their children to do well in school but I think some them just don't really know how to help or don't have the time to help. [They] just come from huge families that have only so many minutes in the day that you can sit down and actually give them the kind of attention they need.

Rita shared her thoughts that students lack the background experiences that parents can provide such as: "having sat and read with them since they were infants. They don't come to school having listened to classical music, they don't come to school knowing their colors, they don't come to school knowing their numbers."

Mandy pointed out that the school tried to provide some of these

background experiences by:

getting lots of outside resources, some of the theatre programs which are so special to our children because they don't have parents that are going to take them to the opera or the symphony or the theater so these are more experiences for them.

She described other efforts by the school to help parents in their efforts to support their children: "We provide parents family literacy nights where they can come by. And we get a certain amount of parents that come. And usually they are not the ones that require the materials."

Meeting Student Instructional Needs

When describing their school, teachers mentioned that theirs was a school where the staff "really cares very much about students." And that at the school "different types of teaching for different types of kids" are offered that provided "a real good blend that meets the needs of the students." When asked to describe the ways in which teachers might support the academic achievement of students with disabilities, the principal noted:

I have to say that I don't think that at any time I would be able to say that they do this kind of thing just for kids that have a special education label. We have a lot of students that are in a gray area. So in a lot of cases, we have groupings that include special education but are not limited to special education...

The special education teacher explained that when making decisions about meeting instructional needs: “a lot of what I do is just gut reaction for me as to what this child needs to help understand this concept.” When describing the ways in which they meet needs of individual students, however, other teachers included providing hands-on activities, accommodations, and understanding issues of poverty.

Hands-on Activities

One way that general education teachers at Pine Hills reported that they met needs of students with disabilities in the general education classroom was through the use of hands-on activities. The principal made clear that: “for years the teachers here have tried to use more manipulatives with special needs students, more hands-on things.” While the special education teacher mentioned neither hands-on activities nor the use of manipulatives with regard to meeting individual needs, several general education teachers referenced both, especially in the area of math. Mandy stated:

I do a lot of Math Their Way, which is all hands-on. So I use a lot of those manipulatives and so we do have the standards for that as well and the math curriculum. And I make sure that I am covering all those skills and just using the Math Their Way program and a wide variety of hands-on activities.

Tonya also mentioned using the program for “the hands-on learning that you [can] do with [it]. So what I tend to do is use the Math Their Way and just extend it into the activities that second graders need to know.”

In describing the ways she addressed the needs of students with disabilities in her classroom, Rita revealed “first of all I do a lot of hands-on math with these guys. A lot of getting up to the board, coming up to the overhead, getting them up and moving because they can’t sit still anyway.”

However, applying hands-on activities for students was not without complications as Mandy noted:

if you look at any of the booklets that have come from the state department, like especially in math, the probability and statistics books all those--they are all hands-on. And if you ask any of our upper grade teachers, they’re meeting with the frustration of, oh great, the state’s supporting all the hands-on activities but at the same time out of the other side of their mouth they’re saying but you have to cover all these skills for that time and the upper grade teachers are finding that they just can’t do it.

Providing hands-on activities were also noted in the science content area.

Rita mentioned such activities in science: “We do a lot of hands-on science because they get a lot out of hands-on science [materials]. There’s not so much hands-on social studies that you can do.”

Accommodations

When asked to describe their actions in relation to meeting the needs of students with disabilities, classroom accommodations were mentioned most often. General education teachers described accommodations, interpreted by the researcher as modifications to content delivery, materials, or activities.

Although not valid criteria as outlined by state guidelines, Rita noted that four or five of her students with disabilities were exempted from taking the standards-based assessment because their reading and math skills were below grade level. As a result of the exemptions she and the special education teacher “don’t focus on that [the standards-based assessment]” but rather they “just focus on what [the students] can do which is they can learn the math and they’ve got to learn to read. And that’s where we’re focusing on these guys.” To support these students Rita incorporated:

a lot of notetaking where I write things on the board, they copy it down.

I’m a big believer of outlining chapters because I’ve found that, especially with these low kids, they outline it they are at least going to get 50 on the test.

Rita also noted that she:

will take answers from them verbally if they can’t write it down and many times they can’t write it down. I’ll always give them the opportunity to-- do you want to call on someone to help you, maybe jog your memory?

And let them do that – co-work there. I do a lot of cooperative learning groups.

Mandy described the modifications that she made for the students in her class. For example, she explained that:

You just make sure that you have your hands on their cheeks so that they're focused on you. The child who's had no experiences, they are just going to have lots of visuals. ... if I have a child who has a difficult time transferring information, I might have their own personal example in front of them.

Tonya mentioned an accommodation provided in class that could be used during the standards-based assessment:

I was talking to somebody the other day at an IEP meeting and they were saying that as scratch paper they can use graph paper. And they can [use] graph paper as manipulatives to where I have these squares and I can put the numbers in these squares and I can use the squares as a number line.

Understanding Issues Related to Poverty

With the exception of one general education teacher, learning to better understand family situations that influence the learning and behavior of students at Pine Hills was mentioned by every staff member as a way to better address the needs of students at the school. In the summer previous to this study, the principal

hired a consultant and coordinated a two-day staff development for teachers related to understanding poverty. The principal, Marge, stated that:

What I have found is that while that it is not directed to special education, it is very pertinent to special education students, those strategies are. That seems to be what I hear teachers using--various strategies that are in that program with children who are not experiencing the success they might like.

Marge illustrated use of one such strategy:

The plan, do, and review strategy--teachers are really working with the kids on articulating what their plan is and reviewing whether they have met their plan or not. She [the consultant] has strategies for reading and marking paragraphs, identifying various words in a paragraph. I have a number of teachers who are using that. They don't use it just with special education, but they find that it is particularly helpful to special education students. They will read with a pencil in their hand now with the intent of going to find information.

Rita offered a differing opinion about the applicability of this information for addressing students with disabilities:

that's not just for the special education students, that's really for half of our school, the generational poverty type students that we have. The things have helped with some of them, but not the special education students.

They may very well be generational poverty, but they have other problems besides that.

However, other teachers agreed that the information that Marge had brought to the school related to better understanding of their students who lived in poverty was beneficial. Pat noted that what she's learned about generational poverty has helped her to understand students' lack of motivation as something "they've gotten passed to them from their parents' generation and that education's nice but not necessarily a goal that they will be able to obtain." Tonya concurred that this increased understanding helped her: "We get together and talk about studies and what kinds of practices really work with these kids--that there are definite, specific ways that you need to teach those students." She continued:

It's not important [to them] and you are asking them to do what is so unfamiliar to them that it's not getting in. So here's a proven way or a strategy to try so that you can hopefully get that end result.

Mandy also noted the importance of the information she had received:

Even though we all have a pretty good understanding, we're not there and there's no way that we can totally relate to what they are going through on a daily basis. So I think even though that's not like saying how you specifically make them achieve better, I think that it makes us understand them and to meet them at their level or

just having us to interact with them better and to realize what's important to them and how we're expecting them to value what we value. So I think that's very beneficial.

Professional Interactions

Teachers noted that at Pine Hills there was “a lot of teamwork which helped the students a lot.” They described the staff as being “open to sharing a great deal of experience, materials, [and] knowledge” and that there was a “generous feeling and great sharing of ideas.” *[The director of special education explained that as part of her own selection criteria (in addition to that provided by the researcher) she considered the positive attitudes of the staff at Pine Hills.]*

While teachers worked together in such formal arrangements as team teaching and in more informal ways such as support groups within a given grade level, the principal did not require teachers to work closely unless it was of their own choosing:

We have some combinations where teachers do work very closely together. I present that as an option, I don't require it. I feel like it is something teachers should do if they feel good about that and with each other.

When asked to describe how the staff interacted at Pine Hills, teachers characterized their relationships in terms of the collaborative ways in which they worked. In collaborative interactions, teachers worked in partnership

characterized by mutual responsibility for students. Teachers also described the interactions between generalists (general education teachers) and the specialists (educators with areas of specialty such as reading or learning disabilities). These interactions were distinguished by exchanges [Researchers note: exchanges are interactions that may include, but are not limited to, collaborative, collegial, or hierarchical interactions between teachers such as between the learning disabilities specialist and general education teacher].

Collaborative Interactions

Tonya described her working relationship with other teachers at the school as consisting of “a lot of collaboration.” She explained that making decisions for students in her classroom was “really challenging” but that:

it really helps to have the special education teacher. She doesn't have all the answers but I really feel we can work as a team to try and figure out what is best because if it was left up to me--you just get real frustrated about am I going in the right direction. Is what I'm doing the problem or what else could we do?

Marge noted that teachers were team-teaching and that “There are many spots where two teachers switch off for science and social studies and they do that to the degree that they want to do it.” Teachers accomplished this in two ways. Some teachers divided subjects such as science and social studies between them

and taught one of those subjects to both groups of students, other teachers grouped students by ability within the same grade level. Rita explained:

[We] grouped the kids according to abilities and I ended up with low math and she ended up with high and middle math. It also keeps the kids working more on their own level because we have such a large diversity of grade levels.

Teachers and the principal also described how they work collaboratively on teams such as the Special Education Child Study Team and the Student Assistance Team. For example, Tonya described the Student Assistance Team:

[It] is the first thing if you have a concern. They meet weekly and so you just fill out the paperwork and kind of write up your concerns. And at that meeting there are usually two teachers, the principal, the reading specialist at least on that team. And its just kind of a time for the teacher to share what the concerns are and maybe to come up with some different ideas.

Other team meetings included those that occurred at each grade level.

Marge described that she “holds grade level meetings approximately once a month, a little bit less often than that. And at that time we work together on common concerns.” She elaborated that:

They have chances to collaborate with each other, but not as a total grade level on a daily basis. They do not have a common planning time for the whole grade level [but] pairs of teachers have common planning time.

Marge also pointed out that teachers were beginning to form supportive groups among various levels. “First grade now has started a language arts group and they share ideas.” Rita described a group that met at the fifth grade level that addressed how to meet student needs. She also saw it as:

our mental health hour on Friday afternoons. We sit there and go, if so and so had just been retained in fourth grade because they are not mature and they’re missing pieces and they need to be back in a fourth grade, they’ve been successful in a fourth-grade curriculum. They’re not successful in a fifth-grade curriculum.

In addition to collaborative relationships where teachers worked together regularly and over extended periods of time such as the ongoing Student Advisory Team or grade level support groups, teachers also worked in relationships that involved more intermittent interactions.

Specialist/Generalist Interactions

The general education teachers mentioned a variety of staff members with specific areas of expertise who were available to provide assistance in working with students. These included the learning disabilities specialist, occupational and physical therapists, and a reading specialist. As one teacher noted:

The reading specialist for first grade comes in and she does a literacy group. In this class, I see the speech therapist and the occupational therapist comes in. The physical therapist has checked in several times.

But all of those different specialists check in and want to know how the students are doing.

Tonya described the assistance she received from the speech pathologist and the learning disabilities specialist in the comments below:

With the speech teachers a lot of times they'll say 'if you can do these kinds of activities in the classroom then we don't need to pull them out.'

So sometimes you'll take a small group of students that could benefit from an activity like that and then it could be taught right in the classroom so there's no pullout.

Tonya continued by explaining the assistance she received from working with the learning disabilities specialist:

Before the school year begins, we find out if there are students with special needs. And at that point the specialist [learning disabilities specialist] will come in and say I need to work with your students a half-hour every day and then she'll schedule that time in. And of course you have your regular schedule. So trying to figure out what's the best time for them to miss. In second grade we've decided that it's during the social studies/science time.

Rita stated that the special education teacher assisted her by providing work for students in her fifth-grade class: "she gives me the daily editing for these guys because two of them are on first grade level." [Researcher's note: daily

editing consisted of sentences written incorrectly that students were required to edit.]

Pat, the learning disabilities specialist, described that a lot of the work she did with the general education teachers was:

fly by the seat of your pants work. We talk a lot. It's not on a regular basis. Some days--well, we just aren't getting anywhere with this; let's just drop it. We will do a lot of onsite, right there.

She continued:

Now with the general education teachers that I work with, I really feel more of a partner than anything. So sometimes I feel like my position is an aide's position where I am just in assisting the children. Sometimes I'm just an extra hand in the room to keep the children on task to see if they're listening.

Managerial/Enabling Interactions

When asked by the researcher to describe the ways in which the principal supported the achievement of students with disabilities, the teachers were not able to give any specific actions taken by the principal specifically for students with disabilities in response to standards. However, the principal and teachers interacted collaboratively by serving together on teams designed to jointly solve problems related to student needs. Teachers more often reported hierarchical interactions with the principal when discussing their professional interactions. For

example, they described the professional development opportunities and materials Marge had provided for them in addition to the encouragement she bestowed related to the process of increasing academic achievement.

Professional development. Teachers pointed out that Marge provided information and professional development that helped them “to have the students be successful.” According to Mandy, she attended “conferences, always getting information.” Marge’s interest in generational poverty led to several types of professional development for her staff. Tonya observed that understanding “generational poverty [has] helped us. We have had several staff development days.... I think it’s really supportive for the teachers.” Tonya also mentioned that on these professional development days Marge had led discussions about:

what does a successful student look like and what does a struggling student look like. What does a student that might benefit from this? It might not be our special education students. They’re already getting as much help as they possible can. But what about these students that are almost there or they need that extra time.

She added: “We get together and talk about studies and what kinds of practices really work with these kids--that there are definite, specific ways that you need to teach those students.” She’s had us go through some [professional development] tapes so that we can better understand our children.”

Pat noted that: “some general education [professional development] goes on that I haven’t attended or been part of and maybe should have been.” While recognizing that she had missed opportunities, she also stated that she didn’t “know that it would have made any difference if I had.”

[The special education director noted that special education staff at the central office level were excluded from general education information and decisionmaking. She noted “While we’re included supposedly from an administrative standpoint, special education is separate.”]

Funding. Teachers mentioned that Marge supplied necessary materials to help teachers to provide instruction related to the standards. Mandy recalled that Marge:

supplies us with the trade books and we have a multitude of copies of books that are available to all of our teachers. She really does try to come up with as much money as possible to fund the science and math closet. So she really supports it in that department.

Mandy also noted that Marge had also provided money “for overnight fieldtrips or extended day field trips.” She elaborated:

We’re limited to 9:00 to 1:30 field trips and if you can get there and back and do it, then you’re ok. But she’s allowed some of our classes to even go to some of those far away places that these kids would never get to venture to. So that when they are studying the regions of [the state] there’re

actually some concrete experiences that they've had. So she supports lots of field trips that we can do with kids.

When asked about funds provided to students with disabilities related to improving achievement, Pat stated that:

I'd love to see some remedial math programs purchased but you're talking about big-ticket items. I know a lot of attention is given to reading-boosting programs like Reading Recovery and Reach for Reading. And the only way special education students get to participate in those is if they get into it before they were identified as needing special education.

Rita responded to the question related to the supports the principal has provided to students with disabilities by saying that it was hard for her to address because the year before she had been:

hired as a social studies specialist to help get those fourth and fifth graders to be able to pass that social studies standards. And then I picked up a class this year, so I have a hard time with that one.

Rita mentioned that she had "asked for math games because my kids like games." But she was not sure if they were ordered. She added: "I'm sure there're things that [she would] like to give us, but we're always tied up with financial problems."

Principal encouragement. Teachers frequently related that the principal was “very encouraging and positive” and “very supportive,” often telling them to “continue plugging along.” Mandy said:

I really believe in my heart that she does what she knows she has to by the state and by the superintendent but at the same time she says to us, I know you guys are doing the best you can and I am going to continue to support you.

With regard to standards and the related assessment Pat noted that Marge had:

given us all just a positive outlook that we can do this She’s said we’re going to do everything that we can possibly do but we are not going to set our standards as high as some of the other schools that don’t have this same specific problem. She set reasonable goals--not that we’re going to pass but that we’re going to improve. I haven’t felt undue pressure from any of the administration about the standards. I can’t really put my finger on anything specifically that she has done other than getting us a realistic goal for our students.

Mandy discussed her concern about the transience of the school’s population and that, even though “we’re not always testing the same children.”

the principal is:

really is great about that. She does not make us feel badly about that at all. She knows that we work very hard with out kids. She wants to make sure that we continue to give them lots of hands-on experiences knowing that those are the right things for our children.

Impact on Families and Educators

The principal and teachers were asked to talk about their observations and feelings related to the affect the standards and the assessment had on parents, students, and on themselves. Their thoughts and comments are provided in the following three sections that highlight comments related to parents, students, and educators respectively.

Impact on Parents

Collectively, the staff at Pine Hills seldom referred to parents in their discussions of the school or issues associated with standards. Families, however, were mentioned in regard to a program change at the school and achievement expectation levels. In an effort to better prepare students for meeting higher academic standards, Pine Hills implemented an extended year program to provide selected students additional time to master the content for their grade level. Parents with children targeted for this intervention had concerns as a result. Teachers explained that at its implementation, this program “was not a popular idea to many parents” and many were “pretty apprehensive.” Tonya concluded

that parents got “real nervous about [the] intervention [because] they don’t like their children tagged.” Marge noted that eventually the “parent group that had been against it backed off and it worked out.”

Parents reportedly had mixed responses related to the level of importance placed on the standards assessment. The principal related that some parents at her school had reacted by setting high expectations and pushing their children to succeed on the standards’ assessment. She acknowledged that: “Then it’s so hard on them. So it is creating more pressure for the individual child.” She conceded that parent pressure could be positive:

maybe [there are] families where that pressure has been positive because the child could achieve it and the family says, ok this is important and you’ve got to do this, this, and this. So [with] some children it is positive.

Pat, the special education teacher, noted that she had seen the opposite reaction in terms of parent pressure to succeed. For some of her parents she said she was:

not sure they understand the importance of the standards at all. We talked to parents about it and I think they look at it as something they don’t have to worry about yet. And all this is done in the high school years, but it’s a factor now.”

Impact on Students

The teachers and the principal readily noted the impact of the standards, and more specifically, the assessments, on students. For most of the staff at Pine Hills, comments reflected concern about the negative impact on students presently and in the future.

Current effects. The impact of standards-based assessment could, as Marge suggested, ‘be good in that they may need some amount of stress [because] students who are capable need to know what they are expected to do.’ She admitted, however for most of her students the assessment was:

causing pressure to be put on the child. It’s not unusual when you give the [standards-based assessment] for a student just to put his or her head on the table and start crying because they know that material is too hard. Some of these things were just really ridiculous. It was above the development of that aged student.

Both Pat and Rita also acknowledged that the standards were very difficult for their students. Pat revealed that, for her, it was:

difficult because you know the standards are going to be tough for them- the kind of pressure I think they put on students. I don’t know if it’s a good thing or not. I don’t think working under that kind of pressure is conducive to a healthy atmosphere. I’m worried about the special

education children because I don't think they should be judged on the same basis as everybody else."

