

**The Assistant Principal's Role in Special Education:
An Inquiry into the Supervision of Special Education
at the Building Level**

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**THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN
SPECIAL EDUCATION:
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Valerie Ann Walton

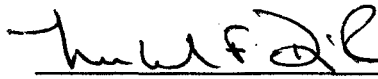
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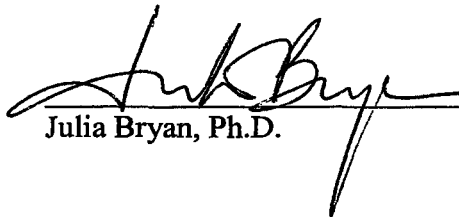
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**THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION:
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THE BUILDING LEVEL**

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles and responsibilities of elementary level assistant principals in the supervision of special education at the building level. Elementary assistant principals in Virginia (N = 219) were surveyed to identify delegated roles and responsibilities, perceptions of level of preparedness to perform assigned duties, and formal preparation for these duties. The survey addressed five leadership domains—Organization, Collaboration, Instruction, Program Evaluation, and Professional Development. Findings indicate that assistant principals fulfill organization duties more often than duties in the other domains, and felt more prepared for this area of responsibility as well. Knowledge and skills were most often attributed to conference attendance and interactions with special education teachers. Findings suggest that assistant principals obtain their knowledge and skills to supervise special education by attending conferences, and reading special education journals. However, they rely even more on special education teachers for information regarding special education.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

If ever there was a time that knowledgeable and skilled school leaders were needed to support special education, the time is now. Contemporary school leaders face increasing accountability requirements and escalating expectations for schools to provide more services for all students (Matthews & Crow, 2003). As a result, the principal's role has evolved from traditional management and supervision to advocacy for educating all students. As the chief advocate for all learners, the principal must ensure that no child is denied appropriate public education, and that all children are provided with equal opportunities to learn.

Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), assigned principals additional responsibilities for students with disabilities. Each round of reauthorization offers new perspectives for educating students with disabilities in the general curriculum (Faust, 2005). More students with disabilities are being included in general education classrooms (Tonnsen, 2000). These students are also participating in local, state, and national assessments. Thus, the roles and responsibilities of principals with regard to instruction have expanded to include enhancing the quality of education for all students, including students with disabilities.

Given the increasing numbers of students with disabilities in general education classes and the requirements to educate them, principals' responsibilities

have increased dramatically and, in many cases, have become too numerous to be managed by one professional. Assistant principals are increasingly fulfilling roles once managed by principals. Their roles in public education have become vital in meeting key responsibilities associated with special education. Current literature describes the roles and responsibilities of principals in regards to special education. Less is known about how assistant principals share these tasks.

In general education, assistant principals are often delegated administrative and managerial duties (Matthews & Crow, 2003), such as managing the day-to-day operations of the school including transportation, cafeteria duty, discipline, and textbook distribution (Weller & Weller, 2002). In addition, assistant principals assume other duties assigned by principals, including supervision of the special education process (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Gaston, 2005; Glanz, 2004; Marshall & Hooley, 2006). As the administrators responsible for the management of special education, assistant principals become arbiters of the decisions made for students with disabilities. Logically, assistant principals must be knowledgeable and skilled in the area of special education to fulfill this responsibility.

Statement of the Problem

Primary leadership and support for implementing IDEA comes from the administrator who supervises the process (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000). At present, IDEA emphatically states that students with disabilities are full participants in all aspects of school programs (IDEA, 2004). Furthermore, NCLB mandates that all students, including students with disabilities, be included in its accountability system. Assistant

principals help to ensure that IDEA and NCLB are put into practice in their schools. As school leaders, assistant principals address the diverse needs of students and their families through their leadership in school organization, curriculum and instruction, professional development, school climate, and program assessment (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001). However, the extent to which assistant principals ensure that IDEA and NCLB are put into practice remains unclear.

Responsibilities Associated with Instructional Intervention

Roles and responsibilities associated with special education are complex and challenging (Bateman & Bateman, 2001). Duties range from initiating the special education process to evaluating students' individualized education programs. Given the complexities of the special education process and accountability requirements, school leaders, in support of IDEA and NCLB, must demonstrate leadership skills that promote effective special education services (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2004). Special education services begin with identifying students who demonstrate learning difficulties in the general curriculum, due to behavioral, cognitive, or physical challenges (Virginia Department of Education, 2001). In supporting students with learning difficulties, intervention strategies as a first response to those difficulties must be implemented (Faust, 2006; McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004).

Intervention methods require school leaders to demonstrate knowledge of research-based practices that support classroom instruction (Boscardin, 2004; Crockett, 2002). If the assistant principal is the delegated school leader for special education, he or she must provide instructional leadership that facilitates problem-

solving methods. Once the process begins, the school leader ensures legal compliance by making sure that the personnel responsible for providing instructional interventions implement such practices, thereby following the procedures set forth in IDEA. However, a major concern of critics is that school leaders may not adequately be prepared to supervise and support the special education process (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; Cramer, 2006; Jacobs, Tonnsen, & Baker, 2004).

Leadership Preparation

Leadership preparation is essential for supporting students with disabilities (Short, 2004; Stevenson-Jacobson, Jacobson, & Hilton, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2002). School leaders must have prior knowledge of the characteristics of learning disabilities and be familiar with the various teaching methods that address certain learning styles (Tonnsen, 2000). However, in many graduate programs, special education courses are not required for administrative endorsement (Valesky & Hirth, 1991). In a field study limited to a single school division, responses to questions regarding the roles, responsibilities, and preparation of assistant principals revealed that their preparation to fulfill assigned duties in special education was minimal (Walton, 2005). Approximately 45% of the sample rated their graduate programs as inadequate in preparing them for special education leadership.

Despite the rise in the number of special education students now being served, studies concerning school leaders', specifically assistant principals', knowledge of special education law and practices do not appear to be in abundance. There is a need to examine assistant principals' involvement in special education supervision. Leaders' knowledge of special education may well contribute to the way in which

students with disabilities and their families are served (Jacobs, Tonnsen, & Baker 2004). Protz (2005) argued that school leaders must have knowledge of special education law and practice in order to ensure that students with special needs are being properly served in their least restrictive environment.

Educating students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE) is a major principle of IDEA. DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, and Walther-Thomas (2004) stressed that school leaders provide support for students with disabilities by understanding the intent of the legal aspects of both IDEA and NCLB. If assistant principals have assumed the responsibility of supervising the special education process, how are they being prepared to do so? What are graduate programs doing to prepare assistant principals for special education leadership? Are assistant principals primarily gaining their knowledge and skills on the job? The purpose of this study is to further examine the role of assistant principals in special education supervision and their preparation for this role.

Significance of the Study

The number of children identified with disabilities has risen since 1977. In 2005, approximately 13% of all children from birth to twenty one years of age qualified for special education services (Spring, 2005). From 1997 to 2001, in the state of Virginia, the number of students who received special education increased by approximately 4,000 pupils per year (Virginia Department of Education, 2007). As of 2005, Virginia's student population was 1,221,939 and approximately 175,730 of those students received special education services. The increase in the special

education population in public schools suggests that supervisory duties for school leaders in this area have also increased.

School leaders who understand their roles and responsibilities, and engage in professional development activities in special education, are better equipped to provide adequate services to all students, especially students with disabilities (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Jacobs, Tonnsen, & Baker, 2004; Monteith, 1998; Tonnsen, 2000). This study is significant in that it addressed a current gap in the literature by providing additional research data on the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals for special education. It identified needs of assistant principals regarding professional development in special education. The study also provided an opportunity for assistant principals to reflect on their roles and responsibilities as school leaders. Finally, this study raised questions for further inquiry into the supervision of special education at the building level.

Purpose of the Study

Students with disabilities have gained access to the general curriculum; yet, they require adequate support to achieve favorable outcomes (U. S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2004). To succeed, these students typically require increased levels of administrative and instructional support in their schools (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Sage & Burrello, 1994; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000). In supporting students with disabilities, school leaders model and promote data-based decision making, and create collaborative cultures throughout the entire school (Crockett, 2004; DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran & Walther-Thomas, 2004; Glanz, 2004;

McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004). School leaders must be adequately prepared to structure, support, and sustain programs required for student success.

The role of the assistant principal is complex and the lack of attention to the assistant principalship within the literature has contributed to limited knowledge and understanding about the position and its responsibilities (Gaston, 2005), especially in special education. This study investigated assistant principals' roles and responsibilities, knowledge and skills, and professional development for the supervision of special education. The sample consisted of elementary school assistant principals in Virginia. The purposes of the study were to: (a) explore the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals in special education, (b) examine the knowledge and skills needed and the knowledge and skills that assistant principals perceive they need to supervise special education, and (c) investigate how assistant principals obtain the knowledge and skills needed to supervise special education programs.

Chapter One includes the introduction, the background and statement of the problem, the purposes of the study, research questions, limitations and delimitations of the study, and operational definitions of terms used throughout the study. Chapter Two contains a review of relevant literature pertaining to leadership in special education. It discusses the trends impacting the principalship, and ultimately the assistant principalship. Chapter Two also conceptualizes key leadership factors for promoting student achievement for all students, including students with disabilities. Chapter Three includes the study's methodology, including procedures for data collection and data analysis. Chapter Four provides an analysis of results. Finally,

Chapter Five includes a summary of the study, a discussion of findings, and recommendations for future research on this topic as well as implications for leadership preparation and practice.

Research Questions

Research studies indicate that many graduate programs in educational leadership do not include courses that specifically address issues in special education (Davidson & Algozzine, 2002; Protz, 2005; Valesky & Hirth, 1991). Therefore, assistant principals may be entering the field without having the basic knowledge of the laws and procedures that govern special education. Monteith (1998) found that 75% of administrators had no formal training in special education. What they did know came from memos sent to them from an administrative office or from trial and error. Short (2004) interviewed twenty-five building administrators and reported that they had little formal training in the area of special education law as a part of their administration preparation programs. These findings indicate the need for a closer examination of the preparation and involvement of assistant principals in the special education process.

This study gathered information related to the following research questions:

1. What are the roles and responsibilities in special education delegated to elementary school assistant principals?
2. How do elementary school assistant principals perceive their preparation to fulfill their roles and responsibilities in special education?

3. How do assistant principals obtain the necessary knowledge and skills to assist them in fulfilling their delegated roles and responsibilities in special education?

A survey was used to elicit key roles and delegated responsibilities for special education as reported by selected assistant principals. In order to describe the knowledge and skills needed to supervise special education, a thorough review of the research and literature was conducted. Essential knowledge and skills that assistant principals should have regarding special education were extracted from the literature to frame survey questions on perceived needs.

Findings from research studies indicated that assistant principals may require formal preparation prior to assuming leadership roles in special education (Davidson & Algozzine, 2002; Protz, 2005; Valesky & Hirth, 1991). Questions relating to pre-service and in-service training were incorporated into the survey to describe how assistant principals obtain the information necessary for the supervision of special education. These questions provided the central focus of the study and the basis for considering whether assistant principals perceive their preparation for leadership in special education adequate for supporting students with disabilities in public schools. Data gleaned from the survey was analyzed and compared to the extant literature.

Limitations and Delimitation of the Study

Limitations of research relate to internal validity. Internal validity refers to the credibility or believability of the findings and results (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Rudestam and Newton (2001) defined limitations as the restrictions of a study over which the researcher has no control. This proposed study relied on the self-report of

assistant principals via a survey instrument. As such, it is assumed that participant responses were accurate and truthful.

Delimitations are limitations or restrictions deliberately imposed on the study by the researcher (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). They include any factor within the researcher's control that may affect external validity (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). The delimitations associated with this study included soliciting only participants from within the state of Virginia. The sample for this study was comprised of only elementary school assistant principals. As a result of the focus on a specific state and level of school, generalizations must be made with caution outside the localities and levels included within the context of this study.