Rita also expressed concern from the perspective of a fifth grade teacher. Her concern was because of "the fact that they shouldn't have gotten to fifth grade at this point." She felt that "they're missing pieces and they need to be back in a fourth grade." For many of her students she had great concern because they "can't retain from one day to the next." Her concerns were also for her students with disabilities. She explained that one such student was "a sweet kid. She tries. She tries so hard and my heart breaks every time I have to give her an F because she can not do it."

[The assistant superintendent of instruction noted that she did not see any positives related to students with disabilities taking the tests: "They're trying to be forced into a mold that isn't appropriate for them and doesn't allow them to achieve to their fullest potential. They're getting lost in the political shuffle."]

Predicted future effects. Teachers and the principal were asked to talk about their perceptions of how the standards and the assessment might change experiences for students with disabilities. Pat revealed that she believed that it would still be "hanging over our head" but hoped that: "we'll slow it down a little bit and say the best thing we can do for this child is just to wait and not pass them on to another higher level until we know that he's acquired more skills."

In response to the question of future outcomes, Marge expressed her opinion that: “if we continue this high stakes testing, more students are going to be spending another year in a grade.” Additionally, she noted a potential impact on the inclusion of children in general education classrooms in saying that “if teachers are held accountable for the achievement of their students they’re going to be less likely to want to be the inclusion teacher at a particular grade level.”

Rita predicted that:

we’re going to see a lot of kids that don’t graduate from high school. I think we are going to see and increase in the at-risk population in this area. I think you’re going to see a lot of burnt out teachers who are going to say I’ve had enough. I can’t do this anymore. But if they hang anybody’s job on the [standards assessment] you’re going to see a mass exodus from these schools.

For Rita, concerns about the impact on students were less pressing because, as she noted, “Fortunately four of my five [students with disabilities] don’t have to take the standards assessment which is good because they couldn’t pass it anyway.”

Impact on Educators

Teachers and the principal talked extensively about the impact the standards and the assessment had on them. Their responses were related to two unintended outcomes: teacher stress and changes to instruction.

Stress. When asked about how teachers were responding to the standards

Rita replied that:

They are in a panic. They're all frustrated and upset that they're being held to standards that they can not really meet. And it's not that they aren't trying and it's not because they aren't working at trying to meet those standards. It's because of the population we have. I think that the state is completely off on what they are doing as far as these guys are concerned because as far as I'm concerned, they should give them a reading and a math test and that's it. Be done with it. Those guys with special needs, that's all they need.

Marge explained that one of the sources of stress for the staff was the public reporting of the results of the standards assessment. She explained: "It puts it in a fish bowl and takes it away from just being an assessment for kids to a judgement."

She continued:

I think that last spring when the test scores were in the paper, it was very difficult for the staff. It didn't seem to blame teachers but teachers are task-oriented people. We are educators and we feel responsible. I think that it's been very difficult for the school because we knew, the teachers knew, that high stakes testing was on the horizon. That was not a surprise. [The standards] really weren't a realistic goal for these kids. And we knew

that and it saddened teachers. It saddened them because they felt that it was going to be such a negative experience and they tried really hard. I think it had an effect of pulling down morale. So it was a down experience. It was not a happy experience at all.

Marge expressed that another concern related to accountability for students' results on the assessments was that:

if teachers are held accountable for the achievement of their students they're going to be less likely to want to be the inclusion teacher at a particular grade level. Or whether it's special education or whether it's simply other students that are less capable. I think that continued emphasis on these high stakes testing and accreditation will affect the inclusion program.

She noted accountability for student achievement put teachers in a "dilemma of whether to teach for coverage or to teach for understanding." Marge explained that for teachers this was a "tough issue because when you teach for coverage, you're going to leave some kids behind...."

Pat explained that she didn't "hear positive things" about the standards from teachers and that: "teachers are feeling a great deal of pressure about this because ultimately it comes down on the school if everything doesn't work the way it's supposed to." She continued: "It's like the stakes have gotten so high that

some of the pleasure has gone out of the job. From a special education perspective, she explained that it's:

very scary with the standards because everything can't be taught the week before the assessment. So I guess a lot of what I do is just pray about it because it's like oh please let them retain this. Let this really be something that really sticks with them. That's frightening for me because the retention is so poor.

Changing instruction. Teachers revealed the pressure and stress of trying to ensure students met higher standards had resulted in changes in the ways in which they provided instruction in class. The principal also acknowledged that teachers had reacted to poor school performance by making instructional changes. She explained that the poor performance had the affect of:

making teachers feel they had to get away from more of the things that they felt enriched or deepened the understanding of kids and prepare them for things like the history and social sciences test where they almost felt like they were preparing them for a Jeopardy game more than they were to have an understanding of history. I think they probably felt like they had to give kids more drill and less open-ended type things because they felt they needed to prepare them for those tests. And I think that they worry a lot about special needs students.

She continued:

I think that I'd have to say for the most part it's back to doing more worksheets than they had been doing because we'd kind of gotten away from that not being the best way for kids to learn. And so I think it's probably fair to say that in that sense if you look at best practices for long term learning we took a step backwards.

Tonya explained that she was preparing students more for the assessment:

I am trying to teach them strategy. And a little bit more of the stick-with-it, you-can-do-it type things. I'm trying to give them more skills that help them extract the information that they are going to see in those questions. So with these kids you don't spend as much time with casual reading and choose a book and enjoy it. Those are the kinds of strategies I feel like are helping them become a little bit more successful. And I do a lot with bubbling in because that's even a strategy. So we do that every Friday now after they do their spelling test.

Rita also reported that her instruction had become more test-focused and less creative. She stated:

So I feel like it's not real creative sometimes but I'm doing what I have to do so that they can get the knowledge. Kind of how I look at it right now. I think the teaching has gotten more teaching to the test. The circle of what we teach has gotten a little tighter and a little smaller because we know

that we can't waste our time teaching something that's not listed in the standard's book. There just isn't enough time to do what the teachers would call fun stuff any more.

Part Three: Emergent Themes

Student Characteristics as Barrier to Academic Success

When asked to describe their school, participants at Pine Hills Elementary focused on the students. While teachers and the principal recognized that their population was diverse with a "good size participation in the gifted program for the county," most of the discussion centered around student attributes that negatively affected the likelihood that they would be successful in meeting higher academic standards.

Academic Functioning Level

Teachers often mentioned poor school readiness as a factor that impeded students' academic progress. Missing foundation skills upon entering school such as knowing basic concepts created problems that were not remedied by fifth grade according to the teachers. Several teachers and the principal alluded to retention as a remedy for the lack of readiness even though, as the principal noted in her comments, the research did not support the efficacy of retention as a means of helping students to gain the necessary skills to achieve grade appropriate proficiencies.

Socioeconomic Status

A commonly ascribed sentiment of teachers at Pine Hills was related to the perceived connection between socioeconomic status and the students' ability to meet higher academic expectations. Because so many students were from impoverished backgrounds, teachers reasoned that expecting them to achieve higher standards would not be "realistic." Progress in terms of achievement was considered a much more reasonable goal. Achieving the state designated pass rate for the standards assessment was not expected which, as noted by one teacher, was "okay" because "we know who we service."

An assumed inability to pass the standards assessment was accepted for students with disabilities as well. This was exemplified by the fact that, of the students in the classrooms of the teachers interviewed, the majority of the students with IEPs were exempted from taking the standards-based assessment. *[Both the director of special education and the assistant superintendent mentioned they had communicated to schools that only a small number of severely disabled students were eligible to be exempted from the standards-based assessment.]*

Lack of Family Involvement

The principal indicated that Pine Hills had about 125 volunteers, a small number of which were not parents. This researcher also noted on visits to the school that there was a constant stream of parents signing in and out on the volunteer log.

Teachers tended to refer to parents in unfavorable terms. They spoke of parents as either being absent from participation in their child’s education or as not having the skills to support their children in their schoolwork. [Researcher’s note: Pine Hills’ Mission Statement mentioned that “parents were viewed as partners with the school”. Involving parents continued to be a challenge for participants.] A family literacy night was mentioned as one attempt, albeit unsuccessful, to help support parents. Other plans to remedy poor parental involvement were not mentioned.

Teachers also saw the home influences as detrimental in some instances. Teachers noted that student experience at home “totally reinforces what we don’t need to have reinforced” as well as not providing students with the necessary motivation for doing well at school.

Meeting Student Instructional Needs

The principal noted that in terms of specialized instruction, she could not say that they provided an intervention “just for kids that have a special education label.” Rather, the school provided the same support for the student with disabilities as the population as a whole. Accordingly, participants tended to speak about the population as a whole even when asked to describe ways in which they addressed particular learning and instructional needs of students with disabilities. Specific strategies for addressing the unique needs of this population were only addressed after redirection by the researcher.

Hands-on Activities

When directed to specifically describe ways in which they met individual learning needs, teachers at Pine Hills mentioned hands-on activities. However, hands-on activities were not utilized across the curriculum, but were primarily limited to math manipulatives, though one teacher noted that she used science kits that contained manipulative materials. The teachers did not mention other types of hands-on activities that allowed students to tactically interact with content. This was notable because hands-on activities were consistently referred to by each participant, with the exception of the special education teacher, as a way to meet the needs of students considered at-risk of failure, including students with disabilities. The special education teacher did not include hands-on activities in her descriptions of what she did to support students.

Accommodations

Teachers reported using accommodations to address specific needs of students. The examples of accommodations that teachers provided included writing information on the board for students to copy, encouraging peer support during discussion, and providing “lots of visuals.” The accommodations teachers applied did not indicate that consideration had been given to matching learning needs and accommodations. When describing accommodations, teachers did not connect accommodations to specific individual needs but referred to commonplace accommodations that could be applied without prior consideration.

Understanding Issues of Poverty

Teachers reported that information about strategies applicable to children in poverty helped them to understand the students they taught. However, other than referring to a better understanding of students' lack of motivation and values, teachers did not stipulate specific methods they had learned and applied pertaining to meeting needs of students even when prompted by the researcher. [Researcher's note: Two artifacts, the Educational Operating Plan for Pine Hills and a workshop agenda, referred to reading strategies. The principal was the only participant who mentioned strategic instruction in her responses.] Given that teachers often spoke of the challenge posed by the impact of poverty on student achievement, the lack of specificity with regard to the application of the information seemed incongruous to the purported urgency of need as described by the teachers.

Professional Interactions

Teachers were asked to describe the ways in which they worked with each other. In general, responses were limited to arrangements requiring brief interactions between teachers and other educators at the building level.

Collaborative Interactions

The principal had lenient expectations with regard to teacher collaboration, suggesting to teachers that they could collaborate if they felt comfortable with it. While teachers reported that there was a lot of collaboration

at their school, such collaboration was generally limited to partnerships where there was mutual responsibility that did not require ongoing communication, shared planning or joint problem solving for implementation of instruction for the same group of students.

Specialist/Generalist Interactions

While teachers described the support they received from specialists in the building, such support was provided in what could be described as a “revolving door” approach. For example, a specialist might drop off work for a student to do, a specialist might work with a student or a group of students for a period of time and then leave after which time another specialist might work with an individual or group either on that same day or some other. The teachers did not mention discussions between teachers and specialists related to evaluation of success of interventions or how to work in concert to further goals for the student.

Managerial/Supportive Interactions

While, on occasion, the teachers and the principals worked collaboratively such as on the Student Assistance Team or grade-level teams, interactions between the principal and the staff were primarily hierarchical. Both the principal and the teachers responded to the question about how the principal supported students with disabilities in improving achievement by listing the same three things: (a) providing workshops (workshops on children in poverty was the only one specifically cited), (b) securing money for materials, and (c) encouraging

teachers to continue doing their best to help the students. Teachers referred to these things as being very supportive of their efforts to improve achievement for all students.

The principal did not mention any specific programs or plans in place to directly address the unique learning needs of students with disabilities that would indicate consideration of this group in any way separate from the general population. Directive actions related to addressing increasing achievement for students with disabilities or other students with unique learning needs were not noted by teachers or the principal. That is, no explicit expectations, guidelines or plans based on a vision for improving achievement for this population were mentioned.

Impact on Families and Educators

The staff at Pine Hills talked about the impact of the standards and the assessments on parents, students, and particularly themselves. At Pine Hills, parents were generally mentioned with regard to how they impacted the school rather than how matters at the school affected them. Nonetheless, it was noted that parents were concerned about the impact of some of the interventions employed to address achievement, namely, the extended school year. Teachers were also concerned about the pressure the standards assessment placed on students and the ultimate impact the assessment would have on outcomes for students in their school careers. Remarkably, other than the special education teacher's reference

to some parents of children on her caseload who did not take the standards-based assessment seriously, no mention was made of reactions of parents with children with disabilities to either the standards or the assessment. Likewise, little information about students with disabilities was provided in terms of how they had reacted to the conditions produced by the standards and assessment, possibly indicating assessment that exclusion rates precluded observation of such behaviors.

Teachers talked most extensively about the impact of the standards on themselves particularly in the context of the demands of the student population with which they worked. Teachers reported they were stressed because of the expectations for student performance outlined by the standards. This stress resulted in instructional changes. Even though teachers recognized that the changes “did not deepen understanding,” consisted of “more drill,” and in general “took a step back” in instructional best practice, they did not describe any plans to supplant these practices with practices they knew to be better.

Case Study Three

Willow Brook Elementary

Part One: Description of the School

Physical Setting

Willow Brook is located in a rural area. Large open fields surround the one-story modern brick school that at one time had been a middle school. A chicken processing plant, which employs many residents of the area, is located nearby and the neighborhood high school is directly across the divided highway that separates the two schools. The school is elevated above a parking lot and bus ramp that fronts the school. The façade of the school is H-shaped with shrubbery flanking the entranceway. A playground is located behind the school.

A bulletin board directly inside the front doors contains pictures of students who are being recognized for good citizenship. The office is located to the right of the lobby. The waiting area in the office is small and appears uninviting with two metal and plastic chairs located to the right of the front door. The office contains two windowed walls that look out onto the lobby and main hallway and are partially concealed with burgundy-colored blinds. Light from a window on the back wall is obscured by a bookcase placed perpendicular to the wall, which both serves as a wall of the office and cordons off the floor space to create a hallway to the left of the office. Offices, a workroom, and an additional

closet-sized classroom used for speech therapy are located on a hallway that leads from the office.

Participant Demographics

The principal and four teachers, three general education teachers and one special education teacher, participated in the study. In addition, central office personnel represented by the division's director of pupil services and assistant superintendent of instruction were interviewed. Three female and two male participants were included in the study.

Educational Experience

Each teacher interviewed holds an undergraduate degree in addition to their certification to teach, with the exception of one general education teacher, who also holds a master of education degree in elementary education. The principal also has a master of education degree in addition to having 20 years' experience as an administrator. He has been principal at Willow Brook for 10 years. Other participants had been at the school from 7 to 11 years. In addition to a master of education degree in administration, the director of program development and evaluation has 30 years of experience in education.

School Demographics/Background

Willow Brook is located in a division that has 13 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 3 high schools. Enrollment totals about 625 students and includes classes from kindergarten through the fifth grade making this elementary

school the “biggest in the county.” There is an average of five classrooms per grade level with two self-contained special education classes, one of which is a center-based program that serves students from outside Willow Brook’s enrollment area. [Researcher’s note: The center-based program accepts students with emotional and behavioral disabilities who would normally attend another home school. This is due to the small numbers of students in this category.] Resource teachers in music, art, and physical education are also employed, the art teacher is only employed part time and provides instruction for students “every few weeks.” A computer lab has been recently installed at the school. Teachers utilized the lab “40 minutes a day for three days a week.”

According to the school’s principal, 16% of the students at Pine Hills receive free or reduced lunch. Furthermore, of the total population of 625 students, 16% are identified as having disabilities and receive services either in a separate special education room or are provided supports within the general education classroom.

Ethnically, 93% of the school student population was Caucasian. The remaining population was made up of Hispanic, African American, Asian students. According to the principal, when compared to the division as a whole, Willow Brook probably has a higher proportion of “professional and college educated parents.”

The staff at Willow Brook described their school as an “active, happy school” with a “positive energy” where “teachers are very caring and work very hard with the students they get.” Teachers noted that this caring is about more than academic performance including “the other part of the child, and this is their emotion and their ability to work with other people.” Overall, the teachers are described as a “close knit community of teachers.”

Curriculum

Teachers described the curriculum as being based on the state standards. One teacher noted that: “It’s 100% driven by the standards. In fact, if it’s not [a standard], I really don’t do it.” The fourth-grade teacher noted that “Everyone above tells us to do the standards and that we teach to the test. Even in the beginning of the year meeting from higher up they were saying ‘teach to the test’.” Pacing guides designed as a long-range plan for when to introduce each standard were developed at each grade level to determine “what we thought we’d teach in each of the four curriculum areas.” [Researcher’s note: Review of sections of Willow Brook’s Annual School Plan that addressed student performance revealed pacing guides to be the primary means through which instruction would be monitored.]

When asked to describe the curriculum, teachers most often mentioned the math textbook and the philosophy behind their spelling program. The division in which Willow Brook is located has recently adopted a new math series. The math

textbook is a special edition developed specifically based on the state's standards. One fifth-grade teacher described it as the best way to "take you from A to Z in the most direct route."

The spelling program is developmentally based and students are placed into groups dependent on their spelling skills. One teacher related that "they are all in groups that meet their abilities as long as they can fit into one of three groups. I can't do more than three groups." One fifth-grade teacher provided the following details: "We determine at the beginning of the year what spelling level the children are at and the we form groups and develop word lists to give to the children so that they are at their developmental stage."

Teachers also noted that not every textbook available to them fits their needs in terms of teaching the standards. Recently, a new science textbook series was adopted and upon review, the teachers at Willow Brook found that "the science textbook did not follow the standards at all. There's only one unit that follows the standards. So they're having to create on their own." Additionally, one teacher described the social studies textbook as "unusable."

The special education teacher reported that she used the same textbooks as the general education classroom when appropriate. She also used materials, such as out-of-print basal readers, which she had saved over the years to supplement materials provided students in general education classrooms. She was "mostly working with math skills and reading and writing." Other than Accelerated

Reader, a computerized reading program to improve comprehension, she did not refer to any programs designed specifically to address a particular academic need.

Family and Community Involvement

Parents and other members of the Willow Brook community have been informed about the state standards through the school newsletter and at school and community meetings. The principal estimates that over 150 volunteers participate at the school. Parents and the community are perceived as supportive of the school. One teacher noted: “We don’t have a lot of discipline problems here because of the involvement of the parents.”

Parent support. The principal and the teachers at Willow Brook talked favorably about the parent involvement at their school and credited parents with having a positive impact on the school. For example, a fifth-grade teacher noted that the lack of behavior problems at the school was due to the “important factor [that] the parents here are very concerned and involved with their children’s education.” Said one teacher: “We have a very active parent group. A group of parents that are extremely concerned about every phase of their child’s life.”

While parent participation is recognized as important, one teacher observed that parents “Occasionally get too concerned and they don’t allow the child to have their freedom, but they are sincere in their caring.” One teacher noted that while parent involvement remains strong when compared to previous years, involvement of the parents in her classroom has changed: “I’ve got so

many that don't follow through; parents work long hours and they can't help the children or they don't help them for whatever reason."

Community support. The principal mentioned that the school's theme for the year, "Growing Together," had developed into a community partnership. After flooding destroyed a nearby park, "the school applied for several grants to buy trees, to plant trees, to take care of that area." The town in which the school was located "got into it, and they're making their park out of it. It will be an outdoor learning laboratory that the children can go to on field trips." The principal continued by explaining how the activity addresses the standards:

We planted trees one year. We came back the next. We came back in the following fall to see what progress they had made on the trees. We did some more clearing of the land. Measuring the trees, reporting on growth. Coming back to understand why some trees were growing faster than others. We were working with a local biologist from the college to do water samples. I think there were 37 science standards that we incorporated.

Student Achievement

Several teachers described the student achievement as being on the "upper end as far as academics go." Results from recent assessments validated their perspective. With regard to student achievement, the most remarkable characteristic was that, based on the most recent standards-based assessment

results, Willow Brook passed three of the four assessments, missing the cutoff pass rate for the fourth by 9/10 of a point, which placed the school among a very small number of schools across the state scoring as well. The principal elaborated:

We were above the 70% mark in every category except for social studies.

And we were 69.1. So we improved over last year's scores in all areas.

The students do very well on standardized test scores. I don't think we're the highest in the county, but we're right up there with one or two other schools.

Students with disabilities were not included when teachers described student achievement at Willow Brook. When the principal was asked how students with disabilities were doing related to the standards, he commented: "I don't have that information at hand to say they're doing worse or they're doing better." The special education teachers described students on her caseload as being academically "low," functioning two to three grade levels below their age appropriate grade. She admitted, "This is an exceptional year." She characterized her students as being "a little bit lower than what I would normally see."

Inclusion

At Willow Brook, students with disabilities are included in general education classrooms but primarily receive specialized instruction in a separate classroom. In initial verification of criteria for site selection, the researcher was informed that some students were included in general education classrooms

without need of pullout services. The special education teacher explained that in the past if students happened to be placed in the same class, instruction could be provided in the general education classroom. The principal described the role of the special education teacher as one where she was “basically reinforcing what the classroom teacher is doing.” A fifth-grade teacher explained that in the pullout setting “Students [with disabilities] will be working on the work that we’re doing in our class with the support of the special education teacher.”

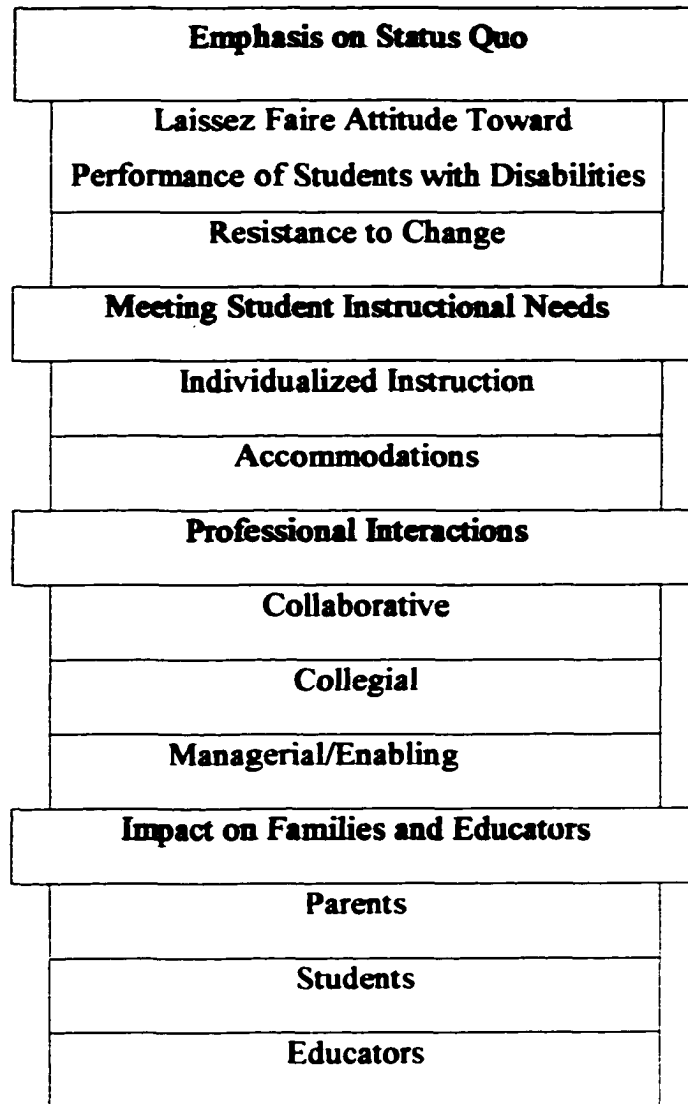
Part Two: Response Patterns

The chart below provides a guide to study participants for reference when reading the sections that follow.

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Ethnicity/Gender</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Yrs. At Willow Brook</u>
Paul	Caucasian/Male	Principal	10
Fran	Caucasian/Female	Teacher/G3	11
Darla	Caucasian/Female	Teacher/Sp. Ed	9
Gina	Caucasian/Female	Teacher/G5	11
Mark	Caucasian/Male	Teacher/G5	7
Sam	Caucasian/Male	Director of Student Services	
Eric	Caucasian/Male	Dir. Planning and Program Evaluation	

At this site, the common responses are classified as: (a) acceptance of status quo, (b) meeting student instructional needs, (c) professional interactions, and (d) impact on families, students, and educators. Figure 7 includes each of these four common themes as indicated by gray boxes under which the related subthemes are listed. Each theme is described in this section.

Figure 7. Common responses and related subthemes.



Emphasis on the Status Quo

At Willow Brook each teacher and the principal mentioned the school's reputation for high academic achievement and stated that there were high expectations for students in terms of academic performance. Teachers tended to talk about this group of high achievers and, with the exception of one teacher, addressed the learning needs of students who did not fit the category only when prompted by the researcher.

Laissez Faire Attitude About Performance of Students with Disabilities

For general education teachers at Willow Brook, supporting students with disabilities to meet "high goals and expectations" like other students was "not a high priority," according to the special education teacher. [Researcher note: In contrast to this statement, Willow Brook's Mission Statement noted that: "We believe that all students are individuals of worth and recognize that all students can be successful learners while learning at different rates."] Darla noted that, while general education teachers did not ostracize students, she was left with the feeling that they thought "it would be nice if we didn't have them." For example, after students are found eligible, rather than discussing how to coordinate efforts, teachers wanted to know "how many hours can he come to you." Darla felt that teachers "just want to get them out, especially the ones who are behavior problems. Fran concurred that when the class rolls come out, the teachers "look around and wonder who got the slow kids." [*The director of special education*

affirmed this sentiment among general education teachers: "I think that once a child is identified as needing special education, regular education tends to put them on the back burner."]

Teachers cited one reason why they were not as attentive to students with disabilities:

The special education kids are exempt from the overall performance that we're subject to. So there's not so much pressure with them. And although they go along and they have the same curriculum, we feel pretty comfortable with adjusting it to meet their needs. They are not included in the average that is the pressure average [pass rate] to make.

[The director of special education noted that "I was allowing principals to exempt students from the assessment. The students are taking these tests and they're not passing and it doesn't really help their self-concept. I'm not forcing students into that examination schedule."]

While the needs of students with disabilities were not ignored, concerns about students considered slow learners commanded the greater concern. Fran noted that: "I know that the [needs of] LD kids are going to be met, it's the slow learners we leave out." Gina noted that in reference to her concerns about her students with disabilities taking the test:

I think if they can accommodate in some way, they will be able to take the test. And will remember a lot too. I'm sure the best that will happen to

them [students with disabilities], whatever we could do that's best for them will happen for them. It won't be the same for everybody else.

The principal concurred: "There are so many accommodations that you can give kids with disabilities that make the playing field as level as possible, I don't see how they can have any big gripe about it."

Resistance to Change

Given the school's consistent high academic performance, teachers expressed their indignation about focusing on improving achievement. Darla described the school's reputation:

I think as far as reputation in the county this school is known as having very high standards. High standards of what the principal expects, what the teachers expect of each other, and of students, of course. I think everybody kind of knows that at this school you are expected to a certain standard.

Teachers at Willow Brook, working in a school with historically high student academic performance, reported that it was difficult to respond to changes designed to improve achievement. Fran cited the example of the pacing guides which were written plans for the rate of implementation of the standards:

I think that at the school everybody got the job done already and so these things that are coming down that are designed to help us to make sure we're doing the job sort of get in the way of us doing the job.

The principal explained that overall he was did not foresee any changes at his school in response to the standards and the assessments because of past academic successes: “We mastered all categories so we’re cruising right along in that area. I think we’ll probably be doing pretty much what we’ve been doing.” Paul also noted that with regard to the way teachers would respond to meeting higher standards he did not “think they made any extraordinary effort to change a lot of what they were already doing because we had a pretty focused attack anyway.”

Meeting Student Instructional Needs

Several teachers explained that meeting the instructional needs of students began with preparing them for the learning process. Mark noted that meeting needs of students began with “just trying to motivate them and keep them on task.”

Gina explained that she began with thinking:

more in terms of disciplining them and setting them up for instruction. In other words having a hold on the group so that the group is listening and so that they can learn no matter what [or] how I teach them.

When asked to explain specific ways in which they met the instructional needs of students with disabilities, teachers at Willow Brook mentioned two primary methods. Providing individualized instruction in the form of one-on-one instruction was one such way. When asked to tell about techniques for working

with students with disabilities, instructional accommodations was the method most often described.

Individualized Instruction

When asked to describe specific ways in which she supported students with disabilities, Darla responded that she was “mostly working with math skills and [with] reading and writing and word study. Primarily what I am doing is following their IEP goals and objectives some of which I took from the standard’s booklets.” For Darla, individualization of instruction included IEP provisions based on the functioning level for each child. She explained, for example: “If I was working with a third-grade student, often the standards that I choose as their goals and objectives are first grade.”

For other teachers, individualized instruction was synonymous with one-on-one instruction. Instructional assistants and volunteers provided support to assist teachers in meeting individual needs. According to Fran, “I have had university practicum students at least two days a week full time so we can afford to get a lot of one on one for kids who need one on one.” Mark also used volunteers from the local university: “There’s also the availability of tutors; I’ve had college students in the past that have come in to help. And that’s usually a resource-type situation where the student will go out of the room and get some individual attention.”

Mark utilized an instructional assistant for providing individual attention for students in need of extra help: “we have a reading assistant and she comes into our class for 30 minutes each day and usually it’s during math time. And so I’ll have her work with the students who are struggling.” Mark also provided individualized attention in small groups. He explained the way his small group sessions were conducted:

I wouldn’t say it’s that I have a different lesson for them or some type of manipulative that’s going to unlock the key to it for them. We’re just grinding out problems. Taking it through each step. Helping the kids learn the steps, the methodology involved in it. Just practicing and practicing. I believe that if you work with a student enough and you do enough problems correctly that eventually they’re going to learn to do it themselves.

Accommodations

Teachers at Willow Brook provided a number of accommodations for students in their classrooms defined by the researcher as modifications to content delivery, materials, or activities. Gina commented that with regard to the students in her classroom with special learning needs, her challenge was that they were “just not real independent.” While she did not have a particular technique or strategy for working with this group of students, Gina: “Just tried to make it come through as quickly as I can. Just the day to day plugging along, encouraging them,

helping them correct and see where their mistakes were and doing it again.” She noted that she did provide accommodations for learning style by furnishing manipulatives for students because “They’re much better at visual learning than they are at hearing me speak to them.”

Fran accommodated students by providing opportunities for them to have access to differentiated work through use of computer programs. “[It is] easy to differentiate in the computer lab [because] it adjusts the amount of practice given on a skill according to how well the child is doing. So that’s a good thing for the kids who have problems.”

Fran added that accommodations for her students included supportive modifications such as strategic positioning in her classroom. She mentioned that as a teacher “you just try to look and see if they need to be more isolated or if they need to be paired with someone who is more nurturing.”

Mark accommodated students’ learning needs by modeling processes in math. He cited this example:

I’m modeling for the kids how to do the problems, talking them through the steps. Checking each problem that they’re doing to make sure that they’ve done it correctly. Sometimes we’ll do each problem and I’ll ask the kids how to do it or what they got on this particular step or like we’re multiplying by two digit numbers, ok what did you get on your first row. What do you do before your second row? Checking their work and if they

don't get it right going back and seeing what it is, where they've gone wrong and how to correct it.

Professional Interactions

Teachers described their working relationships as involving a lot of “sharing.” Fran brought up one exception to this. She explained that the pressure to do well on standards-based assessments led teachers on her grade level to “feel some competitiveness I think among ourselves. I think we all want our kids to be the best and to have the highest scores.” On the whole, however, teachers talked positively about their working relationships, which included collaborative interactions that involved working in partnership to mutual responsibility. Teachers also described collegial interactions that involved collective responsibility for all students. In collaborative interactions, teachers worked together for the success for all students even when they did not have direct academic responsibility for them.

Collaborative Interactions

As noted by one of the fifth-grade teachers, the “principal leaves it up to us as to what we want to do as far as we want to team or work individually.” Staff at Willow Brook chose to work in partnership to provide instruction for students through team teaching and close communication between general and special education teachers regarding coordination of services.

Team teaching. The process of team teaching, where teachers are responsible for planning and teaching one content area to more than one class, was described as a common practice at Willow Brook. The principal noted: “Most of the teachers team in the science and social studies area. In the other core subjects they’re independent. Science and social studies just lends itself to doing that.”

Gina described team teaching this way: “some of the teachers exchange classes so that the teacher’s teaching perhaps two classes the same thing. In my case another teacher and I exchange for science and social studies and then everything else we teach within our own room.”

Coordinating instruction. General and special education teachers also collaborated in terms of coordinating instruction for students with disabilities.

Mark explained:

We work very closely with the [special education teacher]. What they’re doing is driven off our curriculum. So the students will be working on the work that we’re doing in our class with the support of the special education teacher. We’ll try and keep the student with the class as much as possible.

Gina referred to communication between the general and special education teachers as “a cooperative thing” between the “LD teachers, the speech teachers

all the other people that work with our students. There's the usual exchange there." She elaborated:

We have a give-and-take. I mean there's communication verbally; there's some written communication. She just did the same thing we were doing in class but did it a different way with that student so they student could understand it.

When asked about the ways general and special education teachers work together, the principal noted that:

special education teachers meet with the general education teachers once a week to discuss common areas. They are basically reinforcing what the classroom teacher is doing. They are supposed to get together with them and mainly deal with the standards.

The special education teacher described communicating and coordination of instruction with the general education teachers in much the same way as the principal. According to Darla, "We talk weekly, biweekly, monthly, on progress. We email now."

While teachers worked to provide complementary instruction between the general and special education classrooms, Darla added that she had some concerns when the assistance teachers asked of her included finishing work from

the general education classroom. She explained:

I get notes with things the student needs to work on. I don't mind when they send assignments that the student may be struggling, [but it] is a fine line between me being a tutor and an LD teacher.

Teaming. Teachers and the principal also worked collaboratively on teams designed to improve achievement for students at Willow Brook. Gina noted that a curriculum team was formed with "one person at a grade level who is chairman and this person and Mr. Price have a meeting once a month with the representatives from each of the grade levels and the special education teachers and so on. And he gives them information that they bring back to us." The principal explained the function of the team in more detail:

Instead of having team leaders at each grade level we have curriculum area specialist or leaders. I selected teachers or asked for volunteers –that were particularly good in [a content area]. We have a science, social studies team leader and we have an overall K-5 team leader. And then we meet once a month to map out the goals or strategies that we want to go forward with. This is not a gripe session or we don't bring complaints or concerns. We map out or discuss our long-range goals based around where we're going to go. What's coming up--our annual school plan.

Collegial Interactions

Teachers also interacted in collegial ways where collective responsibility for all students was exhibited. For example, Mark said: “as far as helping and supporting each other, there’s a lot of that going on.” Fran noted in working with other teachers on her grade level: “We do share a lot of teaching materials; when we have an idea that works well we tend to share it.” She mentioned that as a team her grade level: “came up with a pacing guide at the beginning of the year which we were asked to do by the administration. And we roughly came up with what we thought we’d teach in each of the four curriculum areas at the beginning of the year. And when we would teach them.”

Teachers also worked collegially with regard to regularly scheduled grade-level meetings that addressed student needs. Gina explained that “we have grade-level meetings once a week as a unit and make decisions together. It gets bothersome at times to meet every Monday afternoon at 3:30, but usually there’s nothing up in the air that [we don’t] know about.”

Mark also mentioned team meetings when describing how teachers worked together at Willow Brook:

We meet as a fifth-grade team about once a week. In the past we’ve shared ideas about units and how to teach particular concepts. There’s just really not time to do a lot more of that because we just don’t have the planning periods to do it.

Managerial/Enabling Interactions

When asked by the researcher to describe the ways in which the principal supported the achievement of students with disabilities, the teachers were not able to give any specific actions taken by the principal specifically for students with disabilities in response to standards.

While teachers and the principal worked in collaborative ways, teachers most often described their interactions with the principal in traditional hierarchical ways. These included the principal providing professional development opportunities, materials and resources and, to a lesser degree, contributing information, encouraging teachers, and monitoring implementation of the standards.

Professional development. When asked to describe what the principal had done to support achievement of students with disabilities, teachers spoke of the workshops provided them. Gina noted that it was “mainly workshops or inservice training [that provided information] to work with different situations. Particularly ESL [English as a Second Language] because we have a number of students that are here that have moved in.”

The principal also mentioned a recent inservice for which he provided substitutes so that teachers could meet to problem solve because they did not have

daily planning time. He explained:

We've had numerous inservice programs on technology where we've shared with teachers new technology to help them in the classroom. And we provided subs out of our own local school money so that they can be free to have an hour and a half together as a team to work on common problems and then rotated those subs in three grade levels so it's an hour and a half in each grade level.

Darla also mentioned the principal's support in making it possible for teachers to attend workshops. She expressed her opinion that this type of support:

Provided us the opportunity to enhance our teaching through technology development. We were given the opportunity to take two sessions and substitutes were hired to cover our classes and we went to different schools and had technology workshops whether it was technology or what to do with the students or just for us.