Definition of terms

Within the context of this study, commonly used terms are defined as follows:

Child Study Committee refers to a committee that enables school personnel and non-school personnel, as appropriate, to meet the needs of an individual child who is having learning difficulties in the educational setting. The committee reviews existing data to make recommendations to meet children's needs, and reviews implementation of the recommendations. The child study committee may refer children for evaluation for special education and related services (Virginia Department of Education, 2006).

Eligibility Meeting refers to a meeting to determine whether a child has a disability and whether or not the child requires special education and related services (Virginia Department of Education, 2006).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal law that governs how special education is to be defined and implemented within the individual states (McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004).

Individualized Education Program (IEP) refers to the written, legal document that describes the special education and related services to be provided to a student with a disability. It also states how the child will be involved in the general curriculum and the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with non-disabled children in a regular class. The IEP also lists supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and program modifications or supports for school personnel so that the child will advance appropriately toward annual goals, progress in the general curriculum, participate in extracurricular activities and be educated with children with and without disabilities (Bateman & Bateman, 2001).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) refers to the maximum extent appropriate that children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the general educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general education classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be satisfactorily achieved (McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004; Virginia Department of Education, 2001).

Local Education Agency (LEA) refers to a local school division that is governed by a local school board and state operated program (Virginia Department of Education, 2001).

School Leader refers to principals, assistant principals, lead teachers, and/or other personnel who supervise special education in public K-12 school settings.

Special Education refers to specially designed instruction at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004).

Special Education Process refers to the process by which a student is referred, evaluated, and determined eligible for special education and related services. This process also includes the development of the individualized education program (Smith, 2002).

Student with a Disability refers to a child determined, through evaluation, to have autism, deaf-blindness, developmental delay, hearing impairment including deafness, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, emotional disturbance, severe disability, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, or visual impairment including blindness, who by reason thereof, needs special education and related services (IDEA, 2004).

Summary

This chapter has identified and discussed current issues in special education and the critical role of assistant principals. It has also addressed the significance and purpose of this study. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive review of the literature, which further explains current issues in education. It also provides an explanation of how changes in demographics, economics, and policy contribute to the changing roles in school leadership, and subsequently special education supervision.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Restructuring efforts in our nation's schools, coupled with trends in special education, have created new challenges for school principals who are now being held accountable for improving instructional delivery to all students in their schools (Boscardin, 2004; Capper, Frattura & Keyes, 2000; Crockett, 2004; DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Sage & Burello, 1994). In the past, school principals were given little authority to do more than to supervise teachers and prepare administrative reports. As schools became more complex, principals were given more responsibilities relating to instruction (Glanz, 2004). Currently, the principal's role is to ensure that all students, including students with disabilities, meet academic standards. Shared leadership is essential in meeting these demands (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran & Walther-Thomas, 2004). School principals practice shared leadership when they delegate responsibilities in supervision of school programs to assistant principals. As delegated leaders, assistant principals execute administrative actions over school programs, including special education programs in the same manner as principals.

This chapter contains a review of the literature which focuses on the evolving role of assistant principals in educating individuals with disabilities. Research investigating assistant principals' involvement, knowledge, skills and development working with individuals with disabilities was explored. A survey of research in the above mentioned areas establishes a basis for this investigation which analyzed the

leadership behaviors of assistant principals in supporting all students, including those with disabilities.

Trends in Education Impacting the Principalship

Principals have an increasingly complex role that requires them to be more than operational managers (Wakeman, Browder, Flowers, & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2006). Principals are instructional leaders who have the primary responsibility of supervising educational programs that support all learners, including students with learning difficulties. They must ensure that instructional methods are based on scientific evidence that demonstrate positive results for diverse learners (Zaretsky & Moreau, 2007). While the instructional role of the principal has increased, many administrative and managerial duties that would ordinarily be carried out by principals are now assigned to assistant principals (Glanz, 2004; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Matthew & Crow, 2003; Sybouts & Wendel, 1994), including the supervision of special education (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Gaston, 2005; Weller & Weller, 2002). In order to explain how assistant principals have assumed this responsibility, it is necessary to discuss demographic, economic, special education and policy trends as they relate to the principalship and, subsequently, the assistant principalship.

Demographic Trends

Demographic trends have created many challenges for school leaders. In the United States, as in most developed countries, a majority of the population is aging (Fowler, 2004). At the same time the school-aged population is growing, and becoming more diverse (Morrison, 2001). As a result, school leaders must find ways

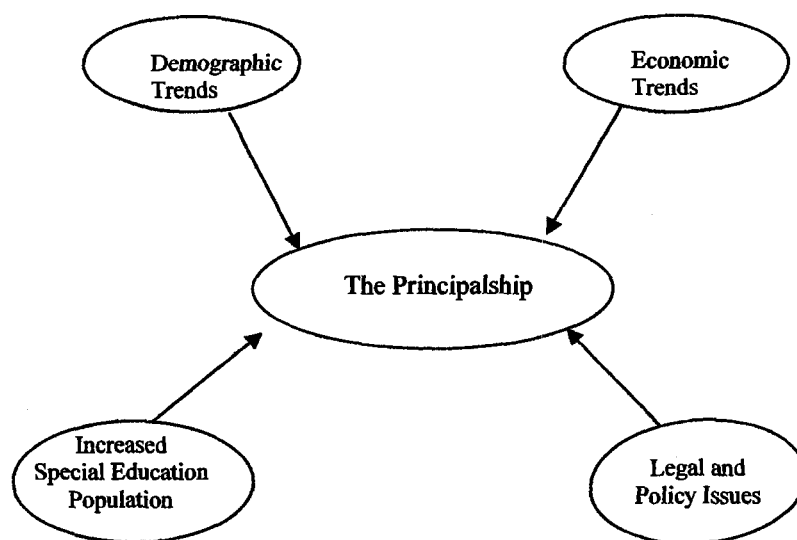
to accommodate every pupil (U. S. Census, 2000). Morrison's perspective of public leadership, suggests that public leaders, including school leaders, should become knowledgeable of expanding cultures in the United States. By understanding the issues associated with growth in student diversity, school leaders become proactive in providing educational support to diverse learners. School leaders, who are knowledgeable of the societal trends, communicate to the community, including senior members, their vision of education for all students (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner, 2000).

Economic trends, increased special education population, and changes in education policy are also issues impacting the principalship (Burrup, Brimely, & Garfield, 1999). As a result, principals have become more involved with student achievement, including the achievement of students with disabilities. School leaders who demonstrate knowledge of these trends are able to forecast the future direction of education (Fowler, 2004). In this instance, school leaders become change agents as they prepare their communities for inevitable changes in education (Fullan, 2001). Figure 1 illustrates these major changes and their impact on the principalship.

Aging population. The largest percentage of U.S. citizens is over the age of 50 years. Demographers predict that over the next 30 years the percentage of citizens 50 years and older will substantially increase (Burrup, Brimley, & Garfield, 1999; Fowler, 2004). Seniors, a large percentage of the voting population, are concerned with how the government spends their tax dollars on various programs, including educational programs. In order to meet the demands of the increasing senior population, school principals must communicate their vision of education effectively,

persuading seniors to vote for quality educational programs in the best interest of all children (Hodgkinson, 2003). Hence, the principal's role extends beyond managing the affairs of a single school building; it expands to areas of public leadership and political stewardship.

Figure 1. Trends Impacting the Principalship.



Increased student enrollment. While in the United States, individuals are living longer and having fewer children, Fowler (2004) argues that the *absolute* number of school-age children in the U.S. will not decline. The United States Department of Education predicts that between the years 2007 and 2010, student enrollment will slightly decrease, and then expand rapidly through 2020. This growth will result from what is called the “baby boom echo,” which occurs when the youngest boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) have their children later in life. In addition, new immigrant families increase the overall population with a higher birth

rate than the native-born population. These phenomena contribute to projections for increasing enrollment in the coming decade.

School leaders wishing to understand how population shifts affect education policy must be aware of demographic trends both nationally and locally. For example, population shifts have brought about uneven growth patterns between rural and urban districts. Southern states, such as Virginia, North Carolina, Alabama, and Kentucky are experiencing a population shift due to an influx of migrant workers into rural areas (Fowler, 2004). In the state of Virginia, student enrollment increased statewide by approximately 12 percent from 1995 to 2005. As a result, school leaders must know the population which they serve, and plan accordingly for fluctuating enrollments during various migrant seasons.

Diversity trends. In the United States the population is becoming more ethnically and linguistically diverse (McCollin & O'Shea, 2006). There are 215 nations in the world and every one of them is represented in the United States (Hodgkinson, 1998). People across and within different ethnic groups are producing offspring, and as a result, racial lines are becoming obscure. Linguistically, a large proportion of the student population, in the U.S. is made up of *English Language Learners* (ELLs), and their numbers are increasing. The numbers of ELLs represented in the special education population are increasing as well (Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Pendzick, & Stephenson, 2003).

English Language Learners and special education. Referrals of ELLs for special education services have resulted in additional responsibilities for school leaders. School leaders must ensure that evaluation tools used for children who are

learning to speak English are bias-free (Council for Exceptional Children, 2002; McCollin & O'Shea, 2006). Regulations set forth by IDEA specify the use of non-discriminatory assessments for determination of a child's disability which also applies to ELLs. Administrative responsibilities have expanded in this area as school leaders make sure that interpreters or other supports are in place to ensure appropriate test measures (Thurlow, Barrera, & Zamora-Duran, 2006). Evaluation procedures are not new to the special education referral process, however, ensuring that ELLs are being evaluated appropriately is a new challenge for school leaders who must make sure that instruments and procedures used to assess a child learning to speak English measure the "extent to which the child has a disability and needs special education, rather than measuring the child's English language skills" (Council for Exceptional Children, 2002 p. 25). Furthermore, school leaders have the responsibility of providing learning opportunities for diverse populations. School leaders must promote culturally responsive pedagogy to ensure that classrooms are places where all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds are welcomed, supported, and provided with the best opportunities to learn (Richards, Brown & Forde, 2007).

Economic Trends

Principals' roles have evolved to become the chief advocates of public education, especially for children challenged by economic hardships. Pierce and Stapleton (2003) explained that the number of children living in poverty is increasing. At least 20 % of the children in this country under the age of 18 years are living in poverty and that number is on the rise. Children from the poorest families live in various places and some locations are overlooked. For example, the largest pockets of

poverty are in rural America. In Oklahoma, 32% of children live in poverty, as do 16% of children in Vermont. Wherever the location, inspiring disadvantaged children to high performance levels is noted as one of the greatest challenges for school leaders (Hodgkinson, 2003).

Out of all of the societal changes impacting the principalship, poverty coupled with learning disabilities is the most challenging (Gay, 2000; Hodgkinson, 2003). Together, these conditions make learning difficult, as many economically challenged, disabled students often fail to receive the services they desperately need. Responding to the educational needs of children affected by poverty has become a major responsibility for school principals. Gay argued that social and emotional needs are factors to be considered when providing instruction to students affected by poverty, and educating the whole child requires knowledge of these needs. In meeting the needs of all children, including children affected by poverty, school principals must promote interagency collaboration to form partnerships with health and welfare agencies in their communities. Sybouts and Wendel's (1994) assertion that school principals will lead schools and communities into different and more involved relationships has come to fruition.

Family structures have changed in the United States, such that many students live in single parent households. In 2001, 22% of children in the United States lived in fatherless homes, two times as many as in 1970 (U.S. Census 2006). These children are more likely to experience poverty than children with their fathers present, and the rate for completing high school is lower than for students who live in two parent homes (Fowler, 2004). These societal issues have added more responsibilities

for school principals as they must provide professional development to inform the school community on the conditions and characteristics of children affected by poverty and family issues.

Increased Special Education Population

The number of children identified with disabilities has risen since 1977, with 13% of all children from birth to twenty one years of age qualifying for special education services (Spring, 2005). The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) provides supplemental funding for special education services to individual states based on the number of students with disabilities (Weishaar & Borsa, 2004). *Part B*, of IDEA, authorizes grants to the states assisting them in initiating, expanding, and improving educational programs for children with disabilities (Verstegen, 1999). Slowly increasing numbers and proportions of children are being served in programs for students with disabilities. During the 1993–1994 school year, 12 percent of students were served in these programs compared with 14 percent in 2003–2004. The rise since 1993–1994 may have been attributed to an increased proportion of children identified as having speech or language impairments, which rose from 2.3 percent of enrollment to 3.0 percent of enrollment; other health impairments (having limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems, such as a heart condition, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever, nephritis, asthma, sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, epilepsy, lead poisoning, leukemia, or diabetes), rose from 0.2 to 1.0 percent of enrollment; and autism and traumatic brain injury rose from 0.1 to 0.4 percent of enrollment (USDOE, 2004).