When asked whether she had any professional development specific to how you might enhance achievement for kids with disabilities as they work toward the standards, Darla replied:

Not as far as actual teaching or working with students we haven't had a whole bunch. I would have to say not a lot of support. It seems like the main thing they [the special education department] are worried about is making sure we do the paperwork right."

Funding. Teachers reported that the principal was very supportive in terms of providing money and materials. Fran responded to the question about how the principal supported achievement for students with disabilities as follows:

Our principal does anything we ask as far as if we ask them for something that we think will improve the [results of the standards-based assessment]. They really have gone the distance as far as providing for us. And we have appreciated that.

Gina, admitting that it had probably been “in the pipeline already,” credited the principal for having “brought in our computer lab.” She believed that “it came by because of the standards and because of the way things are going [technologically].”

Gina also mentioned that she had recently received some materials she had requested of the principal. The principal had purchased them for teachers to use in preparing students for the standards-based assessment. She explained that: “We asked him to buy some social studies things to work with students.”

For Darla, the special education teacher, resource support from the principal came in the form of a classroom:

One of the biggest things he’s done is getting me a setting like this. I think he realized the importance of these kids. [They] need to have a setting that they feel comfortable in. The other thing is my fancy computer over there-

-support in that way and more in supporting me which then indirectly supports these students.

Even though the requisite three participants from Willow Brook did not include the following types of managerial/supportive interactions, at least two of the four teachers did mention the interactions listed below. They are, therefore, included to provide a more complete picture of the principal's actions. In addition to providing professional development and resources, the principal also interacted with teachers by monitoring teacher activities, contributing information, and providing encouragement.

Contributing information. Gina mentioned that at "various times, we get pamphlets and different things that help us" to assist students. For example, some of these pamphlets included information related to teaching students for whom English was a second language.

Mark related that: "he'll pass along any information about college students who were interested in tutoring. We have a program with college students where they'll come in with your lower-achieving students and have a time where they can read with a student."

Principal encouragement and monitoring. Mark believed that "with teachers [the principal] is always a very positive upbeat person. Always tells us how our school is doing so well and how we're the best and things like that."

Gina also shared that with regard to the use of the new computer lab Paul had encouraged teachers by relaying the importance of making use of it. “We have computer three times a week--and so he has given us this as kind of a you need to do this--this is important.”

Monitoring teachers also played a part in principal’s interactions with teachers. Fran noted that “He makes sure that we mark our plans for the standards we’re teaching. Recently we’ve been asked to report back and say where we are in relationship to the pacing guide that we came up with.”

Impact on Families and Educators

The principal and teachers were asked to talk about their observations and feelings related to the effect the standards and the assessment had on parents, students, and on themselves. Their thoughts and comments are provided in the following three sections, which highlight comments related to parents, students, and educators, respectively.

Impact on Parents

The lack of references to parents noted earlier in this chapter was also evidenced with regard to the impact of standards on those likely to be affected. Two participants, however, did mention the impact on parents, and given the comparative significance, their comments are included below.

The principal explained that he had worked proactively to address concerns of parents with disabilities and to place the assessment in perspective.

“Most of the parents we talk to whose children have learning disabilities understand that their child is not going to perform as well but they want to see how they do perform so they’re curious to see where they are and if they’re making progress.”

Paul also revealed that he had some challenges related to parent concerns about the impact of the increased workload that resulted from classroom assignments:

We have a bunch of parents that say you’re taking away from our quality time. You’re assigning two hours of homework and we don’t have enough time to do this, or I don’t have enough time to mess with my child at home. So the child comes to school without their homework done. So what do you do? Cut them down for that?

While the special education teacher did not report any concerns of parents of students with disabilities on her caseload, Gina, a fifth-grade teacher with students with disabilities in her classroom, reported that parents of the at-risk students and students with disabilities were concerned about the long-term effects in terms of graduation. She revealed: “[They are] just concerned about whether their child’s going to graduate down the road. I know this is only fifth grade, but in seven years they’re going to have to graduate or not.”

Impact on Students

When asked to talk about their concerns with respect to the way the standards were being implemented in their state, teachers’ responses were almost

exclusively negative in terms of the impact on students. Fran noted that while she thought the standards were “positive in that they were challenging,” she also felt that “where we fall down is when we try to make every kid accomplish that.” She added “There’s something wrong with the pressure” that is placed on students and teachers.

Gina revealed that she had “seen a number of students get really stressed out.” She explained:

The kid goes home and says I’m not happy with the way this is going and when a student of mine writes a letter that says I don’t like the standards, they’re unfair, I’m a child, let me be a child, that says something.

Gina related that the standards-based assessment was also negatively impacting students:

They are dreading tests more and more. I think they’re stressing some kids out. Even though it’s do the best you can, don’t worry about it. Parents find the scores and they worry about it and then the kids worry about it.

With regard to students with disabilities, Gina remarked:

I think students that are behind on a reading level tend to get more stressed out during the test. They get frustrated because they can’t read it or they want to know something and you can’t help them because we have very rigid rules about how we give these tests.

The special education teacher described her concerns for students in terms of administering an exam that would be recognized up front as too difficult for them. She explained:

I guess sometimes I worry about are we setting them up to fail. They look at the test and they look at me and say you're joking, right? And of course I read it out loud to them. But if I did not read it out loud, it may as well be in a foreign language for some of them. And that kind of concerns me that self-esteem. Are they going to leave my room and go "I don't know a thing"? And then will they go back to their regular education class and all the kids are talking at lunch about this question and that question and how do you think you did on this. And I'm worried about how they can't participate in that conversation.

The principal mentioned his concern about the long-term impact on students:

You'll probably see more children being identified or run through the process who truly don't have a learning disability. Might be a slow learner. And I see teachers becoming frustrated because they've got to get everybody in their classroom to a certain level. And I can't get Johnny to that point and you must have a learning disability.

Impact on Educators

Teachers readily talked about the impact standards had on them, most often even prior to being asked to respond to the issue by the researcher. The effect of the standards on teachers is divided into two categories: (a) stress, and (b) instruction.

Stress. Gina explained that the standards had ‘been stressed so much; they are so all important that everything else is blocked out of the picture. There is nothing else.’ Fran concurred: “We all teach the standards. Probably it would be considered insubordination to do anything else. And we’re under a lot of pressure to do that.”

For each teacher at Willow Brook, this led to increased stress. Mark spoke to the issue of stress from the perspective of a teacher in a high-achieving school this way: “I think everyone is feeling more stress about it. And we’re a school that’s close to passing. I don’t know what it’s like in other schools [with other] people feeling the pressure.”

The amount of information in the standards to be covered was the impetus for stress as noted by several teachers. Fran explained:

We came up with a pacing guide at the beginning of the year which we were asked to do by the administration. Recently we’ve been asked to report back and say where we are in relationship to the pacing guide that we came up with. I’m not sure how seriously we took pacing guides as far

as something that would help us. We took it as something that they demanded of us from the administration and something to hand in and now we're being held accountable to perform with what we did at the beginning of the year. That's kind of just another pressure. The consequences are on the teachers.

Fran explained further that covering all standards before the assessment meant that there was "leftover instructional time" at the end of the school year:

The other thing is just the pressure to get it all done before the test. We do tend to push everything into the beginning of the year. Nobody's going to leave a math skill until after the standards tests. So the other thing would be the pressure of getting it done on time. I think that our window starts six or eight weeks before school is over. Somewhere in there. The last six weeks are pretty much anticlimactic.

The source of stress for the special education teacher came from another source: other teachers. Darla provided this example:

And where does pressure come from? From the teachers that will say hey, you mean he has to take a third-grade science test and he can't even read. I try and say if he's taking science in your class, he has to take it. And they are often very reluctant. They know that's going to affect their class grade and they hate that pressure that's on them.

Darla added that, in general: “I think everybody wants high expectations and they want accountability to a certain extent. But I think they feel that it’s just gone too far the other way. It went from nothing to almost an impossible task.”

In thinking about the impact of standards and the assessment on teachers, Gina provided this summation: “I think it puts a lot of pressure on teachers. I’m not sure we’re better teachers because of it.”

Changing instruction. One of the unintended outcomes for teachers from their perspective was related to changes to their instruction. Teachers provided a number of examples of how responding to the standards had required them to alter their instructional practices. According to Gina:

We’re supposed to be very creative in how we teach the different concepts that are on the standards. But you can only be so creative and you can only drum it in their head so much and then they say can’t we do something else? It’s just being pushed, pushed, pushed to the point that I feel like we’ve dehumanized teaching a little bit. Everything is geared to making those little circles filled in on that test and making sure we do it on the right line and so on and so on and so on. I see what I don’t like and that is taking kids away for the creative expressive part of school that I’ve always loved.

Mark provided other examples of ways teachers have changed instruction:
“I think that other teachers are doing what I am doing to. They are doing less fun types of things and more serious [activities].”

He elaborated:

We used to do a lot more fun kinds of things that went along with what we were doing. I think we did things in a lot more depth before too. I think a lot of teachers have changed a lot of what they are doing, like narrowed down the scope. Instead of doing fewer things more thoroughly, they’re doing more things less thoroughly so that they can teach everything to the students. Things are much more structured and rigid now.

Teachers also found that it was important to practice skills for test taking.

Fran told about how it worked in her classroom:

We take practice tests where we color in the circle over A, B, C, or D because that’s the formatting and it’s a very intense format on the test booklet. Kids pretty much have never had that before.

Accompanying Fran’s perceived obligation to expose students to the standards assessment were additional concerns of other teachers. Teachers were apprehensive about the testing processes and the ability of the test to do what it was designed to.

Concerns about testing. Mark shared two areas of concern with regard to

the assessment:

I guess one concern I have is just one test, one test of measuring one students' ability. Some kids just don't perform well on tests like that. The other thing that concerns me about it is it's all in a multiple-choice format. I think we should be expecting more out of our students than just boiling it all down to a bunch of multiple choice questions.

The principal believed that the test format could potentially confuse students and the results not accurately reflect student knowledge. He related:

I think the children know the information, I think the children in all schools know the information. I think it's how to take the test, how to wade through the trickery that's in the test itself. The standards tests from the state haven't been proven to be fantastic testing instruments. They're constantly changing it so we're taking a test and we'll see how bad we are. And then we've got to go back and remediate instead of doing it the other way around.

Fran held a similar view that the process of taking the test could be "tricky." She felt that completing the answer sheet could be an obstacle for some students: "The [answer sheet is] a whole page and just losing your place would throw the whole thing off." She also explained that she was frustrated by not having access to the results of the test in time to respond in a formative way. She stated:

The whole year long we're told do those standards – work, work, work. And then the kids are gone and we never see any results. It's very unsatisfying from a teacher's point of view in knowing how you did. It's like not getting to see the end of the movie. Like never getting to see the end of the movie until the next year and you don't care about it so much.

Part Three: Emergent Themes

Emphasis on Statue Quo

Willow Brook was a large school with a significant proportion of academically successful students. Teachers spoke of this quality as a primary characteristic when asked to describe the school. Further, teachers and the principal spoke proudly of having one of the highest pass rates for the state related to the standards-based assessment.

In discussions about supporting students at risk of not passing the standards-based assessment, such as those with disabilities, general education teachers did not speak directly to this population until redirected by the researcher. While their actions were not negligent, they exhibited little urgency with regard to addressing this population; rather, they cited numerous reasons for not considering the needs of this group as a priority. For example, the principal noted that accommodations provided to students with disabilities made the “playing field level,” implying needs were sufficiently addressed. The special education teacher expressed concerns regarding the willingness of general

education teachers to work in partnership with regard to students identified with disabilities. She said she had the impression that teachers “just want to get them out.”

There was also a notion, though not supported by state policy, that special education students were exempt from the accountability embedded in the standards-based assessment. This revealed not only a lack of understanding on the part of teachers, but also a willingness to disregard the needs of students if outcomes were not measured. One teacher explained: “The special education kids are exempt from the overall performance [standards] that we’re subject to.” Another teacher elaborated further that excluding them was a good thing because “they wouldn’t pass anyway.”

Teachers and the principal revealed that making changes to their current procedures and practices was not necessary. One teacher noted that the development of pacing guides actually got in the way of her doing her job. Additionally, given the historically high achievement of students at Willow Brook, the principal did not see a need to change instructional techniques and planned on “doing pretty much what we’ve been doing.”

Meeting Student Instructional Needs

Teachers described both individualized instruction in the form of one-on-one lessons and instructional accommodations, which were designated as

specifically for students with disabilities. Overall, teachers had difficulty describing techniques other than whole-group types of procedures.

One-on-one instruction was provided by instructional assistants and volunteers from local colleges. This type of instruction was delivered in the general education classroom and sometimes students were taken out of the classroom. While teachers described the assistance of these individuals as valuable, the potential for remediating weaknesses was questionable. Volunteers and student assistants likely had no formal preparation in dealing with needs of students with learning difficulties. Yet, students with unique instructional requirements were the students most often assigned to work with these individuals.

Accommodations were described as a way to meet the needs of students with disabilities in terms of supporting their achievement. Accommodations included utilizing proximity control, peer supports, computerized instruction; in addition, modeling was mentioned by parents. Teachers did not describe the application of these techniques in ways that indicated specific student needs were factored into the decision to use the accommodations. For example, moving students away from distractions, or placing them in groups that were likely to be supportive was not mentioned in relation to an identified need related to improving achievement. Similarly, students as a group were assigned to work in the computer lab. While the computerized math program was individualized to the

extent that it was designed to adjust to student performance, as the primary means for addressing unique learning needs its adequacy for meeting various instructional needs was questionable. Modeling was another way that was described for meeting student instructional needs. While modeling the cognitive processes involved in solving math problems is an element of best practices for instruction, based on the details provided in the case illustrated by the teacher, modeling meant the use of an example in solving other problems rather than a demonstration of the metacognitive processes involved. For example, Mark explained that he talked about how to do the problems with the kids and took them through each step in a way that approximated modeling, however, he did not take it further in terms of sharing with the students the thinking processes that were involved with the problem solving.

Professional Interactions

Professional interactions for teachers and the principal at Willow Brook were exemplified largely by contacts that, while cooperative, did not require participants to work closely in an ongoing fashion. That is, teachers did not necessarily join forces in a way that enhanced outcomes as a result of the partnership. This was illustrated in the way in which teachers collaborated.

The principal left decision making about whether to “team or work individually” to the teachers and, therefore, collaboration was not common to the all teachers. Team teaching was the primary means of collaboration. However,

teachers tended to work in relative isolation and did not plan together or meet to discuss such issues as the success of their teaming, ways to improve their instruction, or student progress.

Interactions between general and special education teachers consisted primarily of discussions about student progress and coordinating instruction between their two classes. The special education teacher supported students in general education classrooms by complementing the work assigned students there with the work done in her pullout resource room. Interactions between general and special education teachers were not described in terms of sharing ideas or joint problem solving. Additionally, their interactions were not reciprocal in terms of mutual decision making about instruction for students with disabilities. Rather, the teachers shared with each other decisions that they had already made about what instruction was to be provided.

The principal worked collaboratively with the teachers on a curriculum team. This team was comprised of teachers having specialized knowledge in a content area who met monthly with the principal to “map out goals or strategies to go forward with.” One such strategy described by the principal was a policy regarding the range of performance levels that could be designated as “on grade level.” Teacher representatives developed these parameters to help teachers make determinations about whether or not students were working on grade level. This information was then passed along to their respective grade levels. Teachers did

not mention that they talked about issues related to instruction such as improving performance or best practice.

The teachers also described collegial interactions where teachers shared information that could support the success of students in other classes on their grade level. For example, teachers met to “make decisions together” and share ideas and teaching tips. Teachers noted that these types of interactions were hampered by a lack of planning time during the school day, thus limiting the frequency of collegial interactions. Interactions between the teachers and the principal were primarily hierarchical. That is, the principal’s role was one that could best be described as managerial. For example, the principal organized professional development opportunities or provided substitutes at the building level to allow teachers to develop their skills. Notably, no professional development opportunities were provided for general or special education teachers related to how to meet the instructional needs of students with learning difficulties.

The principal provided resources that supported teachers’ efforts in helping students master the standards. A computer lab, adequate classroom space, and materials with practice tests were examples provided by teachers. While teachers believed the computer lab may have been a result of a division initiative to bring technology to all schools, the principal was still credited. All other

resources were provided at the request of the teachers rather than as a component of a long-range plan to improve student performance.

To a lesser degree, as indicated by teacher comments, the principal also monitored their instruction related to the standards, provided information, and encouraged their efforts. For example, teachers noted that the principal had requested reports related to their pacing guides to determine what standards had been covered and by what date. The teachers did not describe monitoring related to the quality of their instruction or the degree to which students had reached mastery of the standards introduced. The principal was also recognized as having passed along information that teachers could utilize in terms of available resources in the community or information that teachers could use in working with students. Encouragement in the form of affirmations from the principal that the school was ‘the best’ was also noted by teachers. Remarkably, neither the principal nor the teachers described actions based on a plan to address academic requirements related to the standards such as improving instruction or student achievement.

Impact on Families and Educators

A general theme among participants at Willow Brook was that the impact of the standards would primarily be negative. Several teachers responded that they could not foresee any positive outcomes. Participants described the impact on parents and students in a limited way. Parents were concerned about the amount

of work that was required at home and the ultimate outcome the standards assessment would have on graduation. Concerns about the influence the assessment had on student stress levels and self-esteem were also noted. Given that mastering standards and the assessment posed little difficulty for the majority of students at Willow Brook, the negative impact of the assessments perceived by participants were not realized in terms of numerous examples that could be cited.

Participants offered many examples of the negative impact the standards had on their situations. Teacher responses indicated that they were generally overwhelmed about the large number of standards that needed to be “covered” prior to the assessment, and felt a great deal of stress related to this. They were also displeased that they needed to change their instruction in ways that were not productive in terms of helping students master the content. Additional concerns were also raised about the assessment itself. Teachers were troubled by the fact that a multiple-choice test would be used to determine students’ mastery of the content. An additional frustration for the teachers was not having the results to help guide instruction before the academic year was concluded.

Summary of Case Studies and Cross-case Analysis

Introduction

This final section of Chapter Four will summarize, analyze, and interpret the three case studies. Figure 8 illustrates the similarities and differences among the three schools in terms of the primary and subthemes that emerged. These

provide a framework for the more detailed cross-case analysis that follows. This section contains (a) a short summary of the overarching themes that emerged within each school, (b) a cross-case analysis of the three schools, and (c) a discussion of the final emergent themes common to the three schools.

Summary of Themes from Oak Glen Elementary

When asked to talk about students with disabilities, responses across participants at Oak Glen were imprecise reflecting the possibility that the needs of students with disabilities were not thoroughly contemplated. When describing ways in which the needs of students with disabilities were addressed, teachers and the principal most often described common approaches to addressing typical variations in learning needs such as having students do fewer problems on a math worksheet. Overall, the needs of students were being met in reactive rather than proactive ways.