Autism was added as an optional reporting category in 1991 and was a required category beginning in 1992. Although autism makes up a small percentage of children served under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), the number of children receiving services for autism in the 6-11 and 12-17 age groups grew markedly over the past 10 years (U. S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2003). Less than one percent of the general population ages 6 through 21 receives special education and related services for autism; however, that percentage has steadily increased from 0.03 percent in 1992 to 0.18 percent in 2002. The percentage of the population receiving special education and related autism services increased for all age groups. The largest increase was for the 6-11 age groups: 0.04 percent in 1992 and 0.3 percent in 2002. The increase in the autism category is the result of an increased awareness and diagnosis of autism and the expansion of state definitions of autism to include other pervasive developmental disorders, such as *Asperger Syndrome*, *Rett Syndrome*, and *Childhood Disintegrative Disorder* (USDOE, 2004).

The increase in the special education population has impacted the roles and responsibilities of school leaders (McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004; Sage & Burello, 1994), including major changes in principal supervision. Students with disabilities, including students with autism, are increasingly being educated in general education settings. At present, approximately 96 percent of the special education population is educated in regular school buildings and about 48.2 percent, including students who are diagnosed with autism, is educated at least 80% of the school day in general classes (USDOE, 2004). As a result, assistant principals must often share the responsibility of supervising instructional programs, including special education programs (Marshall

& Hooley, 2006). In addition, accountability issues are mounting and have increased responsibilities in instruction for school leaders (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2004).

Policy and Legal Issues

Policy is formed through a sequence of events that occurs when a political system considers different approaches to public problems, adopts one of them, tries it out, and evaluates it (Fowler, 2004). The process is initiated by growing issues that generate national attention and public education has become a major issue. Since 1965, almost 400 billion dollars has been spent on public education, however, state and national assessments of student progress have shown that student achievement in reading and math has remained stagnant over the past 40 years (Yell, Katsiyannis, & Shiner, 2006). To remedy this problem, a revised standards-based reform bill, Goals 2000; Educate America Act (1994) was passed. To further strengthen the policy language in support of standards and testing, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized, initiating accountability for public education (Fowler, 2004).

No Child Left Behind Act. In January 2002, the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was signed into law as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This legislation signaled a significant increase in the federal government's role in K-12 education, ultimately changing the organizational structure of schools (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). The overarching goal of NCLB is to create a system of accountability for students, teachers, and most importantly, school leaders. It aims to take public education to higher levels of academic reform and sets high

expectations for all students, particularly those traditionally left behind in the public education system (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2004). As a result, principals' roles changed from managing instruction to leading instructional processes.

Historically, students with disabilities were not included in state and local assessments, segregating them from non-disabled peers. Today, most students with disabilities are held to the standards of their grade, thus supporting a unified system in which all students are expected to excel (Yell, Katsiyannis, & Shiner, 2006). Embedded in the goals of NCLB are the expectations that identified subgroups, including students with disabilities, will demonstrate academic achievement. As a result, supervision of instruction has expanded to include performances and outcomes of students with disabilities.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. All students, including students with disabilities, have a basic right to public education. However, providing access to the general curriculum is a major issue that continues to generate public interest. One of the major purposes of IDEA is to ensure that children with disabilities have access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) which involves special education and related services designed to meet their individual and unique needs and that ultimately prepares them for post-school activities (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001). To further clarify the intent of IDEA, changes were made in 1997 and in 2004 to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) provisions which call for specific attention for students with disabilities to ensure their access to the general education curriculum. This requirement exists regardless of the setting in which students receive

special education and related services (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2005) and ensures that all students, including students with disabilities, receive the instructional strategies that meet their academic needs.

Through IDEA (2004), local education agencies may use response to intervention methods to support students with learning challenges in the general curriculum. Responsiveness to intervention involves high quality programs that are research-validated and generally effective with most students (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2005). This method represents a considerable departure and alternative to the traditional IQ achievement discrepancy model used to determine special education eligibility under the learning disabilities category (Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop, 2007). Today, school leaders are encouraged to use response to intervention strategies as a way to problem-solve for learning and behavioral challenges (Faust, 2005).

To further support students with disabilities in general education settings IDEA (2004) calls for the use of evidence-based or scientifically-based practices to increase academic achievement. These instructional practices involve instructional methods that produce the kinds of effects they claim, across many applications. Such practices have been validated by scientific studies and examined by the larger educational community and have been found to be consistently effective (Faust, 2005; McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004). Administrative support is a critical factor in sustaining the use of evidence-based instruction (Vaughn, Klingner, & Hughes, & 2004). Requirements of NCLB and IDEA have focused the attention of school leaders on accountability and access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities

(White, 2005). As a result, school leaders' roles involve improving instruction for all students, including students with disabilities through responsiveness to intervention models and evidence-based instruction. As educational policies continue to evolve, school leaders' roles and responsibilities will continue to change to promote excellence, equity, and accountability for all students, including students with disabilities (Collins, 2005).

The history of public education in the United States has been one of generally rapid growth and expansion (Burrup, Brimley, & Garfield, 1999). Demographic and economic trends, special education populations, and educational mandates, have all added to the complex role of the principal. With federal regulations mandating that students with disabilities be included in the general curriculum and in school assessments, monitoring the progress of these students and ensuring their success have increased in priority. As a result, adequate supervision and effective leadership have become imperative (Crockett, 2002).

Assistant Principals' Delegated Roles and Responsibilities

The assistant principal's position is demanding and multifaceted, covering a wide range of managerial and administrative responsibilities. Their duties vary greatly on a day-to-day basis and are often not clearly defined leading to a sense of ambiguity and frustration (Gaston, 2005; Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Often, their responsibilities center on assisting principals "in all matters" with discipline as their main duty (Harris & Lowery, 2004; Weller & Weller, 2002). In other cases, assistant principals' roles and responsibilities share in the improvement of instruction, however, their contributions in this area are often overlooked (Gaston, 2005;

Matthews & Crow, 2003). Table 1 contains a summary of assistant principals' duties from several references. As the table suggests, duties include filling out paperwork, completing reports, and facilitating conferences with parents, students, and faculty (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2001).

Assistant principals are also active in coordinating staff development, attending central office meetings, assisting with developing the school's master schedule, and managing transportation (Weller & Weller, 2002). Assistant principals are also assigned duties in special education (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Glanz, 2004; Marshall & Hooley, 2006). When this is the case, it becomes the responsibility of assistant principals to ensure that students with disabilities are being educated in their least restrictive environment with adequate supports. The roles and responsibilities in special education are delineated throughout the literature for principals (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; Council for Exceptional Children, 2001; McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004; Sage & Burello, 1994; Tonnsen, 2000). However, the assistant principals' roles and responsibilities in special education are not explained to the same degree.

Research in Special Education Supervision

While research studies that specifically address the role of assistant principals in the special education process are limited, some studies draw attention to the role of school leaders in special education. Many researchers have focused primarily on preparation for special education administration (Davidson & Algozzine, 2002; Monteith, 1998; Protz, 2005; Valesky & Hirth, 1991) and others have examined the

Table 1

Roles and Responsibilities Delegated to Assistant Principals

<i>Summarized duties found in selected literature</i>	DiPaola, M. F., & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2001).	Gaston, D. (2005).	Glanz, 2004	Marshall, C., & Hooley, R. M. (2006).	Matthews, J., & Crow, G. M. (2003),	Weller, D. L. & Weller, S., J. (2002).
Discipline	•	•	•	•	•	•
Campus Building/Safety	•	•	•	•	•	•
Scheduling / Coverage	•	•	•	•		
Special Education and 504 Meetings	•	•	•	•		•
Community / Student Activities			•	•		•
Curriculum Development	•	•	•	•		•
Teacher Evaluations		•	•	•	•	•
Parent Meetings	•	•	•			•
Tutorial Programs		•		•		•
Handbook Development for Teachers	•	•				•
Department Meetings	•	•	•	•	•	•
Central Office Meetings		•	•		•	•
Transportation		•		•	•	•
Textbooks, Lockers and Keys		•	•	•	•	•

perceptions of school leaders towards special education, focusing on their attitudes regarding inclusive education (Praisner, 2003; Washington, 2006). These studies are significant as they explain how school leaders perceive their roles and responsibilities in supporting students with disabilities.

Assistant Principals and Special Education

Research studies reveal that assistant principals have assumed administrative duties in special education (Davidson & Algozzine, 2002; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Protz, 2005; Short, 2004; Witt & McLeod, 2002). Davidson's and Algozzine's (2002) study of administrators' perceptions regarding special education law, reported that 54% of 264 participants were assistant principals. Overwhelmingly, 62% of 51 participants in Protz's (2005) study were assistant principals. Five school leaders were selected to participate in Short's (2004) qualitative study of special education law and its application, two of whom were assistant principals. Studies describing the role of contemporary assistant principals make known that supervision of special education is one of their typically assigned duties (Gaston, 2005; Weller & Weller, 2002; Williams, 1993). These studies all reveal that assistant principals often share the responsibility of implementing and monitoring special education programs alongside principals.

Preparation for Special Education Supervision and Administration

Given that national attention has been directed toward student achievement for all students, including students with disabilities, preparation for special education leadership has become a focus of inquiry. Researchers have sought to explain the role of colleges and universities in preparing school administrators for leadership in all

areas, including special education. In a nationwide study of school administrator training programs and certification requirements in special education, Valesky and Hirth (1991) found that 20 states mandate administrators to have special education knowledge for at least one type of endorsement. Fewer than 12% of states, however, required administrators to complete a course devoted to the study of special education law (IDEA). Assumptions made from this nationwide study imply that some colleges and universities realize that school leaders need preparation to carry out their administrative duties in support of children with disabilities.

School leaders acquire knowledge about special education primarily on the job or through their own informational pursuit (Monteith, 1998; Moorehead, 2002). Monteith found that 75% of administrators had no formal training (graduate coursework) in special education. Protz (2005) conducted a study of the knowledge and application of special education laws, finding that 50% of principals and assistant principals had no formalized schooling about special education. An analysis of principals' knowledge of special education conducted by Jacobs, Tonnsen and Baker (2004) concluded that certification programs for school leaders, which touch upon special education law, rarely provide or require preparation for them to deal with the instructional needs of students receiving special education or the needs of their parents.

Implications from research studies regarding the legal aspects of special education led Davidson and Algozzine (2002) to study the perceptions and knowledge of special education law among principals and assistant principals. Using a rating scale ranging from "limited" to "significant", more than half (53.3 %) of the

participants indicated a “limited” or “basic” level of understanding, while 46.7% indicated a “moderate” or “significant” level. Additionally, 40% of assistant principals indicated a “moderate” level of understanding with another 40% of assistant principals indicating a “basic” level of understanding of special education law. Percentages were lower at each of the extremes, with 13.3% indicating a “limited” level and only 6.7% indicating a “significant” level of understanding for policies and procedures mandated under IDEA.

Assistant principals were asked about their need for administrative training in special education. A low percentage (4.2%) of assistant principals indicated a “very low” need for training with the remaining percentage (58%) indicating a higher need for administrative training in special education. This self-reflective study signals the importance of administrators fully understanding special education laws and their professional needs in this area. If assistant principals believe that they have the knowledge and understanding of special education when actually they do not, they may render poor decisions that could vastly affect the services and outcome for students with disabilities.

Attitudes Toward Special Education

School leaders who receive formal training in special education as a part of their preparation for leadership demonstrate positive attitudes toward special education in general, and refer fewer children for special education services (Praisner, 2003; Washington, 2006). School leaders must realize that their attitudes toward special education programs in their buildings affect the overall educational climate and are a critical factor in determining whether or not programs will be successful

(Witt & McLeod, 2005). If assistant principals are charged with delegated responsibilities in special education, then they must realize that their attitudes also affect the outcomes of students with disabilities.