Cooperative working relationships among staff emerged as a theme and was a facilitative extension of the described child-centeredness. Professional relationships between teachers at Oak Glen, however, failed to take advantage of the expertise of each member. Teachers did not work in ways that utilized the shared knowledge of team members as it applied to improving student achievement. Home-school partnerships in terms of working with parents to improve academic outcomes for children were not considered.

Figure 8. Cross-case analysis of the emergent themes from each case study.

Oak Glen	Pine Hills	Willow Brook	Common Themes
Child-centered Approaches	Meeting Student Instructional Needs	Meeting Student Instructional Needs	Pedagogy
Individualized Instruction		Individualized Instruction	
Hands-on Activities	Hands-on Activities		
Accommodations	Accommodations	Accommodations	
Differentiated Instruction			
	Understanding Issues of Poverty		
Professional Interactions	Professional Interactions	Professional Interactions	Coactive Professional Networks
Collegial		Collegial	
Collaborative	Collaborative	Collaborative	
	Generalist/Specialist		
Managerial/Supervisory			
	Managerial/Enabling	Managerial/Enabling	
Impact on Families and Educators	Impact on Families and Educators	Impact on Families and Educators	Unintended Outcomes
Parents	Parents	Parents	
Students	Students	Students	
Educators	Educators	Educators	
	Student Characteristics as Barrier		
	Academic Functioning		
	Socioeconomic Status		
	Lack of Parent Involvement		
		Emphasis on Status Quo	
		Laissez Faire Attitude Toward Performance of Students w/ Disabilities	
		Resistance to Change	

Oak Glen was attempting to implement the state-mandated standards-based curriculum and to ensure that the pass rate for the standards assessment was adequate. Therefore, addressing all standards prior to the test was a pervasive concern. Teachers often omitted projects or units used in the past because they did not have time to do something just because it was “fun.” Stress created by, among other things, the volume of standards-based content to be covered created conditions whereby teachers and administrators had little time to contemplate the results of their actions or interpret the degree to which results were consistent with the outcomes they wanted.

Ostensibly, when the themes generated from this site were considered--the child as the focus of actions, teachers working with each other and the administration, and consideration of the impact of the standards--it appeared that the necessary inputs for improving achievement were in place. However, a closer inspection of how these components were translated into practice and revealed ineffective execution of each of these ideas. Little time for reflection left teachers unable to discern the relationship between customary practice and results in a time of new expectations for schools.

Summary of Themes from Pine Hills Elementary

Participants at Pine Hills defined themselves as a school coping with inherent student characteristics that were disadvantageous to success. Thus,

characteristics such as poor school readiness and low socioeconomic status were seen as almost insoluble obstacles. Teachers focused primarily on the problem rather than on solutions.

Meeting the instructional needs of students with hands-on activities, accommodations, and through better understanding of issues of poverty, was a common theme. Teachers named these methods as their response to addressing student needs. The examples provided revealed difficulty translating the techniques into effective practice.

Working in partnership with other educators was another theme described by Pine Hills. However, teachers collaborated in ways that were insubstantial in terms of positively influencing student performance. For example, individuals with particular expertise, such as the special education teacher and other special education support staff, were underutilized. Partnering with parents in a supportive or cooperative fashion related to helping children succeed was not considered. Neither the teachers nor the principal described the provision of any direction from the school level regarding how best to address improving achievement.

A final theme was related to the unintended outcomes of the standards and the assessment. Unintended outcomes included increased stress on the part of students and educators. Teachers often supplanted what they knew to be good instructional practice with more drill-and-practice routines.

Summary of Themes from Willow Brook Elementary

For teachers and the principal at Willow Brook, it was the historically high student achievement at their school that formed the lens through which school issues were filtered. Effectively, the school's academic success appeared to obscure other issues such as meeting the needs of students who were not successful academically. The difficulty teachers had in describing supports to students with disabilities may have reflected a lack of contemplation about how to best address the unique learning needs of these students. Unless teachers and the principal were asked specifically to do so, they did not address students with disabilities in their responses. The principal and the teachers held the perception that by virtue of being identified as having a disability, student needs were met via the IEP. This was exemplified by the principal's comment that the accommodations allowed on the standards-based assessment created a satisfactory level of support for these students.

Notably, the level of responsibility general education teachers felt for students with disabilities was quantified by whether or not students with disabilities would be included in the standards assessment. One teacher mentioned that she didn't feel pressured about the achievement of students with disabilities in her classroom because their scores would be disaggregated from the rest of her classroom scores. It should be noted that the principal did not provide direction or

formulate a plan aimed at recognizing and addressing needs of students with disabilities or the role of teachers in meeting the needs of this group of students.

Professional relationships was another theme at Willow Brook although these relationships did not take advantage of the powerful connections that can be made between professionals of varying expertise. In fact, individuals with the most skills and education related to addressing special learning needs (i.e., the special education teacher) were underutilized. For example, the special education teacher worked in relative isolation in her resource room. Neither did she provide consultative assistance on a regular basis. Conversely, those with the least amount of formal preparation, namely, instructional assistants and volunteers, were overutilized. That is, these individuals were most often assigned to work with the most instructionally needy students.

Overall, Willow Brook was a school where academic success was a reality for the majority of students. The relatively small population of students with disabilities were often not afforded specialized instruction or other considerations of their learning needs. Teachers and the principal did not indicate in their responses that the status quo was anything other than acceptable. For Willow Brook, recognizing and responding to the whole school population was an unrealized attribute.

Cross-case Analysis

In this study, particular elements that emanated from research and the literature were targeted for investigation within a much broader exploration of the issue of supporting students with disabilities to meet higher academic standards. In order to address the overarching question for this study, these constructs were formulated from two vantage points (a) principal leadership and (b) teacher instructional practice.

The cross-case analysis was conducted by comparing the differences and similarities among the themes that emanated from each site with consideration of the two constructs. This section includes a description of the cross-case analysis and identification and discussion of the differences and similarities among the themes across cases.

The frequency with which participants included issues and topic matter in their narrative descriptions played a part in the development of the themes. One researcher-generated condition in considering an issue a theme was that at least three of the five participants at the school level had to describe the same issue or topic. Thick narrative descriptions by the participants of issues, topics, and events provided essential understandings that were used for further interpretation by the researcher. Reflection and interpretation (and reinterpretation) by the researcher was ongoing throughout the study as new relationships were revealed and new

connections constructed. One of the initial steps in the cross-site analysis was to compile the themes from each site and then compare and contrast them.

Differences Among Themes When Compared Across Cases

While more similar than different in terms of the issues and topics of discussion that participants chose to mention, what distinguished each site was a unique and predominant schoolwide focus that both defined the school's fundamental principles and marked the distinctive character of the school. For example, Oak Glen presented itself as a school with a philosophy where children were highly valued and deserving of special attention. Every participant at the school level noted this as a primary characteristic when describing their school. Further, this theme was woven throughout their responses underscoring the position that this school attribute was more than superficial.

Students were also at the center of discussion at Pine Hills. In contrast to Oak Glen, however, these students were most often categorized as being overwhelmingly challenging. Teachers perceived themselves as helpless in terms of supporting these students to the degree necessary for them to be considered academically successful. While teachers clearly stated the need to support and teach these students, adverse conditions posed by the students such as school readiness, socioeconomic status, and lack of parent involvement were, in several cases, deemed undefeatable.

Finally, a distinguishing characteristic of Willow Brook was that it was a school on the verge of being accredited based on student performance on the standards-based assessment. From the vantage point of an academically successful school, participants expressed little urgency related to making changes in school practices because efforts to support student learning needs were being met as exemplified by high student success rates. Students with disabilities, in particular, were considered to be adequately supported because of their IEPs.

Similarities Among Themes when Compared Across Cases

Themes coalesced with striking similarity across the cases. Three overarching themes across cases were derived from review and analysis of the themes within each site. The three common themes were (a) pedagogy, (b) coactive professional networks, and (c) unintended outcomes.

Pedagogy

The actions of building-level staff related to providing support for students with disabilities were a focus of this study. Teachers' instructional practices were a logical premise for discussions about how they supported students with disabilities in meeting more rigorous standards. It followed then that teachers responded to questions associated with this issue by describing the classroom supports they believed targeted the academic needs of students with disabilities in their classrooms. Specifically, teachers named three practices as the primary approaches they used with students with disabilities and other students whose

learning needs differed from that of the general population. Given the lack of deviance between the schools in naming these practices as the most viable of options for improving achievement, these techniques represented the teachers' view that they were the most effective or efficient ways in which to react to meeting demands of students who are low achieving. They were (a) individualized instruction, (b) hands-on activities, and (c) accommodations.

Individualized instruction. Teachers commonly mentioned individualized instruction as a way to provide learning opportunities to students with disabilities. Thus, they reported using individualized instruction to support students who needed "extra help" in understanding information that had been presented in class. To teachers across cases, individualized instruction essentially referred to a kind of grouping such as one-on-one or small group rather than as a way to address individual needs or instructional levels. While the general or special education teacher led these groups, instructional assistants and volunteers were more often charged with providing this one-on-one or small-group instruction in each of the three schools.

Hands-on activities. Another intervention described as being a means for addressing needs of students with disabilities was hands-on activities. Teachers explained that allowing students to manipulate materials was an example of specialized instruction geared to students with special learning needs. For teachers across schools, use of manipulatives was synonymous with hands-on activities.

Although incorporating hands-on activities was said address the needs of students with disabilities, when offered, these types of activities were provided to support the whole class rather than as a direct response to unique student needs.

Accommodations. Of the three techniques commonly described by teachers, instructional accommodations represented the strategy most uniquely applied to students with disabilities. Participants perceived this approach as being almost exclusively in the purview of special education; that is, teachers did not describe making accommodations for students in their classes as a whole as they did the other approaches.

Participants cited examples of accommodations that included supports such as providing notes written on the board during lectures, decreasing the amount of work on a given task, and providing different writing paper. As per their examples, accommodations tended to be limited to materials students used and represented options that required little deliberation prior to implementation and deviated in limited ways from the original task.

One commonality among what teachers shared on this issue related not to a common response but to a general failure to note instructional techniques that required changes in the way instruction was delivered by the teacher. Common responses did not reflect proactive application of high-quality instructional techniques that effectively and strategically presented information to students (e.g., the use of a graphic organizers.)

Coactive Professional Networks

Participants spoke invariably about their working relationships within their schools as being an avenue for improving success for all students. A second common theme across schools was related to how educators connected with each other in both formal and informal ways related to the particular requirements of their respective positions. Three common elements from the schools came together to validate this theme. In order to illuminate this theme, the three elements (a) collaborative relationships, (b) collegial interactions, and (c) hierarchical relationships will be described.

Collaborative relationships. These relationships were defined as working together with mutual responsibility for outcomes and were a definitive characteristic of each school. While the types of collaboration differed slightly from school to school, team teaching and collaborative school-based teams were collective examples of ways each school collaborated.

Another similarity was the degree to which collaboration represented superficial associations among the staff within the schools. Participants described the “what” of their collaboration, but did not reference any transformational outcomes such as achieving individual goals or more collective ones for the school in which they worked. For example, teachers reported that they were engaged in team teaching; however, it could be described as sharing the workload rather than involving goal setting, ongoing communication, problem solving, or

learning from each other, all of which are factors essential to effective collaborative relationships.

Collegial interactions. These relationships, and by extension generalist/specialist relationships, were defined by teachers as being supportive of each other and consequently the students with which they worked. Collegial relationships tended to be less formal than the collaborative associations and included sharing information, materials and ideas.

Both general and special education teachers engaged in collegial relationships across each site, but the distinction in terms of the respective responsibilities for these teachers was made very clear in the generalist/specialist relationships. While the participants described working in support of each other, the special education teachers commonly reported that the outcome of these types of relationships served to highlight differences in their professional preparation; namely, that general education teachers teach subject matter across all content areas for whole classes whereas special education teachers serve a more supportive, albeit technical, role for smaller groups of students. Special education teachers commonly reported that this left them feeling underutilized in terms of their potential to make a difference instructionally for students with disabilities in general education classrooms because their responsibility for student achievement was not perceived as equivalent that of general education teachers. As one special education teacher noted, “sometimes I feel like my position is an aide’s position

where I am just in assisting the children. Sometimes I'm just an extra hand in the room to keep the children on task to see if they're listening."

Hierarchical relationships. While actions of the principal related to improving student achievement was a central question of this study, and thus each participant was asked to respond to related interview questions, principal leadership did not emerge substantially enough for consideration as a separate theme and, therefore, is included here as a third coactive network.

Participants tended to describe the actions of the principal in terms of interactions: how they worked together and how the principal supported them. This example of a coactive network differed slightly from the other two in that it involved more hierarchical interactions between teachers and principals. A common theme among each site was that teachers and principals described leadership responsibilities for improving achievement in primarily managerial terms (Sergiovanni, 1996).

In terms of the leadership task of managing, principals in this study were commonly noted for their support in mobilizing resources for reasons of securing money that could be used for instructional support for students. Principals' actions also were commonly described in terms of providing procedural information and guidelines such as pacing guides for regulating the process of implementing the standards.

Another type of hierarchical interaction was exemplified in the enabling behaviors described frequently across the sites. Enabling behaviors were those that removed obstacles for teachers, which helped them fulfill their job responsibilities, as well as those actions that supported development of skills necessary to meet demands. Two examples common to the sites were professional development opportunities provided by the principal and informational staff meetings.

Perhaps one of the most important factors related to leadership did not pertain to the inclusion of similar responses across sites but rather to the uniform exclusion of certain leadership elements. For example, when asked to talk about a principal-initiated program, initiative, or directive, no participant could name an example, including the principals and central office personnel. *[Both central office participants noted that no special initiatives or programs were in place in the district. The special education director explained that this was because they “were going through a systems change.”]* Neither could it be said that principals provided purposeful direction that reflected a sense of urgency with regard to changing current school processes to consider the unique needs of students with disabilities. In summary, leadership consisted of removing barriers to instruction and providing supports where necessary for teachers to do the job as they had prior to implementation of more rigorous academic standards. Purposeful leadership that reflected future goals or improvements was omitted.

Unintended Outcomes

In talking about the realities of the participants' particular situation, powerful emic issues (issues based on perspectives of the participants) emerged that transversed the three sites. Participants revealed that unintended outcomes of the standards and the related assessment had had a negative impact on families and educators. Pressure that originated from sources outside the individual and stress that originated from within individuals, often as a result of pressure, were common themes. Parents and students felt pressured to be successful on the assessment, and teachers felt pressured to respond to the demands of assisting students in meeting higher academic expectations. For educators, a common reaction to the pressure and resulting stress related to standards and assessments was to change their instructional practices. Participants at the school level consistently referred to the ways teachers were eliminating some elements of best practice, often despite the fact that they recognized these decisions as counter productive to effective teaching. Changes in practice included more worksheets, less in-depth study, and more drill and practice. Teachers commonly recounted decisions not to do any "fun activities" until after the standards assessment.

This cross-case analysis compared the differences and similarities among the themes from each site. After analysis of themes, three common themes coalesced around issues of pedagogy or instructional methods, coercive interactions that included various exchanges between teachers and principals (e.g.,

teaming), and unintended outcomes. The constructs of leadership and instructional practice were also considered. These constructs and the implications of each of these themes will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

Final Interpretations, Implications, and Recommendations

This chapter is divided into four parts. Part I highlights the literature comprehensively reviewed in Chapter Two. Part II includes a discussion of the themes that emerged after analysis of the three cases and how they were determined. Part III compares the common themes across sites to the literature in Chapter Two. Finally, part IV concludes the chapter with recommendations for research and practice.

Part I: Review of the Study's Literature Base

This study explored the actions of elementary principals and teachers toward improving achievement for students with disabilities related to standards-based reform. The framework for this study designed based on four areas supported by research and literature: federal initiatives, state initiatives, leadership practices, and instructional practices. Each of these four areas will be discussed below.

Federal Influences on Reform and School-based Practice

Several recent federal initiatives have been designed to ensure that outcomes improve for all students in the nation's schools. Students with diverse learning needs (e.g., students with disabilities) are mentioned specifically in three major statues that have codified the goals of standards-based reform: Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Goals 2000), the Improving America's Schools Act of

1994 (IASA), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

(McDonnell et al.,; Ravitch, 1995). Specific attention is paid to the inclusion of all students in reform efforts resulting from Goals 2000 initiatives: “The term ‘all students’ and ‘all children’ ... [includes] students or children with disabilities” (Public Law 103-227, sec 3 [1]). IASA requires states to consider the unique needs of students at risk and make provisions to ensure that these students do not fail to meet challenging standards because of inadequate instruction and support. In addition to Goals 2000 and IASA, IDEA has been amended to incorporate an increased emphasis on the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings. IDEA also requires states to include students with disabilities in state and district wide assessment programs with accommodations where appropriate (NICHCY, 1998).

State Influences on Reform and School-based Practice

Recently, many state initiatives related to increasing student achievement through higher standards have been enacted. States have focused on two types of standards: (a) content standards and (b) performance standards. Content standards “describe what teachers are supposed to teach and students are expected to learn” (Ravitch, 1995, p. 12). Performance standards operationalize what students must do to demonstrate proficiency in knowledge and skills as outlined in content standards (National Education Association, [NEA], 1997) and specify what is considered proficient in terms of performance. States need to strike an intricate

balance between articulating high expectations for all students and allowing for enough programmatic flexibility to consider outcomes for students with disabilities and other unique needs (CISP, 1998). Systems of accountability also need to become more results-based and include students with disabilities.

Principal Leadership for Inclusive Standards-based Reform

Based on the literature reported in Chapter Two, four primary leadership actions were formulated that encapsulated effective leadership elements. The first, providing resources to accomplish goals (Miles & Darling-Hammond, 1997), may require principals to utilize resources in more efficient and innovative ways (Parker & Day, 1997; Tourgee & DeClue, 1992). These ways may include reallocating money through the elimination of nonteaching staff, implementing either multi-age grouping or integration of special education students to increase the percentage of teachers working with students, or pooling resources from special education and/or Title I to support more flexibility in grouping to decrease group size for small-group instruction.

Secondly, providing goal-related professional development (Sparks, 1997) that allows teachers to learn subject matter reflected in the standards and to develop the skills to teach them effectively is essential (Copenhaver, 1997; Sparks, 1997). Teachers need to be able to link instruction with standards and support students with disabilities in general education settings in ways that enable

them to meet established standards and demonstrate their understanding through assessment (Rainforth, 1996; Rothman, 1996).

Third, effective school leaders clearly express the school's vision and use the vision to guide improvement through articulation and implementation of a goal-based plan of action (Goertz et. al, 1996; Hesselbein, 1996). The mission provides a compass for generating directions for the school, especially in turbulent and ever-changing circumstances as is often the case during times of educational reform (Hesselbein, 1996).