Administrative Roles and Responsibilities in Special Education

Special education programs have become a large part of the overall public school setting. These programs serve more than ten percent of public school students, and their governing regulations require school leaders to become involved in several processes, including diagnosis and programming for students with disabilities. Since assistant principals may be delegated this responsibility, they are required to follow federal regulations. In order to fulfill their delegated responsibilities in special education, assistant principals must understand their role in this process. While assistant principals do not have to be experts in disabilities, they must have a working knowledge of the legal aspects of IDEA (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2003). The following sections further delineate special education functions performed by assistant principals when delegated supervision of special education in their buildings.

Pre-referral / Referral Process

Assistant principals in the pre-referral stage of special education act as facilitators. Assistant principals ensure that referred students have received interventions to determine whether instructional practices were the cause for the learning or behavioral problems, or whether a severe discrepancy in learning or behavior exists and requires special education. In this instance, assistant principals coordinate the personnel in charge of collecting data and delivering instruction, using

tactics of varying intensity (Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop, 2007; Smith, 2002). Referral and placement rates in special education have dramatically increased, and Response to Intervention (RtI), a systematic approach to instruction which may reduce referral rates, has become a major focus for both *NCLB* and *IDEA*. Cramer (2006) argues that once students have been referred by a classroom teacher, they have a 90% chance of being formally tested, and of those tested, 73% are found eligible for special education services. Crockett (2005) stresses the importance of school leaders having knowledge of teacher assistant teams, and utilizing these teams as instructional support for struggling students, before referrals to special education are made.

Eligibility Process

The role of assistant principals in the eligibility process requires them to manage education timelines, student assessments and parental notification. In managing the eligibility process, assistant principals ensure that assessments clearly illustrate the need for special education services (McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004). Additionally, assistant principals must have knowledge of current issues involving identification and placement of certain minority groups in special education. By knowing the current issues relating to overrepresentation of minority groups in special education, Wakeman, Browder, Flowers, and Ahlgrim-Delzell (2006) found that school leaders encourage greater instructional supports for struggling students and determine whether a student actually needs special education services.

Individualized Education Programs / Program Monitoring

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is central to the provision of an appropriate education for a child with disabilities. It outlines the extent to which the student participates in the general curriculum and the accommodations for both instruction and assessments (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; Capper, Frattura, & Keyes, 2000; Murdick, Gartin, & Crabtree, 2002). For all practical purposes, the IEP is a contract between the district and the student's parents or guardians and is intended to drive instruction, accountability and evaluation. As delegated leaders of the special education process, assistant principals communicate to all stakeholders, that special education is not a place, but a system of instruction and services designed to ensure an opportunity for a child with a disability to receive an appropriate education based on his or her needs (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001).

With increased attention towards the outcomes of students with disabilities, a major responsibility for assistant principals who may be delegated supervision over special education is to ensure that IEPs reflect the needs of learners in the general curriculum. In order to fulfill this responsibility, assistant principals must utilize collected data that illustrate the student's performance. Assistant principals must analyze written reports and communicate often with service providers to determine whether or not students are experiencing academic success and meeting the goals and objectives of their IEPs. As outlined in IDEA, parents must be given notification of their child's progress periodically and as supervisors, assistant principals make sure that students' progress is documented and reported to parents. Moreover, assistant

principals, as delegated leaders, utilize collected data to determine whether the student's current placement is appropriate for learning.

Transition Services

Under NCLB and IDEA, schools must do more than provide access to the general education curriculum. School leaders must make sure education programs achieve positive results by increasing academic progress, program completion, and professional and social preparedness (Kochhar-Bryant, 2006). For students 16 years and older, this shift in policy means that schools are to provide transitional services to bridge students from school to independent living. When delegated as facilitators, assistant principals coordinate IEP meetings between students and representatives from supporting agencies. In this instance assistant principals ensure that vocational assessments are made available to all students, especially students with disabilities. Vocational assessments are necessary for students with disabilities as they create awareness about the academic and functional skills needed in order for students to support themselves. deFur (1999) suggested that school leaders promote collaboration among the school and community agencies. By promoting collaboration between the school and the community, school leaders facilitate the increase of positive post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities.

Discipline

Out of all of the responsibilities placed on the assistant principal, managing discipline is one of the most challenging. Nothing creates as much anxiety, frustration, and overall confusion for assistant principals as applying discipline procedures to students who receive special education (McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004).

Assistant principals generally follow protocol when faced with decisions of school suspension for students without disabilities. However, the procedures for removing students with disabilities in violation of school rules are more complex. This complexity comes from the major tenet of IDEA, which states that students with disabilities have the right to a free and appropriate education (FAPE) (Murdick, Gartin, & Crabtree, 2002). Schools must guarantee that FAPE is not compromised when removal is being considered as the disciplinary action for a student with disabilities. Assistant principals charged with managing discipline have the responsibility of knowing and applying the correct procedures for students with disabilities.

When students with disabilities break the school's code of conduct, the IEP team convenes to review all relevant documents in the student's file, including the child's IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parents to determine if the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to the child's disability or was the direct result of the LEA's failure to implement the IEP (IDEA, 2004). If the student's conduct is determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability, then the LEA is responsible for conducting a functional behavior assessment and drafting a behavior intervention plan. Behavior intervention plans are designed to provide individual support for students with deficits in behavior (Capper, Frattura, & Keyes, 2000) and school leaders have the responsibility of ensuring implementation. Effective school leaders also proactively promote positive schoolwide behavior strategies, creating a system of

support for all students, including students with behavior disabilities (McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004).

Key Leadership Factors for Educating Students with Disabilities

Effective leadership has become critical in meeting the demands of educating all children, particularly those with disabilities. Factors associated with effective leadership involve creating collaborative cultures where all stakeholders work together to improve instructional programs that promote academic achievement. Current literature speaks clearly of the leadership skills needed to support the academic achievement for all students, including students with disabilities. Assistant principals, who are charged with leading the school's efforts in promoting achievement for all students, including students with disabilities, must have knowledge of and demonstrate behaviors associated with effective leadership in their daily work. Table 2 demonstrates how often five key factors associated with effective leadership are found throughout the literature.

Standards for administrative preparation programs have generally been inconsistent and often lacked high expectations. This necessitated the practice of creating or revising standards by professional boards, universities, and state departments of education (Harris & Lowery, 2004). Forged from research on productive educational leadership, standards were drafted from 24 state agencies and representatives from various professional associations (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) six standards of effective leadership listed provide a framework all school leaders.

Table 2

Key Factors for Effective Leadership in Special Education

<i>Leadership Factors</i>	Boscardin, 2004	Collins, 2005	Council for Exceptional Children, 2001	Crockett, 2004	Crockett, 2002	Hehir, 1999	Parrett, 2005	Sage & Burello, 1994	Walther Thomas, DiPaola, 2003
Organization			•				•	•	•
Collaboration	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Evidence-based Instruction	•	•	•	•			•		
Program Evaluation		•	•	•	•	•	•		
Professional Development	•		•	•			•	•	•

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by:

- 1) facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
- 2) advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
- 3) ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- 4) collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- 5) acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
- 6) understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

Embedded in the six ILLSC standards are leadership skills needed to support academic achievement for all students, including students with disabilities. Assistant principals, who are charged with leading the school's efforts in promoting achievement for students with disabilities must have knowledge of and demonstrate the leadership skills associated with effective leadership in their daily work.

Harris and Lowery (2004) explained that school leaders demonstrate accomplishment of these six competencies through their knowledge required for the standard, the dispositions or attitudes manifest by the accomplishment of the standard, and performances that could be observed by an administrator who is accomplished in the standard. Assistant principals as delegated leaders of special education in their buildings must adhere to ISLLC standards. Assistant principals are charged with the responsibility of supporting the principal in creating learning organizations that emphasizes success for all students (Hoy & Miskel, 2005), including students with disabilities. The ISLLC standards should be used to guide their overall leadership practices to become effective school leaders.

Organization

The organization of quality schools arises from the school's educational philosophy and is designed to meet the specific needs of its children (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001). School leaders, who have an organization in place that is designed to meet the needs of all children, create goals that clearly include all students, including students with disabilities (Walther-Thomas & DiPaola, 2004). In responding to the educational needs of all children, school leaders ensure that schools' beliefs, missions and goals reflect all children in the school community.

Overall, effective leadership involves aligning the school's goals with the goals of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, (IDEA). In doing so, school leaders ensure that children with disabilities are included in all school programs and activities (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001). Implementing the school's goals along with those of IDEA requires a heightened awareness of the unique needs of

learners and the educators who support them (Chapple, Baker, & Bon, 2007).

Effective school leaders understand what constitutes qualified educational programs that meet the needs of diverse learners and they adopt practices that promote cooperation and respect throughout the school community; creating healthy school climates.

School climate refers to teachers' perceptions of the general work environment of the school. More specifically, school climate is a relatively enduring quality of the school environment that is experienced by participants, affects their behavior, and is based on their collective perceptions of behavior in schools (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). For example, one school proclaims that they do not have regular and special education children, but they just have "children". Another school declares that "all means all". Both statements imply that all children, including children with disabilities are included in the schools' curriculum and high expectations are set for all students. As such, both messages reflect the beliefs of school leaders and communicate to school communities that all children are provided equal opportunities to learn in their schools.

Collaboration

Schools have become more inclusive and collaboration is essential in promoting student achievement for all students, including students with disabilities (Walther-Thomas et al., 2000). Successful collaboration requires a solid foundation of interpersonal communication skills, trust, and mutual respect (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Fullan (2001) explained that effective leaders understand that collaborative relationships are essential in all successful change initiatives. As change agents,

school leaders have the responsibility of creating environments that encourage collaboration and shared decision making. In order to improve a school's performance, a school leader must create a collegial school culture, which is a prerequisite for school improvement (Senge et al., 2000). By providing opportunities for collaboration among stakeholders, school leaders promote collegial school cultures, and enhance schools' performance.

Collegial school cultures are created through relationships that are established through meaningful conversations about instruction and student achievement. In collegial schools, Sergiovanni and Starratt (2007) explained that teachers experience a high sense of efficacy, motivation and commitment as shared beliefs become part of their school. Hoy and Miskel (2005) refer to these effects as "collective teacher efficacy", defined as, "a shared perception of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students" (p. 176). LeBron (2007) stated that collaboration functions as a bridge that connects a school's shared vision with the reality of current school performance. School leaders foster collaboration by ensuring that sound instructional practices are being implemented for all students, including students with disabilities. As school leaders closely monitor instruction, they ensure that general and special education teachers share expertise (Collins, 2005). Sulzberger (2007) stressed that collaborative practices provide support for educators as they work to ensure that all students achieve to high levels, thus improving school performance.

Effective school leaders model collaboration (Kouzes & Posner, 2002) by initiating and engaging in conversations around instructional issues, including student

performances on local, state, and national assessments. In doing so, they move educators from focusing on factors over which teachers have little to no control over, to instructional strategies that will enhance student achievement for all students. Whitaker (2003) explained that effective school leaders model collaboration and build trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2004) when they visit classrooms daily or at least weekly. Classroom visits along with constructive feedback to general and special education teachers, communicate that effective instruction is essential for student achievement. In providing constructive feedback, effective school leaders encourage teachers to share their expertise in instructional methods that have positive results with students, including students with disabilities. When teachers share expertise they are better prepared to collaborate with parents (Collins, 2005), and inform them of the academic progress of their children.

Effective school leaders create environments where general and special educators collaborate often (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001; Parrett, 2005). In order to build collaborative relationships among general and special education teachers, school leaders must ensure that teachers be given opportunities and appropriate support to do so. One of the most common complaints among teachers is the lack of adequate time to plan and coordinate instructional activities (McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004). When general and special education teachers are provided with common planning times, effective instruction is increased and learning is maximized (Walther-Thomas et al., 2000).

Hehir (1999) places the responsibility of initiating collaboration between general and special education educators primarily on special education administrators.

However, assistant principals, as school leaders, must shoulder this responsibility with principals and special education administrators. Assistant principals initiate collaboration by informing principals and special education administrators of the needs of teachers for professional development in collaborative practices (Collins, 2005). In doing so, assistant principals support visions, goals, and objectives of their schools.

Evidence-Based Instruction

Evidence-based instruction promises better outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities (Faust, 2005). Evidence-based instruction involves teaching and administrative practices that have been subjected to scientific testing and found to be consistently effective across many applications (McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004). Since such practices have been validated by scientific studies and examined by the larger educational community, NCLB and IDEA urges implementation. However, important issues surrounding the use of evidence-based methods have emerged (Faust, 2005). One major issue is the amount of administrative support required to implement the legal aspects of IDEA and according to Protz (2005), compliance with legal mandates is high priority for school leaders. While focusing primarily on the legal aspects of IDEA, school leaders may be ignoring the leadership skills needed to encourage and support scientific approaches to learning.

Another issue involves school leaders' understanding of their roles in transforming the school community to increase the use of evidence-based instruction. In order to stimulate the use of evidence-based practices school leaders must understand their administrative roles (Boscardin, 2004). In support of leadership in

this area, Boscardin suggested that a national research agenda in special education leadership be established. By examining issues in school reform and special education leadership, school leaders are able to use research data to identify and better understand their administrative roles in evidence-based instruction. Faust (2005) stressed that school leaders must understand how their administrative practices influence evidence-based instruction that ultimately increases educational outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities. As school leaders, assistant principals often assist principals in instruction (Marshall & Hooley, 2006) which includes implementing evidence-based instructional practices.

In many instances, assistant principals are involved in conducting classroom observations for instructional improvement. Therefore, they must be able to provide to teachers, including special education teachers, guidance in evidence-based instructional interventions. In this instance, assistant principals' roles transform from managers to leaders of instruction. When given the opportunity to assist in instruction, assistant principals should include research in evidence-based instruction as a part of pre-service and in-service activities for their staff. By sharing with teachers, research articles or professional websites on evidence-based instruction, assistant principals promote instructional strategies that will enhance learning for all students, including students with disabilities. As school leaders delegated responsibilities in instruction, assistant principals must understand that their performance is linked to the performance of teachers and ultimately to student outcomes (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2003). As delegated leaders of special education, assistant principals must ensure that general and special

education teachers participate in professional development activities that include evidence-based instruction.

Program Evaluation

Assistant principals along with teachers, parents, and other administrators are stakeholders in education, and they often assist with evaluating educational programs (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003), including special education programs. Program evaluation involves making judgments about the merit, value, or worth of educational programs (Gall, Gall, & Borg) and accountability requirements urge school leaders to question whether they are providing the educational programs that support academic achievement for all students, including students with disabilities (Crockett, 2002).

The academic success of students with disabilities depends on the quality of their instructional program. Assistant principals share in the evaluation process by observing and communicating the progress of students with disabilities in the general curriculum. By expressing their concerns to principals, about instructional issues that affect students with disabilities, assistant principals take part in the evaluation process, thus supporting students with disabilities in the general curriculum.

Professional Development

Effective leaders recognize that professional development is essential in providing quality instruction for student achievement. Contrary to beliefs, professional development is not always costly and innovative school leaders utilize resources within their buildings to enhance instruction for all students, including students with disabilities (Walther-Thomas et al., 2000). Parrett's (2005) account of *LapWai Middle School* demonstrated how one school raised the academic levels of all

students. To accomplish this goal, the school leader, as the change agent, created multiple opportunities for the staff to actively participate in problem-solving activities. By encouraging collaboration, implementing evidence-based instruction and utilizing data to evaluate programs, LapWai was able to improve instruction and increase parent participation to raise student achievement.

To begin the problem solving process, the staff at *LapWai* came together to establish a common vision of success for their school, initiating collaboration. In order to provide time for staff collaboration, the school leader adjusted the weekly schedule to gain two hours of common planning time and professional development. To further cultivate collaboration, the superintendent launched a monthly educational summit. This innovative technique allowed parents, teachers and students to come together to consider the progress, offer input, and focus on engaging the community in improving academic achievement and school success. As a result of these collaborative activities, leadership teams were established.

Through a concerted effort, *LapWai* was transformed into a more effective learning community. Like the school leader at *LapWai*, school leaders, including assistant principals, must become change agents. They must be able to motivate and encourage staff to work together in support of academic achievement for all students, including students with disabilities.

Implications for Special Education Leadership

Changes in societal structures, economic status of individuals, and changing trends in the requirements to educate diverse populations, including students with disabilities, all have contributed to the shifting roles and increased responsibilities of

principals and assistant principals. Although, current literature does little to address the specific roles and responsibilities of assistant principals in special education, as school leaders they are becoming more involved with managing programs for students with disabilities (Davidson & Algozzine, 2002; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Protz, 2005; Short, 2004; Stevenson- Jacobson, Jacobson, & Hilton, 2006; Weller & Weller, 2002; Witt & McLeod, 2002).

Research studies regarding special education leadership indicate that assistant principals need and want additional training in special education to adequately fulfill their delegated roles and responsibilities (Davidson & Algozzine, 2002; Protz, 2006; Short, 2004; Stevenson-Jacobson, Jacobson, & Hilton, 2006). If assistant principals are delegated the supervision of special education, then school administrators must ensure that assistant principals are provided with opportunities for professional development in special education leadership. This professional development will help assistant principals to broaden their knowledge of leadership and put into practice a system of support that will ultimately increase the educational outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) was designed and amended to ensure that educators provide quality educational services for children with disabilities. The Council for Exceptional Children (2001) asserts that school leadership is a major force in successfully implementing IDEA requirements.

In order to investigate IDEA implementation at the building level, this study obtained information about the roles and responsibilities of Virginian elementary school assistant principals in special education. The survey instrument employed in this study also asked respondents to report how prepared they feel to accomplish these duties. In addition, the study explored how assistant principals obtain information about current issues in special education. The goal of the study was to gain a greater understanding of the assistant principal's role in and preparation for implementing IDEA and promoting achievement for students with disabilities.

This chapter provides a description of the research procedures and methods used to research the role of elementary assistant principals in special education. It outlines research questions, data collection procedures, participant demographics, the survey instrument features, and data analyses. The chapter concludes with a description of the procedures used to protect the anonymity and rights of the participants.

Research Questions

This descriptive study used a survey instrument to collect data from elementary school assistant principals in Virginia about their characteristics,

experiences, knowledge and opinions—aspects that Gall, Gall, and Borg, (2003) believe descriptive studies should capture. Green and Salkind (2005) explained that descriptive statistics involve summarizing distributions of scores by developing tabular or graphical presentations. This study provides frequency distributions using statistical methods to describe the delegated roles and responsibilities in special education reported by elementary assistant principals. More specifically, the study investigated the following research questions:

1. What are the roles and responsibilities in special education delegated to elementary school assistant principals?
2. How do elementary assistant principals perceive their preparation to fulfill their delegated roles and responsibilities in special education?
3. How do assistant principals obtain the necessary knowledge and skills to assist them in fulfilling their delegated roles and responsibilities in special education?

Procedures

The study was carried out in four stages, the first of which was a comprehensive literature review focusing on the trends in education, including special education, that impact principalship. The literature review resulted in an evaluation of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA, 2004), research studies about special education trends and supervision, and a list of delegated responsibilities in special education that were used to frame the data collection.

The second stage involved identifying the participants for the study. Participants were members of the Virginia Association of Elementary School

Principals (VAESP), a professional organization in Virginia that develops programs to meet the current and future needs of elementary and middle school administrators. To assist members as they meet the challenges of a rapidly changing educational environment, VAESP sponsors conferences and workshops, which often include informational sessions on special education (Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals, 2007). Elementary assistant principals received an invitation to participate in this study during VAESP's Annual Assistant Principal and Lead Teachers' Conference held on March 25, 2007, pending approval by the dissertation committee.

During the third stage, a survey was created to address the research questions. It was evident after reviewing research about the role of assistant principals and the special education process that there were no formal surveys measuring assistant principals' role in special education. Rudestam and Newton (2001) explained that there are instances, however rare, when no existing measure taps the construct the researcher desires to measure. Thus, a survey instrument was developed to collect data about the delegated roles and responsibilities of assistant principals in special education. The survey incorporated major factors of the assistant principalship and special education leadership gleaned from the literature review. It addressed the administrative experiences of assistant principals, their involvement in the special education process, their perceptions of how prepared they feel to carry out special education duties and their participation in various professional development activities.

The final stage involved the collection and analysis of data extracted from the survey. One goal of this stage was to have a high return rate. When cover letters

accompany surveys, researchers increase their rates of return (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003)—a finding that was supported by this study. The cover letter (Appendix A) explained the purposes of the study, directions for completing the survey, ethical safeguards for the survey, and the background and contact information of the researcher. The survey itself included a letter explaining the incentives for completing the survey instrument within four weeks of the initial and follow up requests.

Data collected using online survey tool (SurveyMonkey) were entered into a statistical program for analysis. Means, standard deviations, and other measures of central tendency were used to draw conclusions about the types of responsibilities assistant principals fulfill and their perceptions of how prepared they felt to complete their duties. Reliability analyses also were conducted to test how well the instrument measured preset leadership domains. To conclude the study, this written report summarizes the findings and suggests areas for further research.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument used in the study consisted of items extracted from the literature relating to the special education process, supervision, and leadership (see Appendix B). In addition, several survey items were obtained from Walton's (2005) study completed for coursework in Field Research (EPPL 765) which asked questions about the delegated roles and responsibilities of assistant principals in special education. To ensure the validity of the survey instrument, the researcher met the following guidelines: (a) presented all respondents with the same questions, (b) recorded answers accurately, (c) used closed questions to validate meaning, and (d) piloted the survey (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). A cover letter explained the purpose

and significance of the study as well as instructed the participants as to when and where to return the survey. A clear reference to the survey's confidentiality was also integrated into the cover letter.

The survey instrument was divided into three parts which correlated with the study's guiding questions. Part A contained questions about the professional experiences of assistant principals. This section asked questions pertaining to assistant principals' past and present experiences in the supervision and administration of general and special education. Questions about their school's demographics also were included in this section, particularly the components of special education.

Part B contained questions that addressed the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals in the special education process. Survey items derived from the literature identified the knowledge and skills school leaders need to supervise special education. The questions in this section solicited responses relating to the processes of identifying, placing, monitoring, and evaluating special education programs. Additionally, the participants were asked how often they perform special education functions and their perceptions of how prepared they feel to perform each function.

Jacobs, Tonnsen, and Baker (2004) claimed that in order for students with disabilities to acquire the rights afforded to them by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, school leaders must have the knowledge and skills to enforce the rights of all students, including students with disabilities. The questions contained in Part B solicited assistant principals' knowledge of legal aspects of special education, and addressed leadership skills needed to promote academic achievement for all

students. For questions about how often assistant principals carry out special education duties, the participants ranked their responses on a scale from one to five, where one was “never” and five was “very often”. The respondents then were asked to rank how prepared they felt to carry out each duty, with one standing for “not prepared” and five standing for “very well prepared”.

The questions in Part C explored professional development activities for school leaders in special education. Current literature suggests that special education programs are expanding and inclusive programs are increasing (Faust, 2005; Fowler, 2004; McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004). Assistant principals who act as supervisors of special education have the responsibility of ensuring that all students are being educated in the least restrictive environment. As inclusive programs continue to expand (Shepherd, 2006), collaboration among school leaders and general and special educators will become paramount (Beninghof, 1996). In order to promote inclusive environments, school leaders must be aware of the current issues regarding access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2005). Since assistant principals often assume leadership roles in special education they are in a position to become promoters of inclusive practices (Weller & Weller, 2002). Questions in this section were arranged in closed format and asked the participants to rate the professional development activities that assist them in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in creating inclusive environments.