Finally, involving families and guardians in standards initiatives is critical for several reasons. Working in partnership with families by sharing information and decision-making facilitates clear mutual goals and shared responsibilities. This in turn contributes to better understanding of the purposes and needs for standards and accountability systems as well as understanding the parents' role as active members of the IEP team and their options related to standards and assessments such as the type of testing accommodations available for their children.

Instructional Practice for Inclusive Standards-based Reform

Based on the literature reported in Chapter Two, four primary instructional practices were formulated that encapsulated effective instructional methods. The first, providing tailored instruction (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2000) which takes into account knowledge about student readiness, and learning styles, focuses on

connecting educational goals with the needs of students (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Determining student readiness and learning styles then matching instruction of needed skills results in increased opportunities for students to both comprehend and retain the information they are taught (Sternberg, 1997).

The second instructional practice, use of high-quality instructional techniques, focuses on making students more active and ultimately more independent in their learning. Examples of these techniques include strategic instruction and constructivist teaching. Strategies help students make connections with the general education content by teaching them how to effectively and efficiently acquire information, store it, and demonstrate their understanding (Schumaker, Deshler, & Ellis, 1986). Additionally, constructivist teaching and learning recognizes the importance of connecting new learning with students' prior understandings and acknowledges the student as the constructor of knowledge.

Accommodations, a third type of instructional practice, support students by enabling them to learn the general education content. Changes made to content delivery, including the way in which instruction is provided, materials such as textbooks, or assignments that support student inclusion in general education classrooms, are considered accommodations (Beninghof & Singer, 1995; Lenz & Scanlon, 1998).

Collaborating with colleagues (West & Idol, 1987), while not necessarily considered an instructional practice, is supportive of providing the individualized types of instruction provided in general education classrooms that are necessary for student academic success. One goal of collaboration is to ensure that students with disabilities receive the supports they need while remaining in the general education classroom (Vaughn et al., 2000). Collaborative work structures may include co-teaching, consultation or teaming (Lipsky & Gartner, 1998).

Part II: Description of Themes and Their Development

Description of Theme Development

In planning this study, particular elements that emanated from research and the literature were targeted for investigation within a much broader exploration of the issue of supporting students with disabilities to meet higher academic standards. These elements were formulated from two vantage points (a) principal leadership and (b) teacher instructional practice in order to explore the study's guiding question.

Semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers were the primary data source. Complementary, semi-structured interviews with the director of special education and the assistant superintendent of instruction were also conducted. Participants conducted member checks on drafts of the interviews for accuracy and elaboration/modification. Data collection also consisted of document reviews. Available documents such as letters, school improvement

plans, school mission statements, and agendas were reviewed. Document review consisted of three stages: (1) collection of documents; (2) analysis to determine if information provided by the document supported information shared by the participants or offered an alternative perspective, and (3) determination of the applicability of the information derived from each document in terms of whether or not the information could be included in the study to further clarify, explain, or elaborate on the information shared by the participants.

The frequency with which participants included issues and topic matter in their narrative descriptions played a part in the development of the themes. One researcher-generated condition in considering an issue a theme was that at least three of the five participants at the school level had to describe the same issue or topic. Common themes within each site were categorized based on the most salient attribute. Common themes across each site were noted and categorized using the same criteria. Thick narrative descriptions by the participants of issues, topics, and events provided essential understandings that were used for further interpretation by the researcher. Reflection and interpretation (and reinterpretation) by the researcher was ongoing throughout the study as new relationships were revealed and new connections constructed.

Description of Themes Across Sites

A theme common among responses at the three sites was that of instructional approaches which collectively included individualized instruction,

hands-on activities, accommodations, and differentiated instruction. When asked to talk about students with disabilities, responses from participants at the three sites were imprecise reflecting the possibility that the needs of students with disabilities were not thoroughly contemplated.

Cooperative working relationships among staff emerged as a theme. Professional relationships across the sites consisted of collegial, collaborative, managerial/supervisory, generalist/specialist, and managerial/enabling interactions. Teachers did not, however, tend to work in ways that utilized the shared knowledge of team members as it applied to improving student achievement. In general, these relationships did not take advantage of the connections that can be made between professionals of varying expertise.

The impact of unintended outcomes of the standards and the related assessment on families and educators was noted in each site. Stress created by, among other things, the volume of standards-based content to cover created conditions whereby teachers and administrators had little time to contemplate the results of their actions or interpret the degree to which results were consistent with the results they wanted. Teachers often supplanted what they knew to be good instructional practice with more drill and practice routines.

A theme unique to Pine Hills was related to the participants' perception that they were coping with inherent student characteristics that were disadvantageous to success. Characteristics such as poor school readiness and low

socioeconomic status were seen as almost insoluble obstacles. Teachers focused primarily on the problem rather than on solutions.

A theme exclusive to Willow Brook was one of maintaining a status quo. Effectively, the school's historically high academic success appeared to obscure other issues such as meeting needs of students that were not successful academically. The relatively small population of students with disabilities was often not afforded specialized instruction or other considerations of their learning needs. Teachers and the principal did not indicate in their responses that this was anything other than acceptable. For Willow Brook, recognizing and responding to the whole school population was an attribute unrealized.

Part III: Comparison of Common Themes to the Literature

The actions of elementary principals and teachers in improving achievement for students with disabilities related to standards-based reform have been the focus of this study. The realities of this issue were illuminated by the stories of the participants. Three themes were common across sites: (a) pedagogy, (b) coactive professional networks, and (c) unintended outcomes. Pedagogy referred to teachers' instructional practices related to supporting students with special learning needs. Coactive professional networks consisted of the various interactions between teachers and between teachers and the principal. Principal leadership was included here as the hierarchical nature of leadership at the three schools was categorized by participants in terms of interactions. Finally,

unintended outcomes included issues such as stress and instructional alterations that resulted from implementation of standards and the related assessment.

Based on the literature reported in Chapter Two, and highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, four primary instructional practices were formulated that encapsulated effective instructional methods. They were (a) tailoring instruction (Noyce, Perda & Traver, 2000); (b) providing high quality instructional techniques (McKeown & Beck, 1999); (c) providing instructional accommodations (Udvari-Solner, 1995); and (d) collaboration (Lambert, 1998).

Instructional Actions of Teachers in the Three Sites

General and special education teachers described two primary actions noted in the literature related to supporting students with disabilities: accommodations and professional collaboration. Accommodations used included adaptations to materials students used such as writing paper or limited number of required problems on a worksheet. Teachers also described the collegial and collaborative ways they worked together to improve the success of the students with which they worked. Teachers worked in collegial ways such as sharing materials and ideas and in more formal collaborative relationships, which, included team teaching and working together on school-based teams. Figure 9 illustrates each of the four instructional actions supported in the literature, whether or not it was noted in each site, and examples of actions that were exhibited.

Implications

A complete understanding of teachers' actions related to each of these supports, accommodations and collaboration, requires a comprehensive look at each, which includes not only a determination of the existence of these supports but also the degree to which they were implemented. After asking participants to provide examples and further explanations of each of these actions, it became clear these instructional supports were only superficially applied. Implications include a discussion about how various stakeholders are impacted by the superficial implementation of accommodations and collaboration.

Limited application of accommodations. The primary purpose of utilizing accommodations for students with disabilities is to eliminate the barriers posed by the general education curriculum in light of the students' disability (Vaughn et al., 2000). Accommodations, therefore, should be integral to instructional decision making and must first take into account the goals of the general education curriculum, the objectives of the teacher, and the expected outcomes for all students (Udvari-Solner, 1995). Decisions then can be made regarding the best way to support students through the use of accommodations.

If accommodations are considered after planning, the assumption is that the process is one that entails adjusting the child to the instruction rather than adjusting the instruction to the child. Accommodations at the three sites tended to relate only to how students showed what they knew.

Figure 9. Instructional actions related to improving achievement.

What does the literature say?	Did the principals or teachers note it?		What was the action or example?
Provide instructional accommodations Beninghof & Singer, 1995; Heron & Jorgensen, 1994; Newman & Wehlage, 1993, Rosenshine & Stevens, 1986; Udvari-Solner, 1995	Oak Glen	Y	Require less handwriting, fewer worksheet problems.
	Pine Hills	Y	Present information in a different way, provide different pencil.
	Willow Brook	Y	Provide extra practice, see if they need to be more isolated.
Tailor instruction Campbell & Campbell, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Gardner, 1987; Noyce, Perda & Traver, 2000; Schrag, 1999; Sternberg, 1997; Vaughn et al., 2000	Oak Glen	N	More hands-on, one-to-one instruction.
	Pine Hills	N	Pull students out and go over it.
	Willow Brook	N	More hands-on math activities.
Develop quality instructional techniques Blakely & Spence, 1990; Collins, 1994; Deshler & Schumaker, 1993; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; McKeown & Beck, 1999; Schumaker et al, 1986	Oak Glen	N	Teachers and the principal described changes after students were unsuccessful in whole-group instruction.
	Pine Hills	N	Described instruction in terms of altering slightly the requirements for students with disabilities.
	Willow Brook	N	Described instruction as teacher-directed and lecture-based in both small and whole group arrangements.
Collaborate Darling-Hammond, 1996; Lambert, 1998; Lipsky & Gartner, 1998; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993, Vaughn et al., 2000; West & Idol, 1987	Oak Glen	Y	Getting together with general education teacher to see what her lesson is going to be.
	Pine Hills	Y	Special education teacher circulates and assists students.
	Willow Brook	Y	Team-teaching and switching off subjects so only science or social studies is taught.

For example, Ria from Oak Glen noted, “we have laminated handwriting paper, and they do their work on this.” If, however, accommodations are related only to how learning is communicated, the important function of accommodating the actual learning or input of the content is omitted (Heron & Jorgensen, 1994). Ultimately, accommodations that focus only on adjusting the materials students use will likely have only minimal impact on improving outcomes because they do not consider accommodating the initial acquisition of information.

Limited utilization of collaboration. The practice of general education teachers working alone in their classrooms to meet the needs of students is no longer expected practice in most schools (Friend & Cook, 1996). Instead, effective collaboration among teachers is important for supporting students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Vaughn et al., 2000; Udvari-Solner, 1995). Effective collaboration is contingent on having both the time and skills to collaborate. Without these elements, collaboration may result in only an occasional contact with another teacher similar to how the special education teacher at Pine Hills described her collaboration with the general education teacher: “[a lot of the work we do is] fly by the seat of your pants work.”

Ongoing contact needs to be sustained by a common goal. Where there is no common goal, interactions tend to be more superficial and sporadic (Schmoker, 1996). In situations such as those described at the three sites, where

collaborative relationships are not explicitly goal-based, weak interactions result. Weak interactions tend to lead to outcomes that are equally weak, and these weak outcomes affect professionals and students. Professionals are affected because they do not receive the benefits of shared knowledge and professional growth or fell “like my position is an aides’ position where I am ... just an extra hand in the room.” Students are affected because they do not have the opportunity to benefit from quality supports in the general education classroom.

Instructional Actions Not Identified in the Three Sites

In addition to the loosely applied actions of accommodation and collaboration, there were also two important actions that were consistently missing from each site: tailored instruction and high quality instructional techniques.

Tailored Instruction

Instruction that is appropriately matched to student needs positively impacts achievement (Schrag, 1999). Tailored instruction is a student-focused consideration that implies that teaching takes into account knowledge about student readiness, learning styles, and cognitive strengths. There is also an underlying assumption that the success of all students is achievable and that academic success for most students is not considered adequate. Finally, tailored instruction implies a proactive approach that emphasizes the question, “What supports do students need to learn?”

This diverges from the reactive measure of the three sites whereby students were provided “tailored” instruction after they were found unsuccessful in learning presented content. Teachers had the “instructional assistant sit with him and read it” or “work with him in a small group.” Reteaching as a means of tailoring instruction results in a need to take time from that scheduled for introducing standards. This places increased pressure on teachers to go on “whether or not students have got it.”

High-quality Instructional Techniques

One way that teachers can tailor instruction is through the implementation of research-based techniques that go beyond lecturing and content “coverage.” Teachers who teach learning strategies, for example, provide students with the tools to become effective learners by teaching skills to independently make decisions about how to approach a task (Deshler & Schumaker, 1993). High-quality techniques focus on active student engagement that allows for meaningful connections to learning. Teachers can create situations for meaningful connections by providing instructional conditions that enable students to construct their own knowledge, encourage dialogue and questioning, and allow time for students to make connections related to content (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Perkins & Blyth, 1994).

In the absence of these instructional techniques, students are left to either make connections on their own or, more likely, to participate in learning that

primarily consists of remembering unrelated bits of information. For most students, retaining bits of isolated information is difficult at best from week to week. As Pat noted, retention was a great concern because her students with disabilities “can’t retain from one day to the next.” Students who are taught without connections have greater difficulty performing well on assessments that test learning over extended periods of times such as standards-based assessments administered after students are taught several years worth of content.

Leadership Actions of Principals in the Three Sites

Based on the literature reported in Chapter Two, and highlighted earlier in this chapter, four primary leadership actions were formulated that encapsulated effective leadership elements. They were (a) providing resources to accomplish goals (McDonnell et al., 1997; Odden, 1999; Parker & Day, 1997); (b) developing goal-related professional development (Sparks, 1997; Wehlage et al., 1992); (c) articulating and implementing a goal-based plan of action (Hesselbein, 1996; Schmoker, 1996); and (d) cultivating community and parent partnerships (Ysseldyke et al., 1994; NAESP, 1996). Figure 10 illustrates each of the four instructional actions supported in the literature, whether or not it was noted in each site, and examples of actions that were exhibited.

Participants in this study reported that principals evidenced actions that were supported in the literature as important for enhancing teaching and learning (Miles & Darling-Hammond, 1997, Odden, 1999). For example, principals

allocated resources in terms of money for teachers to use for purchasing materials and test preparation supplies. In some instances, money was obtained from the school's existing budget, in other instances from sources such as the Parent Teacher Association.

Additionally, principals provided professional development opportunities to teachers. These included ones related to skills for teaching the standards as well as ones directed at better understanding the children with whom they worked. Principals also offered information about standards and procedural guidelines related to such topics as implementation rate of the standards.

These examples of managerial and enabling leadership actions exemplify the most frequent responses of the participants when asked to describe what principals were doing to support students with disabilities in meeting more rigorous standards. Teachers felt that these leadership behaviors supported them in their efforts to help students meet higher academic standards. As one teacher noted, "Our principal does anything we ask as far as if we ask him for something we think will improve the [the result of the standards-based test]. [He] has really gone the distance for us. And we have appreciated that."

Figure 10. Inclusive leadership actions related to improving achievement.

What does the literature say?	Did the principals or teachers note it? *		What was the action or example?
Provide resources to accomplish goals McDonnell et al., 1997; Miles & Darling-Hammond, 1997; Odden, 1999; Parker & Day, 1997; Tourgee & DeClue, 1992	Oak Glen	Y	Secured money for materials from PTA.
	Pine Hills	Y	Provided funds for "materials closet".
	Willow Brook	Y	Purchased teacher resource guides.
Develop goal-related professional development Copenhaver, 1997; Imel, 1989; McDonnell et al., 1997; Rainforth, 1996; Wehlage et al., 1992	Oak Glen	Y	Teachers attended division- and school-sponsored workshops.
	Pine Hills	Y	Teachers attended division- and school sponsored workshops.
	Willow Brook	Y	Teachers attended division- and school sponsored workshops.
Articulate and implement a goal-based action plan Goertz et al., 1996; Hesselbein, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 1996; Louis & Miles, 1990; Massell et al., 1997; Mizell, 1996	Oak Glen	N	No programs, initiatives, or plans were noted related to improving academic success of students with disabilities.
	Pine Hills	N	No programs, initiatives, or plans were noted related to improving academic success of students with disabilities.
	Willow Brook	N	No programs, initiatives, or plans were noted related to improving academic success of students with disabilities.
Cultivate community and family partnerships (Lashway, 1995, 1996; Ysseldyke et al., 1995; NAESP, 1996).	Oak Glen	C=Y F=N	Volunteers from the community served as tutors.
	Pine Hills	C=Y F=N	Tutors from the community supported school; parents were not mentioned in relationship to partnership in improving achievement.
	Willow Brook	C= N F=N	

* Y= Yes
N = No

C = Community
F = Family

Principal Leadership Actions Not Identified in the Three Sites

The key to thoroughly understanding the principals' actions lay in further investigation of the approaches supported in the literature that were not present in the schools. Two actions important to supporting all students to reach higher academic standards were invariably missing from each site: the articulation and implementation of an action plan, and the cultivation of family partnerships (Lashway, 1995; Massell et al., 1997; Schmoker, 1996).

Articulation and Implementation of an Action Plan

Principals at the three sites managed their schools and provided important supports for teachers to enable them, in turn, to support students in improving achievement. These actions tended to maintain existing conditions within the schools both in terms of instructional procedures and the supports provided to students with disabilities. One principal said that in five years his school would "probably be doing pretty much what we've always been doing." A stated plan of action that consisted of projects, tasks, or initiatives was not evidenced in the comments of principals or teachers.

After review of the schools' mission statements, it was noted that Pine Hills' mission was to be a "child-centered environment where everyone experiences success and is respected as a unique individual." Oak Glen's mission revealed their commitment to provide "educationally sound" instruction. Willow

Brook's mission made note of their "goal" to meet or exceed the state's pass rate for the standards-based assessment. This was the only goal related to achievement in any of the mission statements. In general, the sites did not utilize their missions for which to plan for future progress. In one case, Pine Hills, the mission to see all as "respected, unique individuals" did not seem realized because students were often referred to as their own barrier to learning. One teacher stated that her students were so far behind academically she couldn't make a difference: "I'm not a miracle worker. I can't wave a wand and pour all the information in their heads."

Implications

In this section, implications will include discussion of how various stakeholders are impacted by the lack of a goal-based plan of action and the ultimate way in which the missing plan manifested itself in the context of inclusive standards-based reform. The following implications will be included: (a) lack of cohesion among staff, (b) maintenance of status quo, and (c) lack of interim measures.

Lack of cohesion among staff. A goal-based plan of action serves to bring staff together around a common set of actions based on a common mission (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Schmoker, 1996). Without it, teachers and principals lack common understandings and expectations. Dissimilar goals and principles, in turn, create a lack of cohesion among actions of the staff as each individual works

toward their own interpretation of what should occur in response to more rigorous standards and accountability. This was clearly manifested in the differences between the comments of special education teachers and those of general education teachers and principals. In the sites, not everyone saw students being in need of additional attention related to improving performance as measured by the standards assessment. For example, at Willow Oak, the principal noted that “There are so many accommodations that you can give kids with disabilities that make the playing field as level as possible, I don’t see how they can have any big gripe about it.” This was in contrast to the special education teacher’s comment that the standards-based assessment was, for her students with disabilities, an “almost impossible task.” This was manifested in various levels of inclusion in terms of access to the curriculum and the assessment, attention to disability-based learning needs, and overall expectations about academic outcomes for students with disabilities.