Sample Population

In order to conduct acceptable statistical analyses, this study gathered the largest sample possible (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). The sample population was

comprised of public elementary school assistant principals in Virginia. The sample was obtained from VAESP's mailing list. In order to obtain the largest sample size, the researcher solicited participation from each listed member (N = 219).

The study made use of a convenience sample. The selected population for the study was convenient in that it was geographically accessible to the researcher, and was compiled into a mailing database. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) explained that convenience sampling is often selected when the sample suits the purpose of the study. The purposes of this study were the following: (a) explore the elementary assistant principals' involvement and the level of supervision in special education, (b) investigate the knowledge and skills needed and perceived by elementary assistant principals to supervise special education and, (c) investigate how elementary assistant principals obtain the knowledge and skills needed to supervise the special education process.

Parjares (2002) stressed that drawing data from a convenience sample requires a rationale and the limitations must be clearly provided. The Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals provided access to elementary assistant principals who, voluntarily, are members. Elementary assistant principals were selected as early intervention programs are expanding, and children with disabilities are now being included in the general curriculum in early grades (IDEA, 2004). These changes have expanded the role and responsibilities for assistant principals at the elementary level.

In addition to the limitations discussed in Chapter One, the following limitations associated with the study restrict the generalizability of the results. This study was limited to Virginia's elementary assistant principals who are members of

VAESP. Participants were limited to volunteers. To add, the survey instrument was subjective in nature, and assumed that all responses were accurate and truthful. It was assumed that a sufficient number of elementary assistant principals would return the survey instrument to allow for meaningful conclusions to be drawn from the data.

Delimitations are defined as limitations the researcher has imposed or intentionally not addressed in the study that would also limit generalization (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). The target population of the study was limited to members of one professional organization in Virginia whose membership includes assistant principals from across the state.

Data Collection

Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) explained that in order to protect participants' rights to confidentiality and to protect subjects from harm, an approval of human subjects must be obtained by an institutional review board. Hence, a request to conduct the study using a survey instrument and human subjects was submitted to the Human Subjects Committee for the College of William and Mary. After permission was granted from the institutional review board, a letter was sent via electronic mail to VAESP's conference coordinator, identifying the researcher, discussing the purposes of the study and requesting permission to solicit participants from their mailing list.

Pilot Study

Prior to administering the survey to assistant principals, a pilot study of the procedures and survey questions was conducted. The purpose of a pilot study was to test the procedures, length, wording, and clarity of the survey. The survey was

administered to an expert panel consisting of 12 practicing elementary assistant principals in Virginia. While completing the survey, the assistant principals were asked to respond to the following questions about the survey: (1) Were the instructions clear? (2) Were the questions clear? (3) Were there any problems understanding what kind of answers were expected? and (4) How long did it take to complete the survey? (see Appendix C). Rudestam and Newton (2001) explained that pilot studies further help the researcher by asking specifically which sections were interesting or difficult. After obtaining the suggestions from the expert panel and recommendations from the dissertation committee, the survey instrument was revised for clarity. Recommendations for the improvement of the survey included eliminating several demographic questions, reorganizing questions regarding preparation for administration to coincide with professional development items, and rephrasing sentences for readability.

Surveys and Incentives

Assistant principals perform many tasks and they fulfill multiple jobs every hour (Marshall & Hooley, 2006), often becoming too overloaded to complete requests (Gaston, 2005). In order to encourage assistant principals to complete the survey in addition to completing their multiple assigned tasks, incentives were offered to the participants. Each participant was given the chance to win a \$10 Starbuck gift card. Starbucks was chosen because of its close proximity to schools, making it convenient for winning assistant principals to redeem their gift cards. Participants wishing to enter the drawing submitted their contact information along with the survey. A total

of ten participants were selected at random to win. After one week, a follow-up request via email was made weekly for three consecutive weeks.

Data collected from the surveys was entered into a spreadsheet from the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* software (SPSS), and a frequency count for each response was conducted. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) explained that frequency count recording is appropriate when the researcher is not seeking to explain the duration of a behavior. This study explains how often assistant principals perform supervisory duties in special education currently, not over time; therefore, frequency analyses were appropriate to generate conclusions.

Data Analysis

Various statistical procedures were employed to answer the study questions. Table 3 lists the research questions and the analyses for each, and Table 4 provides specifics regarding how five leadership domains relate to the research questions. A frequency table displayed how often each answer choice was selected to analyze the assistant principals' professional experiences in special education. The open-ended question permitted the respondents to answer in their own words (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Reliability analyses using Cronbach's Alpha were conducted to determine whether the items for each leadership domain were internally consistent. Independent-samples t tests were conducted to evaluate assistant principals' perceived preparation to supervise special education and teaching experience, courses, or endorsement in special education.

Table 3

Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

Research Questions	Data Collection	Data Analysis
1. What are the roles and responsibilities in special education delegated to elementary assistant principals?	Survey Items Part A, 6 Part B Column A, 1-40 Open-ended Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Descriptive analyses to yield frequencies and percentages ▪ Reliability analyses of survey items ▪ Content analysis of open-ended survey question
2. How do elementary school assistant principals perceive their preparation to fulfill their delegated roles and responsibilities in special education?	Survey Items Part B Column B, 1-40 Open-ended Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Descriptive analyses to yield frequencies and percentages ▪ Content analysis of open-ended survey question ▪ Independent t tests
3. How do assistant principals obtain the necessary knowledge and skills to assist them in fulfilling their delegated responsibility of supervising the special education process?	Survey Items Part C 1-10 Open-ended Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Descriptive analyses to yield frequencies and percentages ▪ Reliability analyses of survey items ▪ Independent t tests ▪ Content analysis of open-ended survey question

Table 4

Assistant Principals and Special Education Survey Table of Specifications

Leadership Domain	Survey Item (s)	Research Question
Organization	Part A / 6 Part B / 1, 2, 13, 14, 16, 18, 23, 25, 27, 30, 34, 36, 38, Part C / open-end question	1, 2
Collaboration	Part B / 4, 8, 11, 21, 26, 29, Part C / open-end question	1, 2
Instruction	Part B / 3, 7, 12, 15, 17, 19, 22, 31, 32, 37, Part C / open-ended	1, 2
Program Evaluation	Part B / 5, 6, 9, 10, 28, 33, 35, 39, 40, open-end question Part C / open-ended	1, 2
Professional Development	Part B / 20, 24 Part C / 1-10, open-end question	3

The final analysis provided a holistic summary of the study including an explanation of the procedures, research methods, supporting literature, findings of the study and implications for future research in supervision of special education at the building level. Given the limitations of the study, the results can be generalized with caution to elementary assistant principals in Virginia.

Ethical Safeguards

The study was conducted using a descriptive survey design with data collected during the 2006-2007 school year. Written approval for soliciting participants was sought and garnered from Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals' (VAESP) coordinator. The research design was ethical in terms of providing results that can be interpreted meaningfully. In other words, the study was an empirical study and the data collected, analyzed, and reported were translated into meaningful

conclusions that could be applied statistically to like samples. In no instance was the identity of an individual respondent or school division divulged or reported. A summary of the results was made available for VAESP conference coordinators, participants, and university professors who made a request. In conclusion, this study involved no interventions, treatments, or manipulation of participants.

Conclusion

Results of this study have professional development implications for school leaders, special education administrators, and assistant principals who supervise special education. In response to the growing special education population, current legislation regarding accountability, and limited amount of research regarding the role of assistant principals in general, this research study makes a contribution to the knowledge base informing current practices in supervision of special education at the building level.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis of the Results

Elementary assistant principals were surveyed about their involvement in special education. This study identified key leadership factors supporting supervision of the special education process. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through surveys, the findings of which are reported in this chapter. The first part of the chapter provides a discussion of the demographics and return rate. The next section analyzes the roles and responsibilities delegated to elementary school assistant principals. It also discusses assistant principals' perceptions of how prepared they feel to carry out each function. Lastly, this chapter presents reliability analyses for how well the survey instrument measured each leadership domain. The *Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 15* was used to conduct the analyses.

Demographics and Return Rate

There are approximately 1,158 elementary assistant principal positions in Virginia (Virginia Department of Education, 2007). Of the 219 assistant principals (approximately 19% of the total number of assistant principals) who received the survey, 118 elementary assistant principals participated in this study, yielding a 54% return rate. The majority of the participants were female (72.0 %, $n = 85$), which was similar to the percentage of female elementary assistant principals (71.7%, $n = 119$) reported by DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran in 2001. A majority of the sample had over 10 years experience as educators (68.6 %, $n = 81$). Over one-half (54.2%, $n = 64$) of participants reported having a school population of 500-700 students. Approximately one-third of Virginia elementary schools (35.6%, $N = 299$) have

student populations in this range (Virginia Department of Education, 2007).

Approximately one-third (29.7%, $n = 35$) of the sample worked in schools where at least half of the students received free or reduced-price lunch. According to the National Assessment for Educational Progress school survey, 21% of Virginia elementary schools reported similar student populations in 2007 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). Table 5 displays the demographics of the sample along with demographic information pertaining to Virginia elementary schools. All participants (100%, $n = 118$) responded to the demographic questions on the survey, and 90 of the 118 participants (76%) responded to all items on the survey. Frequencies and mean analyses were derived from this 76%, of the sample.

Assistant principals were asked if they have been delegated seven supervisory responsibilities in special education. Figure 2 displays the percentages of the sample that have carried out those duties. All assistant principals ($n = 118$) reported that they were responsible for one of the duties—disciplining students with disabilities. Current literature purports that discipline is one of the most common duties delegated to assistant principals (Gaston, 2005; Glanz, 2004; Matthews & Crow, 2003). This finding not only supports the literature but also expands this practice to administrative duties in special education. Conducting special education teacher evaluations (92.4%) was the second highest delegated duty and was closely followed by facilitating special education meetings (90.7%) and handling referrals for special education (90.7%). When students experience academic difficulties in the general curriculum, they are often referred to special education (Cramer, 2006; Nolet & McLaughlin, 2005). Overall, this study identified assistant principals as the administrators who

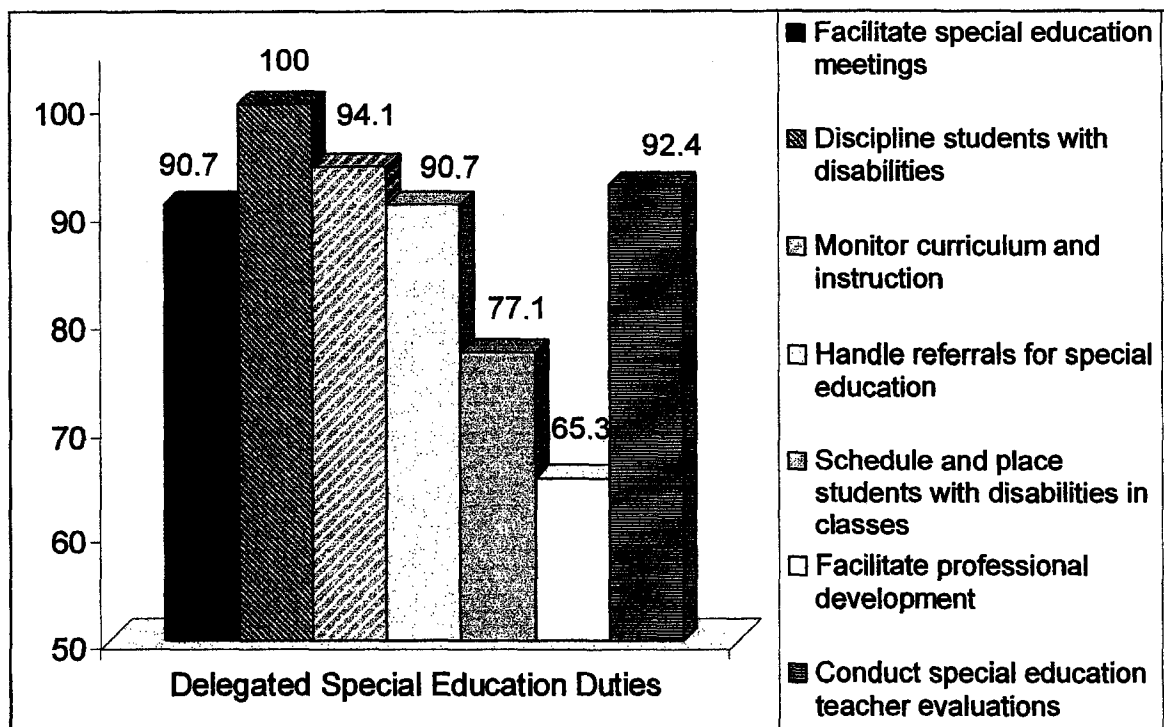
Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of the Sample and Virginia Elementary Schools

School Variables		Sample		Virginia elementary schools	
		<i>n</i>	%	N	%
Student population	300-400	8	6.78	133	15.81
	400-500	15	12.71	168	19.98
	500-700	64	54.24	299	35.55
	Over 700	31	26.27	117	13.91
Free or reduced-price lunch population	No	83	70.34	--	79.00
	Yes	35	29.66	--	21.00
Background Variables				<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Male			33	27.97
	Female			85	72.03
Educator experience	Less than one year			1	8.47
	1-5 years			18	15.25
	6-10 years			18	15.25
	Over 10 years			81	68.64

Note. Virginia elementary school population data is from the Virginia Department of Education, 2007. The free or reduced-price lunch data is from the National Center of Education Statistics [U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007]. The dash (–) indicates information that is unavailable.

Figure 2. Percentage of Assistant Principals Performing Various Special Education Duties



facilitate the special education process. There were two administrative duties that assistant principals said they have been delegated less often: Placing students with disabilities in classes (77.1%), and facilitating professional development for special education (65.3%). One potential reason why these two duties are delegated to a smaller percentage of assistant principals than other duties is that these duties may be performed by principals themselves.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: What are the roles and responsibilities in special education delegated to elementary assistant principals?

Responses to the first research question were found by analyzing data from items 1-40 of the survey instrument. Participants were asked how often they

performed 40 selected duties each month. These duties were divided into predetermined leadership categories—Organization, Collaboration, Instruction, Program Evaluation, and Professional Development—which were identified in Chapter 2 (see Table 2). Participants ranked how often they performed each duty using a rating scale from one to five, where one was “never” and five was “very often.” Appendices D1-D5 display frequency counts and percentages for how often assistant principals reported performing each duty. The tables in these appendices are organized by five leadership domains and show each duty associated with its domain. The means and standard deviations for how often participants completed each task are displayed in Tables 5 through 8 and discussed below. Mean scores are calculated by dividing the sum of all scores by the number of scores and are generally considered the best measure of central tendency (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

Organization

Organizational duties involve creating school environments where all students, including students with disabilities and their families, are active members of the community (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). Table 6 displays means and standard deviations for how often assistant principals perform thirteen duties associated with organization. Two duties that involve creating school environments where all students, including students with disabilities, feel welcome had high mean scores. Communicating to staff that all students and their families are welcome and establishing a climate of respect in their schools received mean scores of 3.91 and 3.93, respectively, indicating that assistant principals perform these duties “often.”

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations for How Often Organizational Duties Are Performed

Organizational duties	M	SD	N
Facilitate child study meetings	3.24	1.17	90
Facilitate IEP/504 meetings	3.37	0.97	83
Ensure that teachers conduct functional behavior assessments	2.35	1.00	85
Ensure that behavior intervention plans are being implemented	2.62	0.98	91
Ensure that effective, positive behavior supports are available to all students,	3.41	1.13	88
Ensure that instructional assistants are fully informed about students with disabilities	2.96	1.19	90
Monitor inclusion classes to ensure adequate support for students with disabilities	3.46	1.20	91
Monitor extracurricular activities to ensure that students with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate	2.42	1.33	90
Establish a climate of respect for diverse populations	3.93	1.13	91
Provide a multi-disciplinary team, including the parent, when developing an IEP	3.66	1.05	91
Communicate to the staff that all children and their families are welcome in the school	3.91	1.17	87
Provide oversight of special education services	2.57	1.29	90
Encourage IEP team members to develop and implement the IEP according to IDEA	3.59	1.15	90

Mean scores were lower for duties that involved direct supervision in special education. (e.g., $M = 2.57$ for providing oversight in the least restrictive environment and 3.46 for monitoring inclusion classes to ensure appropriate support for students

with disabilities), indicating that assistant principals perform these supervisory duties “occasionally.” The organizational duty that had the lowest mean score ($M = 2.4$) was monitoring extracurricular activities to ensure that students have equal opportunity to participate. Assistant principals, on average, reported that they “rarely” performed this duty.

Approximately one-third (33%, $n = 39$) of assistant principals reported that they establish a climate of respect for diverse populations “very often”, and 31% ($n = 37$) reported that they communicate to the staff that all children and their families are welcome in their schools “very often.” Approximately 20% ($n = 23$) indicated that they provide oversight for students with disabilities in their least restrictive environments. One of the survey items asked how often participants initiate functional behavior assessments. Thirty-six percent ($n = 43$) reported that they “rarely” carry out this function, which means they perform this task only once or twice per month. When asked how often they monitor behavior intervention plans for students with disabilities, 35.6% ($n = 42$) of the assistant principals reported that they “rarely” perform this function. Only a few assistant principals (14%, $n = 16$) reported that they encourage extra-curricular activities for students with disabilities “often.”

Collaboration

Assistant principals were asked to rate how often they carry out duties that require collaboration. Collaborative practices involve working closely with stakeholders to provide adequate support for students with disabilities. Table 7 displays means and standard deviations for how often assistant principals perform collaboration duties. Mean scores for collaboration duties fell between “rarely”

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations for How Often Collaboration Duties Are Performed

Collaboration duties	M	SD	N
Collaborate with current and past teachers about learning challenges and what has worked with a particular student	3.35	1.23	88
Collaborate with parents to provide meaningful information about special education and related services	3.31	1.06	91
Work closely with the district's special education director to make maximum use of all learning resources	2.37	1.22	90
Provide pertinent information regarding students when participating in due process hearings	1.52	9.09	88
Keep records of home visits made to parents	1.56	1.04	91
Collaborate with community-based service providers	2.24	1.07	91

($M = 1.52$) and “occasionally” ($M = 3.35$). As Table 7 suggests, assistant principals, on average, collaborate more often with teachers regarding student progress ($M = 3.35$) than with district special education directors for resources ($M = 2.37$). The lowest mean reported was for providing information for due process ($M = 1.52$). This finding may demonstrate that most assistant principals are not involved with due process or may seldom or never have had a case in their schools.

Of the six survey items measuring the leadership domain of Collaboration, approximately one-third of the sample (32%, $n = 38$) reported collaborating with parents “occasionally.” One reason for this finding may be that assistant principals are delegated discipline duties which often require them to hold conferences with parents (Weller & Weller, 2002). Although assistant principals reported having been

delegated supervisory duties for discipline, approximately half of the sample (53.4%, $n = 63$) reported that they never keep records of home visits and that they never provide information for due process hearings (50%, $n = 59$). Approximately one-fifth of the sample (22%, $n = 26$) reported never collaborating with special education administrators or community service providers (19.5%, $n = 23$).

Instruction

Assistant principals in this study reported having been delegated duties in instruction that require them to monitor and provide support for students' individual educational programs. Table 8 illustrates the means and standard deviations for how often assistant principals perform supervisory duties associated with instruction. Mean scores for instructional duties ranged from 2.35 ("rarely") to 3.81 ("often"). The item with the lowest mean score was review present levels of performance for assistive technology ($M = 2.35$). The duty that received the highest mean score for instruction was ensuring that all teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and approaches that have been proven effective in educating students with disabilities ($M = 3.81$). Assistant principals, on average, also ensure that all students are included in local and state assessments "often" ($M = 3.73$). On the other hand, they ensure that teachers understand the purpose for alternate assessments, which measure achievement for some students with disabilities, less often ($M = 2.75$).

Results indicated that approximately one-fifth to one-fourth of the sample support academic instruction for students with disabilities by observing and evaluating co-teaching strategies (24%, $n = 28$), making sure that general and special education teachers have common planning time (19.5%, $n = 23$), and ensuring that

Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations for How Often Instructional Duties Are Performed

Instructional duties	M	SD	N
Ensure that all teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and approaches that have been proven effective in educating students with disabilities	3.81	1.02	86
Implement intervention strategies for students experiencing learning difficulties prior to submitting a referral for special education	3.43	1.16	90
Ensure that teachers understand the purpose and use alternate assessments (VGLA, VSEP, VAAP, etc) when appropriate for students with disabilities	2.75	1.10	89
Review present levels of performance to determine if assistive technology is needed to meet the educational needs of the student	2.35	1.13	91
Ensure that general and special education teachers have common planning time	3.08	1.42	91
Make certain that students with disabilities are being included in state and local assessments	3.73	1.08	90
Provide information to staff pertaining to the instruction of children with disabilities	3.07	1.14	91
Make sure that general and special education teachers be given the opportunity to attend together workshops, conferences, and seminars on collaborative teaching	2.58	1.21	91
Ensure that related services are provided to support students' educational goals	3.11	1.21	89

students with disabilities are included in local and state assessments (23%, $n = 27$).

Approximately 57% of the sample reported that they implement intervention strategies for students experiencing learning difficulties “occasionally to very often.”

Only 17% ($n = 20$) reported that they “rarely” implement intervention strategies for students experiencing learning difficulties. Nineteen percent ($n = 22$) of the sample,

however, reported that they never review students' present levels of performances to determine if assistive technology is needed to assist students in instruction.

Program Evaluation

Assistant principals indicated that they have been delegated duties that require them to monitor and evaluate educational programs for students with disabilities. Table 9 lists the means and standard deviations for how often assistant principals perform duties associated with program evaluation. Mean scores for how often assistant principals perform Program Evaluation duties fell between 2.67 ("occasionally") and 3.60 ("often"). Providing observations of students experiencing difficulty in the general curriculum received the lowest mean score ($M = 2.67$) while ensuring that parents receive prior notice of assessments received the highest mean score ($M = 3.60$). As Table 9 suggests, many tasks are performed at about the same rate: review IEPs to ensure appropriate placement ($M = 3.40$), ensure that teachers understand and use assessment information to improve instruction ($M = 3.43$), monitor IEPs to ensure that annual reviews are conducted ($M = 3.44$), and ensure that parents are given notice at least once every grading period, of progress of IEP goals ($M = 3.40$). Over 20% of the sample reported performing two of the duties very often: ensure that parents are notified of their child's progress once every nine weeks (22.9%, $n = 27$), and initiate annual IEP reviews (17.8%, $n = 21$). As reported by participants, approximately 10% never did two of the duties: provide opportunities for observations for students experiencing difficulties in the general curriculum (12%, $n = 14$), and communicate with all sources at least once every nine weeks and determine the progress of students with disabilities (9%, $n = 11$).

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations for How Often Program Evaluation Duties Are Performed

Program Evaluation duties	M	SD	N
Ensure that assessments measure all relevant aspects of children's performance	3.05	1.20	86
Provide opportunities for observations for students experiencing difficulties in the general curriculum	2.67	1.16	90
Communicate with all sources at least once every nine weeks and determine if students with IEPs are making progress towards their IEP goals	2.81	1.22	91
Ensure that all appropriate assessments are being utilized for the purposes of screening and evaluating students suspected of having a disability	3.23	1.10	90
Review IEPs to ensure appropriate placement	3.40	1.23	91
Ensure that parents are given prior notice of evaluation, assessment, placement, or program modifications	3.60	1.24	91
Ensure that teachers understand and use assessment information to improve instruction	3.43	0.99	91
Monitor IEPs to ensure that annual reviews are conducted	3.44	1.20	91
Ensure that parents are given notice, at least once every grading period, of progress on IEP goals	3.40	1.27	91

Professional Development for Staff

There were two items that asked assistant principals how often they initiate professional development in special education for their staff. Table 10 displays the means and standard deviations for these two functions. On average, assistant principals reported that they carry out both functions "occasionally": Ensure that staff members have access to information on special education ($M = 3.24$), and encourage

Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations for How Often Assistant Principals Initiate Professional Development for Staff

Professional Development duties	M	SD	N
Ensure that staff members have access to information on special education and encourage them to take advantage of available resources	3.24	1.08	90
Encourage staff members to take part in professional development that will expand their knowledge of working with students with disabilities	3.00	1.09	90

staff members to take part in professional development ($M = 3.00$). The frequency table (Appendix D5) reveals that nearly one-fourth of the participants occasionally ensure that their staff has access to information regarding special education (24.6%, $n = 29$) and encourage staff to participate in professional development (26.3%, $n = 31$).