Maintenance of status quo. Another implication of not having a plan of action that goes beyond a vision or mission statement is that there is likely to be little or no change in existing structures or processes such as the way teachers work together or respond to the needs of students with disabilities. In the absence of a strategic path to realize improved achievement for all students, existing structures such as instructional techniques and levels of inclusion tend to remain the same (Schmoker, 1996). One principal commented about his teachers: “I don’t

think they made any extraordinary effort to change a lot of what they were already doing [as a result of implementation of higher academic standards]”.

A lack of purpose for changing the status quo manifests in an obvious way when considering results (i.e., improved performance for all students). That is, the results that have been achieved in the past will be the same that will be achieved in the future. Status quo, permitted by a lack of an action plan, ensures that schools will continue to use the same structures regardless of whether outcomes measures, in this case the standards-based test, make it clear that restructuring is necessary. For example, Oak Glen scored slightly lower in social studies on the state assessments for the second year of reporting even though they had focused efforts in that area. The principal mentioned to the researcher that some of the new things they were implementing did not directly address learning (i.e., breakfast on the day of the assessment or pep rallies before the assessment).

Lack of interim measures. Action plans should contain interim measures or benchmarks that let the staff know how they are progressing toward their goals as well as the emergence of any unintended outcomes. Without a plan designed to delineate the multiple measures of progress, the ultimate outcome or goal (e.g., passing scores on the standards assessment) becomes the only measure. Clearly, the participants in this study focused on one measure--the standards assessment. There was such a strong focus on the assessment that teachers were often

observed to use “standards” in a way synonymous with the standards assessment requiring the researcher to ask for clarification.

Focusing only on the long-term goals can have the impact of increased stress and decreased satisfaction among those responsible for meeting the ultimate goal. Without an opportunity to observe continual progress toward goals, educators can become disheartened about their ability to succeed in improving performance because succeeding in meeting short-term goals is not clear. One teacher explained: “The whole year long we’re told to do the standards--work, work, work. And then the kids are gone and we never see any results. It’s very unsatisfying.”

A lack of interim measures and the concomitant monitoring also leads to a lack of knowledge about what works and what does not. This is particularly critical because standards-based reform, and the federal legislation that supports it, requires schools to respond in new ways, which are exemplified by expectations for inclusion of students with disabilities in state wide assessments (Louis & Miles, 1990). Since schools are changing in response to this and for other reasons, knowledge about what has a positive impact on student outcomes is critical to responsive leadership and instruction.

Cultivation of Family Partnerships

A second action not evidenced among the three sites was the active inclusion of parents as partners in the education of their children (Epstein, 1995;

Ysseldyke et al., 1994). While some schools reported high rates of parent volunteers, working in partnership with parents was not mentioned. This can result in a lack of shared information and a lack of shared ownership.

Lack of shared information. In order for schools to make progress toward improved achievement for all students, alliances between individuals who influence achievement for children are critical. Partnerships between parents, the most influential people in a child's life, and educators are essential. If parents are excluded from meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children, students are affected by the absence of insights and information from the parents' perspective. If improved student achievement is a goal, parents need to be privy to information that can be used to support their child. Likewise, teachers need information from parents related to such things as past educational experiences or unusual family situations that can be used to make informed instructional decisions. Without ongoing communication, determining what is best for a child becomes a one-way decision that rests in the hands of school personnel.

Lack of shared ownership. If parents are removed from the decision-making process, they are effectively removed from obligations of shared ownership of problems and solutions. Relationships of shared ownership tend to bring about a sense of cohesiveness and improved willingness to work together toward goals. Without such cohesiveness, parents are likely to see educators as

having expert power and as parents as having little influence over decisions that are made. This can lead to parents who disengage themselves and either choose not to participate in the first place or decide to participate less.

A Final Note about Leadership and Instructional Practice

As noted in Chapter Three, one of the criteria for school selection for this study was the school was considered exemplary by central office administrators with regard to including students with disabilities in the general education curriculum. Through exploration of the topic of inclusion at each site, widely varying definitions of inclusion emerged. [Researcher's note: a specific definition of inclusion was provided to central office participants.] For one site, inclusion was a place, at one site inclusion was the amount of time a student spent in the general education classroom, and at the third site students were "included" by virtue of being included on the general education teacher's class roll.

Given that central office-level staff perceived the schools to be exemplary raised the possibilities that (a) communication among schools and the central office staff about inclusion was hampered by a lack of clarity about definition, and/or (b) what schools reported to be happening in terms of inclusion was not actualized in practice. Participants at two of the schools considered the school to be inclusive although this was not evidenced in practice. Overall, inclusion that encompassed access to the general education curriculum with the necessary supports was generally missing from these schools designated exemplary.

Recommendations for Research and Practice

As noted in Chapter Two, inclusion of students with disabilities in prior research or the literature related to standards was negligible. This study highlights several areas in which continued investigation is necessary to acquire further information to be used in building theoretical frameworks from which educators can work with regard to providing leadership and instructional practices that support students with disabilities in improving achievement. Areas in which continued research and theory development with regard to leadership and instruction would benefit the educational community are listed below.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Within the context of standards, little research is available to principals and teachers related to effective ways to respond to students with learning needs different from those of the general population (McDonnell et al., 1997). Standards, by nature, assume standardization of outcomes and, as was evidenced in this study, can homogenize instructional processes as well. In order to include and support students with disabilities in the context of standards-based reform, additional research-based information related to instructional best practice and leadership is necessary to provide direction to educators.

2. This study revealed some of the consequences of marginally implementing best practices. Both teachers and principals failed to implement what they understood to be best practice in ways that took full advantage of the

potential to have positive impact on students and educators. Transferring knowledge into practice in meaningful ways continues to be difficult for schools and is often dependent on individual schools making decisions that take into account the idiosyncrasies of the school (Fullan, 1999). Additional research into how schools can significantly apply known research about leadership and instruction in the context of standards-based reform and high stakes accountability is necessary.

3. For principals and teachers in this study, there was a relative lack of urgency with regard to changing practices to focus more on inclusion of and attention to students with disabilities. This illuminated three questions in need of further investigation: (a) What do principals and teachers perceive as their role in supporting students with disabilities to meet rigorous academic standards?, (b) What needs to be in place for teachers to provide instructional care for all students?, and (c) What needs to be in place for principals to consider students with disabilities in school reform? A better understanding of the answers to these questions would serve to illuminate necessary requisites.

4. This study revealed the powerful nature of research that involves the compilation of information using actual stories of those individuals closely involved with the question of study. More knowledge about actual implementation that uses practitioner voices may help to make clear the realities as opposed to what might be simply indicated in other types of research. Another

recommendation is for the continued use of qualitative research to study the dynamic issue of including and supporting all students in general education classrooms.

5. One limitation of this study was that, while the investigation was in-depth, it provided only a single look at three schools. For this reason the information learned can be considered only in terms of what the schools were engaged in at one particular time. To continue to add to theories about leadership and instruction, particularly with regard to students with disabilities, longitudinal investigation of changes over time will be important for understanding the process in which schools engage to respond to reform in ways that include students with disabilities.

Recommendations for Leadership and Instructional Practice

Analysis of the actions of teachers and principals at the three revealed areas that might be considered with regard to changing or improving practice. Several recommendations for practice are listed below.

1. In view of the implications of the absence of a goal-based plan, one of the most important recommendations to be made is related to the development and implementation of a plan for student achievement related to standards. As noted in the case studies, the lack of a plan resulted in a number of unintended outcomes including a lack of staff cohesion around common goals, maintenance of the status quo rather than an emphasis on improved performance,

and a lack of direction that left the staff feeling stressed. Developing a plan based on mutual goals provides purpose for a school and should be a first step toward supporting all students in improving academic performance (Schmoker, 1996).

2. Including families in meaningful ways is another recommendation for practice. If parents are included as partners in their children's education, exchange of information between families and educators is possible. Such active engagement can lead to shared ownership, which furthers the link between home and school (NAESP, 1996).

While most parents want to be involved in their child's education, some parents are not inclined to be involved or prefer to leave their child's education to the school. However, determining if barriers exist that keep parents from being involved could be a first step toward increasing parent involvement. One option may be to find out how barriers could be removed or what supports would be necessary to achieve active engagement for larger numbers of parents (Edwards, 1995).

3. Instituting more time for reflection related to leadership and instructional practice is a critical factor for improved practice. If teachers and principals are not able to take time to process their work, the techniques they use, the effectiveness of their practices, or how their practices could be refined, then growth and improvement occur very slowly or not at all. Individual reflection and group inquiry is a necessary ingredient, which allows for continual improvement

and elimination of processes that do not work or bring about unintended outcomes.

4. Implementing effective collaborative relationships is another recommendation. Effective collaboration can work in very synergistic ways. Through shared expertise and goal-oriented actions, outcomes for students and educators can be greater than if teachers and principals approach a problem in singular fashion (Friend & Cook, 1996). Furthermore, collaboration should be considered an emergent process. Working relationships need to be developed based on trust, which require interactions over time. Effective professional collaboration can serve as a catalyst that yields increased effectiveness regarding leadership and instructional actions.

5. A final recommendation is related to instruction that makes a difference for all students. Teaching rigorous standards to all students with an expectation of high achievement requires instructional practices that go beyond traditional lecture-based lessons. Instructional supports need to consist of more than minimal changes to classroom materials. Instruction must be matched to student needs and be meaningful to students. Making connections should prevail over “covering” the material, and providing students with the skills for independent learning should take precedence over repeated reteaching (McKeown & Beck, 1999).

Researcher Reflections

In reflecting on the research just completed, there were a number of revelations for me related to the experience of conducting a qualitative study. While I understand that listening is important, this study truly revealed to me the value and power of listening for better understanding. The depth of information and understanding about the “real-life” experiences of the educators, I believe, could not have been revealed as effectively in any other way. The face-to-face contact and the ability as a researcher to follow the path presented by the participant made the information more real to me because it was naturally generated through the participant. Afterward, the continuing process of making connections between what was shared at each site and what was common to all the sites revealed a complexity that I could not have anticipated. A co-worker asked me if the type of study I was doing was research, implying that since statistics were not involved the research was not real. I was taken aback because during the course of the study I had come to understand the real power of “going to the source” and uncovering the reality of what standards-based reform really meant to those responsible for putting it into practice.

The willingness of the participants in the study to engage in dialogue with a relative stranger was remarkable to me. They appeared to want to be heard--and understood--and were very willing to talk frankly about their experiences even

though our time together was clearly not designed to resolve issues. Several teachers thanked me for giving them the opportunity to talk things out.

I also learned a lesson about assumptions. I made an assumption that, because the criteria given to central office participants asked them to consider only those exemplary inclusive school in the selection process, only inclusive schools were nominated. The mistake I made was in assuming that, since the schools fit the criteria, the type of exemplary inclusive school I had in mind given the criteria--schools where students with disabilities were being provided with supports to be successful--would be found at each site. It was another lesson about communication and how we are influenced by our own interpretations. Prior classroom observations or informal talks with teachers prior to beginning the study may have served to illuminate this issue before actual interviews began.

In retrospect, I will take away a number of essential insights from this experience. The first is that more questions than answers emerged from this research. This study has helped to illuminate the reality of the work of teachers and principals in supporting students with disabilities. It has also served to highlight issues that were not expected, such as missing research-based components and unintended outcomes, which present as areas for further exploration.

The primary insight related to this study was the realization that the reality of what exists really lies within the story. That is, understandings that go beyond

cursory substance require an investigation of the actions, occurrences, emotions, and interpretations of those who are closest to the issue. The ability to probe for clarity and detail lead to a deeper understanding of the issues for these schools and a deeper regard for educators who are charged with teaching all students while continually responding to change and challenges.

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Appendix A
Documents Related to Review

.

Grade One Mathematics

The first-grade standards introduce the idea of fractions and continue the development of sorting and patterning skills. In first grade, students will learn the basic addition facts through the fives table and the corresponding subtraction facts. Students also will draw and describe certain two-dimensional figures and use nonstandard units to measure length and weight. While learning mathematics, students will be actively engaged, using concrete materials and appropriate technologies such as calculators and computers. However, facility in the use of technology shall not be regarded as a substitute for a student's understanding of quantitative concepts and relationships or for proficiency in basic computations.

Mathematics has its own language, and the acquisition of specialized vocabulary and language patterns is crucial to a student's understanding and appreciation of the subject. Students should be encouraged to use correctly the concepts, skills, symbols, and vocabulary identified in the following set of standards.

Problem solving has been integrated throughout the six content strands. The development of problem-solving skills should be a major goal of the mathematics program at every grade level. Instruction in the process of problem solving will need to be integrated early and continuously into each student's mathematics education. Students must be helped to develop a wide range of skills and strategies for solving a variety of problem types.

Number and Number Sense

- 1.1 The student will count objects in a given set containing between 10 and 100 objects and write the corresponding numeral.
- 1.2 The student will group concrete objects by ones and tens to develop an understanding of place value.
- 1.3 The student will count by twos, fives, and tens to 100.
- 1.4 The student will recognize and write numerals 0 through 100.
- 1.5 The student will identify the ordinal positions first through tenth, using an ordered set of objects.
- 1.6 The student will identify and represent the concepts of one-half and one-fourth, using appropriate materials or a drawing.
- 1.7 The student will count a collection of pennies, a collection of nickels, and a collection of dimes whose total value is 100 cents or less.

Computation and Estimation

- 1.8 The student will recall basic addition facts, sums to 10 or less, and the corresponding subtraction facts.
- 1.9 The student will solve story and picture problems involving one-step solutions, using basic addition and subtraction facts.

Measurement

- 1.10 The student will identify the number of pennies equivalent to a nickel, a dime, and a quarter.
- 1.11 The student will tell time to the half-hour, using an analog or digital clock.

Patterns, Functions, and Algebra

- 1.20 The student will sort and classify concrete objects according to one or more attributes, including color, size, shape, and thickness.

- 1.12 The student will use nonstandard units to measure length and weight.
- 1.13 The student will compare the volumes of two given containers by using concrete materials (e.g., jelly beans, sand, water, and rice).
- 1.14 The student will compare the weight of two objects using a balance scale.

Geometry

- 1.15 The student will describe the proximity of objects in space (near, far, close by, below, up, down, beside, and next to).
- 1.16 The student will draw and describe triangles, squares, rectangles, and circles according to number of sides, corners, and square corners.
- 1.17 The student will identify and describe objects in his/her environment that depict geometric figures: triangle, rectangle, square, and circle.

Probability and Statistics

- 1.18 The student will investigate, identify, and describe various forms of data collection in his/her world (e.g., recording daily temperature, lunch count, attendance, and favorite ice cream).
- 1.19 The student will interpret information displayed in a picture or object graph using the vocabulary: more, less, fewer, greater than, and less than.
- 1.21 The student will recognize, describe, extend, and create a wide variety of patterns, including rhythmic, color, shape, and numeric. Patterns will include both growing and repeating patterns. Concrete materials and calculators will be used by students.

Oak Glen
Mission Statement

The faculty and staff are committed to providing instruction that is educationally sound in an atmosphere of mutual respect and courtesy, which is conducive to learning and in which all students are expected to achieve.

The Role of the School Improvement Team

The purpose of the School Improvement Team is to provide site-based leadership in the area of professional development based upon the interpretation of student and school achievement. The responsibilities of the School Improvement Team are as follows:

1. Interpret state and local assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses in student achievement.
2. Conduct a needs assessment with the faculty to design a staff development program to improve instruction.
3. Analyze the State Performance Report Card to determine strengths and weaknesses and from this report write a School Improvement Plan.
4. Develop a local School Report Card to supplement the State Performance Report Card.
5. Attend division level inservice to become familiar with models and materials developed by the State Department of Education.
6. Conduct inservice at the school level to share new models and materials with fellow teachers and administrators.
7. Document inservice sessions dealing with /Technology Training held at local school.

School: _____

TEAM MEMBERS	CORE CONTENT AREA(S)

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAMS
Meeting 2 – Standards Assessment Analysis
February 16 – Middle and High Schools
February 24 – Elementary Schools
Central Office, Building #4, 1:00-4:30 p.m.

1. Introduction – Objectives of the Workshop
2. Documentation Forms
3. Needs Assessment: Team Survey
4. Assessment Results Analysis
5. “Toolkit” Presentation
6. Questions – Answers
7. Evaluation – Next Meeting Date

MATH LANG ARTS SCIENCE SOC. STU

September Safety / Animals	1.5, 1.8, 1.15 K.1, K.2, K.3, K.7, K.16		1.5, 1.7, K.6, K.8	1.6, 1.13, K.4, K.5
October Communities / Community Jobs / Spinal Bats / Bugs	1.8, K.2		K.9	K.4
November Native Americans Rogers / Linn / Beginning	1.2, 1.8, K.18	1.14 on		1.1, 1.14
December Parsons / Beavis Holiday / Snodgrass	1.2			
January Weather	1.7, 1.10, K.6, K.9	1.12 on	1.7, K.8	1.7, 1.12
February Dorsey / Norman / Bady Food / Birthdays	1.11, K.5, K.10, K.11		K.2	1.9, 1.10, 1.11, 1.12, K.1, K.6
March Dixons / Space	1.12, 1.13, 1.14, K.8, K.10, K.12		1.4, 1.6, 1.7, K.6, K.7 K.8	
April Plants	1.6, 1.16, 1.17, K.13, K.14, K.15		1.4, 1.7, 1.8, K.6, K.8, K.10	
May Dorsey / Friends / Dreams Dixons / Americans			1.3, 1.4, 1.7, K.5, K.6, K.8	1.2, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, K.1 K.2, K.3, K.5
June			1.2, K.3	1.2, K.1

Pine Hills Elementary School Mission Statement

Pine Hills is a place where children and adults are viewed as continually developing. Emphasis is placed on doing and growing. Children actively explore reading, writing, speaking and problem solving. Thematic units enhance and integrate learning. We believe that oral language underlies all literacy learning, and that children learn by constructing meaning.

Respect, responsibility and cooperation are targeted as skills to be developed and demonstrated by adults and students at Pine Hills School. Schoolwide conflict resolution activities promote nonviolent methods of problem solving; a safe, caring and supportive environment is valued.

Parent/school communication is a priority at Pine Hills School. Parents are viewed as partners with the school in assisting children in becoming lifelong learners. Parents and teachers work toward making Pine Hills a child-centered environment where everyone experiences success and is respected as a unique individual.

EDUCATIONAL OPERATING PLAN
1999-2000/2000-2001

Student Achievement

Accreditation

Evidence of
Need:

did not meet the accreditation standards in
the spring 1999 assessment and was accredited with
warning.

Objective:

To meet the accreditation standards

Strategies:

1. Use new curriculum guide
2. Monitor assessment of students progress on
objectives in faculty sessions during student assessment
days using Learning Achievement Records
3. Use question making strategies
4. Write on assessments
5. Use Plan and Label reading strategies

Assessment:

assessments

Evidence of
Success:

By June 2001 will be fully accredited by the state of
as evidenced by the spring 2001
assessments.

READING WORKSHOP AGENDA
MARCH 18, 1998, 8:00 AM

Please preview the agenda for next Wednesday. If you have additional information or materials pertaining to these topics, bring them along to share.
Thanks, Sharon

AGENDA

8:00—8:30 WHOLE—PART—WHOLE INSTRUCTION

8:30—9:15 ASSESSING WHERE WE BEGIN

9:15—10:00 READING WITH STRATEGIES

10:00—10:15 BREAK

10:15—10:45 USING OUR RESOURCES

10:45—11:30 COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

LUNCH ---OUT????

Elementary School

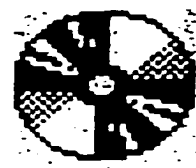
invites you
to

Celebrate the *New Millennium*

as we

Take a Peek at the Past
Ponder the Present
and
Fancy the Future

at our
Family Literacy Night
Thursday, November 4, 1999
6:30 p.m.



**Kindergarten Social Studies Curriculum Benchmarks
A Guide for Parent Involvement**

First Six Weeks

Past events in legends and historical accounts - 3 weeks; K.1a

- Paul Revere
- Johnny Appleseed
- Booker T Washington
- Betsy Ross

Biographies of important, interesting Americans of the past - 3 weeks; K.1b

- George Washington
- Harriet Tubman
- Abraham Lincoln
- Davy Crockett

Second Six Weeks

People and events honored in commemorative holidays - 3 weeks; K.1c

- Columbus Day
- Thanksgiving
- Independence Day
- Presidents' Day
- Lee/Jackson/King Day

Words that describe relative location - 2 weeks; K.2a

- Near/far
- Up/down
- Left/right
- Behind/in front

Words that describe where people, places and things are located on a simple map - 1 week; K.2b

- Land and water
- North, south, east, and west

Third Six Weeks

Physical shape of the state of Virginia and the United States on a map and globe - 1 week; K.3a

The location of history-based stories and legends shown on a map - 2 weeks; K.3b

Identify community symbols - 1 week; K.4a

- Stop sign
- Traffic light
- Speed limit sign

Identify map symbols in a map legend or map key - 2 weeks; K.4b

- Land and water
- Roads
- Cities

Fourth Six Weeks

Descriptions of work that people do from the local community and historical accounts - 4 weeks; K.5

- Present
- Long ago

Basic economic concepts - 5 weeks; K.6a, b, c

- Trading money for food, shelter, clothing
- Basic needs
- Wants
- Good and services
- Money for currency
- Saving money

Fifth Six Weeks

Basic economic concepts (continued)

Admirable character traits of a good citizen - 3 weeks; K.7

- Taking turns; K.7a
- Sharing; K.7a
- Completing classroom chores; K.7b
- Taking care of one's things; K.7c
- Respecting what belongs to others; K.7d
- Rules; K.7e
 - Consequences of following the rule
 - Consequences of not following the rule

Sixth Six Weeks

Identify patriotic symbols for the United States - 2 weeks; K.8a

- United States flag
- Bald eagle
- Washington Monument

Identify patriotic symbols for Virginia - 2 weeks; K.8b

- Virginia flag
- Cardinal
- Dogwood

Learn traditional patriotic activities - 2 weeks; K.9

- Pledge of Allegiance
- Star Spangled Banner, the national song
- Parades
- Fireworks
- Picnics

Willow Brook Mission Statement

The staff of Willow Brook Elementary School is excited about education and is constantly learning and growing. We believe in a positive and nurturing environment. We accept the responsibility to teach our students so that they may obtain their maximum educational potential. We encourage learning through independent thinking, personal expression and respect for each other. In order to carry out our educational missions, we need the commitment of our parents and community. Willow Brook Elementary is committed to meeting or exceeding required passing score for all standards assessments.

We believe that all students are individuals of worth and recognize that all students can be successful learners while learning at different rates of time.

We believe that employees are a valuable resource to the school division and are essential to its effective operation.

ANNUAL SCHOOL PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1999-2000

Students

We believe that all students are individuals of worth and recognize that all students can be successful learners while learning and progressing at different rates.

We will work to provide a caring, safe and healthy environment for all students.

1. We will address the academic, physical and emotional needs of students at
 - a. We will integrate activities focusing on the school theme, "Growing Together", with the core curriculum areas. These activities include use of our Science and Art Learning Center, the Wildwood Park Restoration Project and an Earth Quilt.
 - b. We will continue to provide support and assistance for resource programs, enrichment programs and technology programs.
 - c. We will provide a safe school for our students, having plans in place to deal with emergencies and critical situations. Our Safe School Plan gives detailed information regarding safety issues and drill instructions.
 - d. We will continue to include "Character Counts" instruction in classrooms and through our guidance program.
2. We will provide students with sound instruction in all subject areas.
 - a. We will assist teachers in developing diagnostic profiles of each student each fall using current best practices in assessment techniques, standardized test scores and/or testing results. These will be reviewed with staff twice before the testing start date.
3. We will prepare students to achieve at or above state and national averages on norm-referenced tests and assessments.
 - a. We will monitor instruction in grades K-5 by creating pacing guides for the core curricular areas at the beginning of each school year. These pacing guides will be shared with all resource teachers to make sure that all staff members are keeping children on task. Pacing guides will be updated and reviewed each six weeks to make sure we are covering the in a timely fashion.
 - b. We will conduct test item analyses of core subjects to determine specific areas for improvement. This information will be used for instructional focus in the 3rd and 5th grades. This will be reviewed with the six weeks' pacing guides.
 - c. We will improve phonemic knowledge in grades K-1, using early identification through PALS screening to target students for TLC instruction.

Social Studies Guide

<u>Six Week Period</u>	<u>Text Material</u>	<u>S.O.L.'s</u>
First	Maps and Globes Ch. 1 The Geography of Virginia Ch. 2 The Three Regions of Virginia	4.1b; 4.2a-d
Second	Ch. 3 Native Americans of Virginia Ch. 4 Early Exploration and Settlement	4.1a,b; 4.2b; 4.3a,b 4.3f; 4.7a,b
Third	Ch. 5 The Jamestown Settlement Ch. 6 The Colony Grows	4.1a,b; 4.2b; 4.3a-c; 4.7a-c
Fourth	Ch. 7 Fighting for Freedom Ch. 8 Virginians and the New Nation	4.1a; 4.2b; 4.3a-f; 4.4a; 4.7a-c
Fifth	Ch. 9 The Civil War Ch. 10 A New Century	4.1a; 4.2b; 4.4a-c; 4.5a-c; 4.6a-c; 4.7a-c
Sixth	Ch. 11 Government Today Ch. 12 Working in Virginia Ch. 13 Our Culture	4.6d,e; 4.7c
Text:	McMillan/McGraw-Hill (1997)	

**PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
AGENDA
APRIL 6, 1999**

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Superintendents Advisory Notes - Mike Heatwole
- III. Budget for 1999/2000 - School Calendar for 1999/2000
- IV. State Testing
- V. Summer School
- VI. Upcoming Dates and Events
 - April 8 - PTA Officers meeting 7:00pm.**
 - April 12 - 23 - Grandparents week in cafeteria**
 - April 14 - Kindergarten Report Cards go home**
 - April 20 - First Grade program - 1:30pm. and 7:00pm.**
 - April 23 - End of 5th Six Weeks**
 - April 26 - May 7 - State testing - Grades 3 and 5**
 - May 4 - PAC meeting 7:00pm.**
- VII. Concerns / Discussions
- VIII. Adjournment
- IX. Next meeting date - May 4, 1999 at 7:00pm.

Document Review Form

1. **Type of document:** _____

2. **Date:** _____

3. **Source of document:** _____

4. **Noted by participant?** **Yes** **No**

5. **Supportive or alternative information provided by this document:**

6. **Additional notes:**

Appendix B
Survey and Interview Protocols

PRINCIPAL SURVEY

Please complete this information and return it in the attached envelope. This information is important for data analysis related to this study. All information will be confidential and fictitious names will be used in reporting this information. You may use this form or attach additional pages as necessary. Your time devoted to this is greatly appreciated.

Background

1. Name _____ M ___ F ___

Number of years at this school _____

2. Description of educational background:

a) Undergraduate major or focus _____

b) Graduate degree(s) _____

c) Post-graduate degree(s) _____

d) Certifications _____

e) Other _____

3. Education related work experiences during your career. Check all that apply.

_____ general education teacher _____
grade(s)

_____ Total no. of years

_____ special education teacher _____
level(s)

(e.g., resource, self-contained, etc.)

_____ Total no. of years

_____ administrator _____
level(s)

(e.g., principal, director, etc.)

_____ Total no. of years

_____ other (please specify)

4. Please indicate the ways in which you have received professional development and information related to academic standards. Check all that apply.

Workshops or conferences sponsored by

_____ this school. Please list general topic(s). _____

_____ this school district. Please list general topic(s). _____

_____ the VA Dept. of Education. Please list general topic(s). _____

_____ a professional organization. Please list organization and general topic(s). _____

_____ other sponsor (Please specify along with general topics) _____

_____ Journal articles

_____ Internet

_____ Newsletters

_____ Other (Please specify) _____

5. In your best estimate, the residents of this community:

_____ are primarily parents of school-aged (K-12) children

_____ are primarily individuals without school-aged (K-12) children.

_____ are about evenly distributed between parents of school-aged children and individuals without school-aged children.

6. Please check all that apply. (When estimating number, count individuals involved in more than one area once only.) Individuals in this community (other than parents) are involved in improving academic performance of students at this school as:

_____ mentors (Estimated number) _____

_____ volunteers (Please estimate number) _____

_____ tutors (Please estimate number) _____

_____ other (please specify) _____

7. Please check all that apply. (When estimating number, count individuals involved in more than one area once only.) Parents are involved in improving academic performance of students at this school as:

_____ mentors (Please estimate number) _____

_____ volunteers (Please estimate number) _____

_____ tutors (Please estimate number) _____

_____ other (please specify) _____

8. Individuals in this community without school-aged children have been informed about academic standards by:

_____ community newspaper (Circle origin of article: school / school district / state / federal / other _____)

_____ letter (Circle origin of document: school / school district / state / federal / other _____)

_____ community meeting (Circle sponsor: school / school district / state / other _____)

_____ other communication (Please describe) _____

9. Parents have been informed about academic standards by:

_____ school newspaper or newsletter (Circle origin of article: school / school district / state / federal / other _____)

_____ letter (Circle origin of document: school / district / state / federal / other _____)

_____ meeting (Circle sponsor: school / school district / state / other _____)

_____ other communication (Please describe) _____

10. Please complete the following to describe this school.

a) Number of students attending this school

_____.

b) Percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch

_____.

c) Number of students with disabilities

_____.

d) Percentage of students with disabilities spending 51% or more of the school day in general education classrooms

_____.

e) Percentage of students with disabilities in grade 3 taking the Standards of Learning tests in 1999 _____ . If this information is unavailable, please indicate

why. _____

f) Percentage of students with disabilities in grade 5 taking the Standards of Learning tests in 1999 _____ . If this information is unavailable, please indicate

why. _____

PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW

- 1. Briefly characterize this school as if you were describing it to another principal.**
- 2. What specific actions have you taken either directly or facilitatively to increase achievement of students with disabilities related to standards-based reform? Include what you consider indicators of achievement.**
- 3. What specific actions have teachers taken either directly or facilitatively to increase achievement of students with disabilities related to standards-based reform?**
- 4. Describe for me the ways in which this school has responded to the state's Standards of Learning and accreditation standards.**
- 5. Imagine that it is the year 2004, five years from now. Briefly describe, in general, the ways school experiences for students with disabilities at Grange Hall might be different and ways it might be the same as a result of standards-based reform.**
- 6. What are your concerns regarding standards-based reform as it is being implemented for students with disabilities?**

TEACHER SURVEY

Please complete this information and return it in the attached envelope. This information is important for data analysis related to this study. All information will be confidential and fictitious names will be used in reporting this information. You may use this form or attach additional pages as necessary. Your time devoted to this is greatly appreciated.

Background

1. Name _____ M __ F __

Number of years at this school _____

2. Description of educational background:

a) Undergraduate major or focus _____

b) Graduate degree(s) _____

c) Post-graduate degree(s) _____

d) Certifications _____

e) Other _____

3. Education related work experiences during your career. Check all that apply.

_____ general education teacher _____
grade(s)

_____ Total no. of years

_____ special education teacher _____
level(s)

(e.g., resource, self-contained, etc.)

_____ Total no. of years

_____ administrator _____
level(s)

(e.g., principal, director, etc.)

_____ Total no. of years

____ other (please specify)

4. Please indicate the ways in which you have received professional development and information related to academic standards. Check all that apply.

Workshops or conference sessions sponsored by:

____ this school. Please list general topic(s).

____ this school district. Please list general topic(s).

____ the VA Dept. of Education. Please list general topic(s).

____ a professional organization. Please list organization and general topic(s).

____ other sponsor. (Please specify along with general topics.)

____ Journal articles

____ Internet

____ Newsletters

____ Other (Please specify)

5. In your best estimate, the residents of this community:

____ are primarily parents of school-aged (K-12) children

____ are primarily individuals without school-aged (K-12) children.

____ are about evenly distributed between parents of school-aged children and individuals without school-aged children.

6. Please check all that apply. (When estimating number, count individuals involved in more than one area once only.) Individuals in the community (other than parents) are involved in improving academic performance of students at this school as:

_____ mentors

_____ volunteers

_____ tutors

_____ other (please specify) _____

7. Please check all that apply. (When estimating number, count individuals involved in more than one area once only.) Parents are involved in improving academic performance of students at this school as:

_____ mentors

_____ volunteers

_____ tutors

_____ other (please specify) _____

8. The community at large has been informed about academic standards by:

_____ community newspaper (Circle origin of article: school / district / state / federal / other _____)

_____ letter (Circle origin of document: school / district / state / federal / other _____)

_____ community meeting (Circle sponsor: school / district / state / other _____)

_____ other communication (Please describe) _____

9. Parents have been informed about academic standards by:

_____ school newspaper or newsletter (Circle origin of article: school / district / state / federal / other _____)

_____ letter (Circle origin of document: school / district / state / federal /
 other _____)

_____ meeting (Circle sponsor: school / district / state / other _____)

_____ other (Please describe) _____

10. Please complete the appropriate column to describe the students you serve.

General Education Teacher	Special Education Teacher
<p>a) Number of students in your class _____</p> <p>b) Number of students with disabilities _____</p> <p>c) Number of students with disabilities in your class for whom this is their home school _____</p> <p>d) If you are a 3rd or 5th grade teacher, number of students with disabilities in your class taking the following Standards of Learning tests in 1999: _____ English _____ Math _____ History _____ Science</p>	<p>a) Number of students on your caseload _____</p> <p>b) Number of students for whom this is their home school _____</p> <p>c) Number of 3rd grade students on your caseload _____ Number that will take the following Standards of Learning tests in 1999: _____ English _____ Math _____ History _____ Science</p> <p>d) Number of 5th grade students on your caseload _____ Number that will take the following Standards of Learning tests in 1999 : _____ English _____ Math _____ History _____ Science</p>

TEACHER INTERVIEW

- 1. Briefly characterize this school as if you were describing it to another teacher.**
- 2. What specific actions have you taken either directly or facilitatively to increase achievement of students with disabilities related to standards-based reform? Include what you consider indicators of achievement?**
- 3. What specific actions has the principal taken either directly or facilitatively to increase achievement of students with disabilities related to standards-based reform?**
- 4. Describe for me the ways in which this school has responded to the state's Standards of Learning and accreditation standards.**
- 5. Imagine that it is the year 2004, five years from now. Briefly describe, in general, the ways school experiences for students with disabilities at (name of school) might be different and ways it might be the same as a result of standards-based reform.**
- 6. What are your concerns regarding standards-based reform as it is being implemented for students with disabilities?**

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF INSTRUCTION SURVEY

Please complete this information and return it in the attached envelope. This information is important for data analysis related to this study. All information will be confidential and fictitious names will be used in reporting this information. You may use this form or attach additional pages as necessary. Your time devoted to this is greatly appreciated.

Background

1. Name _____ M ___ F ___

2. Description of educational background:
 - a) Undergraduate major or focus _____

 - b) Graduate degree(s) _____

 - c) Post-graduate degree(s) _____

 - d) Certifications _____

 - e) Other _____

3. Education related work experiences during your career. Check all that apply.

____ general education teacher _____
grade(s) _____ Total no. of years

____ special education teacher _____
level(s) _____
(e.g., resource, self-contained, etc.)
_____ Total no. of years

____ administrator _____
_____ level(s)
(e.g., principal, director, etc.)
_____ Total no. of years

____ other (please specify) _____

**ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF INSTRUCTION
INTERVIEW**

1. **Describe for me the criteria you used in selecting the 5 exemplary schools where academic achievement for students with disabilities is increasing.**

2. **What initiatives has this district implemented that support the academic achievement of students with disabilities related to standards-based reform?**

3. **What actions have principals been instructed to take in regard to increasing the academic achievement of students with disabilities in standards-based reform?**

4. **How have principals been encouraged to use funds such as Goals 2000, Professional Development Initiative funds or Sliver Grants?**

DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SURVEY

Please complete this information and return it in the attached envelope. This information is important for data analysis related to this study. All information will be confidential and fictitious names will be used in reporting this information. You may use this form or attach additional pages as necessary. Your time devoted to this is greatly appreciated.

Background

1. Name _____ M ___ F ___ Age _____ (optional)

2. Description of educational background:

a) Undergraduate major or focus _____

b) Graduate degree(s) _____

c) Post-graduate degree(s) _____

d) Certifications _____

e) Other _____

3. Education related work experiences during your career. Check all that apply.

_____ general education teacher _____
grade(s)

_____ Total no. of years

_____ special education teacher _____
level(s)

(e.g., resource, self-contained, etc.)

_____ Total no. of years

_____ administrator _____
level(s)

(e.g., principal, director, etc.)

_____ Total no. of years

_____ other (please specify) _____

**DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
INTERVIEW**

1. **Describe for me the criteria you used in selecting the 3 exemplary schools where academic achievement for students with disabilities is increasing.**

2. **What initiatives has this district implemented that support academic achievement of students with disabilities in standards-based reform?**

3. **How have principals been encouraged to use funds such as Goals 2000, Professional Development Initiative funds, or Sliver Grants?**

4. **What actions have principals been instructed to take in regard to increasing the academic achievement of students with disabilities in standards-based reform?**