Analysis of the results for the first research question revealed that participants in this study are being delegated supervisory duties for special education in five leadership domains—Organization, Collaboration, Instruction, Program Evaluation, and Professional Development. Assistant principals reported that they facilitate the special education process by facilitating special education meetings, and they create school climates where all students are welcomed, including students with disabilities. Although they reported supervising several aspects of special education, assistant principals indicated that they perform less often duties that require increased levels of supervision in special education and they collaborate less often with special education administrators.

Research Question Two: How do elementary school assistant principals perceive their preparation to fulfill their delegated roles and responsibilities in special education?

The survey addressed the perceptions of assistant principals regarding their preparation to carry out their supervisory duties in special education. Survey items 1-40 in Part B asked how prepared assistant principals perceived themselves to perform supervisory duties in Organization, Collaboration, Instruction, Program Evaluation, and Professional Development. Participants ranked their preparation to perform each function on a scale from one to five, where 1 was “not prepared” and 5 was “very well prepared,” Tables in Appendices D1-D5 provide a complete breakdown of how prepared assistant principals perceive they are to do each function within each domain.

Organization

Table 11 lists the means and standard deviations for perceived preparation for performing organizational duties reported by assistant principals. The mean scores reported for levels of preparation regarding organizational duties ranged from “somewhat prepared” ($M = 3.38$) to “well prepared” ($M = 4.44$). Of the 13 survey items, assistant principals reported feeling well prepared to communicate to the staff that all children and their families are welcome in the school ($M = 4.44$). Assistant principals reported feeling less prepared to provide oversight in the least restrictive environment, including residential, hospital, and alternative settings ($M = 3.38$). Other organizational responsibilities that assistant principals feel somewhat prepared to perform were monitoring functional behavior assessments ($M = 3.40$) and

Table 11

Means and Standard Deviations for Perceived Preparation for Organizational Duties

Organizational duties	M	SD	N
Facilitate child study meetings	3.89	1.14	90
Facilitate IEP/504 meetings	3.89	1.12	90
Ensure that teachers conduct functional behavior assessments	3.40	1.15	88
Ensure that behavior intervention plans are being implemented	3.53	1.13	91
Ensure that effective, positive behavior supports are available to all students	3.91	0.95	91
Ensure that instructional assistants are fully informed about students with disabilities	3.69	1.11	89
Monitor inclusion classes to ensure adequate support for students with disabilities	4.14	0.94	91
Monitor extracurricular activities to ensure that students with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate	3.44	1.36	91
Communicate to the staff that all children and their families are welcome in the school	4.44	1.00	91
Establish a climate of respect for diverse populations	4.36	0.85	91
Provide a multi-disciplinary team, including the parent, when developing an IEP	4.33	0.89	90
Provide oversight of special education services in the least restrictive environment, including residential, hospital, and alternative settings	3.38	1.40	90
Encourage IEP team members to develop and implement the IEP according to IDEA	4.34	0.86	91

monitoring extracurricular activities to ensure that students with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate ($M = 3.44$).

When asked how prepared they were to establish a climate of respect for diverse populations, 41.5% ($n = 49$) of the participants indicated they were “very well prepared” to carry out this function. Over fifty percent (53.4%, $n = 69$) perceived that they were “very well prepared” to maintain a positive school climate. Approximately 31% ($n = 37$) reported that they were “somewhat prepared” to initiate behavior assessments for students exhibiting behavior problems, and 16.9% ($n = 20$) indicated they were “very well prepared” to perform this function. When asked about monitoring behavior intervention plans, 25% ($n = 29$) of the sample reported that they were “somewhat prepared” to monitor behavior intervention plans. Only 12% ($n = 14$) of the sample revealed they were “not prepared” to provide oversight in students’ least restrictive environment (LRE).

Collaboration

Assistant principals were asked how prepared they felt to perform collaboration duties. Table 12 illustrates the means and standard deviations for how prepared assistant principals felt to perform collaboration duties. For collaboration duties, mean scores ranged from 2.71 (“somewhat prepared”) to 4.02 (“well prepared”). Of the six survey items for collaboration, assistant principals reported feeling well prepared to collaborate with the following stakeholders: parents to provide meaningful information regarding special education ($M = 4.02$), and current and past teachers about learning challenges and what has worked with a particular

Table 12

Means and Standard Deviations for Perceived Preparation for Collaboration Duties

Collaboration duties	M	SD	N
Collaborate with current and past teachers about learning challenges and what has worked with a particular student	3.97	1.10	91
Collaborate with parents to provide meaningful information about special education and related services	4.02	1.00	90
Work closely with the district's special education director to make maximum use of all learning resources	3.37	1.31	90
Provide pertinent information regarding students when participating in due process hearings	2.76	1.48	89
Keep records of home visits made to parents	2.71	1.57	91
Collaborate with community-based service providers	3.19	1.30	88

student ($M = 3.97$). They reported feeling “somewhat prepared” to work closely with special education administrators ($M = 3.37$). Their perceived preparation mean scores were the lowest for keeping records of home visits made to parents ($M = 2.71$) and participating in due process hearings ($M = 2.76$).

One survey item asked how prepared they felt to collaborate with special education administrators. Of the sample, 9.3% ($n = 11$) indicated they were “not prepared” to collaborate with special education administrators, and 10.2% ($n = 12$) reported feeling “a little prepared” to collaborate with special education administrators. Assistant principals reported being more prepared to collaborate with teachers (18.6 %, $n = 22$) and parents (14.4%, $n = 17$).

Instruction

There were ten survey items that measured instructional duties. Table 13 illustrates the means and standard deviations for the preparation reported by assistant principals to provide professional development for their staff. Out of ten survey items measuring preparation for instructional duties, eight duties had means close to 4.00, indicating that assistant principals felt “well prepared” to perform them. Two duties received lower mean scores: Ensure that teachers understand the use of alternate assessments ($M = 1.15$), and review present levels of performance for assistive technology ($M = 3.07$).

Participants were asked how prepared they felt to ensure that teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and approaches. Assistant principals’ responses to this item were mixed. Approximately 25% ($n = 30$) of the participants reported that they were “well prepared” to ensure teaching methods are research-based and are proven effective for educating students with disabilities, while 25% ($n = 30$) indicated they were “very well prepared” to perform this task. When asked how prepared assistant principals felt to promote intervention strategies for students experiencing learning difficulties, 25.4% ($n = 30$) indicated they were “well prepared” to perform this duty, and 15.3% ($n = 18$) reported they were “somewhat prepared.”

Responses to how prepared assistant principals felt to ensure that students with disabilities are included in state and local assessments indicated that 37.3% ($n = 44$) of the sample felt “very well prepared.” Less than one percent ($n = 1$) of the sample indicated that they were “not prepared” to make sure students with disabilities

Table 13

Means and Standard Deviations for Perceived Preparation for Instructional Duties

Instructional duties	M	SD	N
Ensure that all teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and approaches that have been proven effective in educating students with disabilities	3.90	1.05	91
Implement intervention strategies for students experiencing learning difficulties prior to submitting a referral for special education	4.00	1.04	90
Ensure that teachers understand the purpose and use alternate assessments (VGLA, VSEP, VAAP, etc.) when appropriate for students with disabilities	1.15	3.50	88
Review present levels of performance to determine if assistive technology is needed to meet the educational needs of the student	3.07	1.25	91
Observe and evaluate co-teaching strategies	3.65	1.14	91
Ensure that general and special education teachers have common planning time	3.93	1.23	90
Make certain that students with disabilities are being included in state and local assessments	4.28	0.86	90
Provide information to staff pertaining to the instruction of children with disabilities	4.01	0.92	89
Make sure that general and special education teachers be given the opportunity to attend together workshops, conferences, and seminars on collaborative teaching	3.88	1.21	91
Ensure that related services are provided to support students' educational goals	3.85	1.03	91

participate in state and local assessments. Another item asked participants how prepared they felt to ensure that teachers understand the purpose for alternate assessments. Approximately 13% ($n = 15$) reported that they were “a little prepared” and nearly 18% ($n = 21$) “somewhat prepared” for this task.

Program Evaluation

The survey instrument measured assistant principals' perceptions of their preparation to evaluate academic programs for students with special needs. Table 14 provides means and standard deviations for how assistant principals perceived their preparation to perform nine duties for Program Evaluation. The mean scores for the nine duties are approximately 4.00, illustrating that assistant principals were “well prepared” to fulfill their responsibilities in Program Evaluation. The duty that received the highest mean score was making sure that parents are given prior notice of evaluation, assessment, placement, or program modifications regarding their child's education ($M = 4.25$). Similarly, participants felt well prepared to monitor IEPs to ensure that annual reviews are conducted and to ensure that parents are given notice, at least once every grading period, of progress on IEP goals ($M = 4.20$). Results indicated that assistant principals, on average, felt slightly less prepared to ensure appropriate placement by reviewing IEPs ($M = 3.56$), to ensure that assessments measure all relevant aspects of children's performance ($M = 3.57$), and to provide opportunities for observations for students experiencing difficulties in the general curriculum ($M = 3.58$).

Table 14

*Means and Standard Deviations for Perceived Preparation for Program Evaluation**Duties*

Program Evaluation duties	M	SD	N
Ensure that assessments measure all relevant aspects of children's performance	3.57	1.11	87
Provide opportunities for observations for students experiencing difficulties in the general curriculum	3.58	1.20	91
Communicate with all sources at least once every nine weeks and determine if students with IEPs are making progress towards their IEP goals	3.77	1.17	91
Review IEPs to ensure appropriate placement	3.56	1.22	91
Ensure that all appropriate assessments are being utilized for the purposes of screening and evaluating students suspected of having a disability	3.84	1.15	89
Ensure that parents are given prior notice of evaluation, assessment, placement, or program modifications regarding their child's education	4.25	0.98	91
Ensure that teachers understand and use assessment information to improve instruction	4.00	0.99	91
Monitor IEPs to ensure that annual reviews are conducted	4.20	1.09	91
Ensure that parents are given notice, at least once every grading period, of progress on IEP goals	4.20	1.00	90

One survey item asked how prepared assistant principals felt to ensure that appropriate assessments are being utilized for the purposes of screening and evaluating students suspected of having a disability. Twenty-three percent ($n = 27$) of the participants indicated that they were "somewhat prepared", while 29% ($n = 34$) perceived themselves as "very well prepared." When asked how assistant principals

perceived their preparation to conduct annual IEP reviews, 39% ($n = 46$) of the sample reported that they were “very well prepared” to fulfill this duty. Almost 41% ($n = 48$) of the participants indicated that they were “very well prepared” to ensure that parents receive notification prior to any assessment or placement decisions made regarding their child’s education.

Professional Development for Staff

Participants reported being delegated two duties regarding professional development. Table 15 illustrates assistant principals, on average, felt “well prepared” to perform these two functions: ensure that staff members have access to information on special education ($M = 3.82$), and encourage staff members to take part in professional development that will expand their knowledge of working with students with disabilities ($M = 3.83$).

Table 15

Means and Standard Deviations for Perceived Preparation for Professional Development Duties

Professional Development duties	M	SD	N
Ensure that staff members have access to information on special education and encourage them to take advantage of available resources	3.82	.995	89
Encourage staff members to take part in professional development that will expand their knowledge of working with students with disabilities	3.83	1.00	89

Assistant principals reported mixed preparation levels for fulfilling their delegated duties for special education. In organization, assistant principals reported feeling less prepared to provide oversight in the least restrictive environment,

including residential, hospital, and alternative settings. In collaboration, they reported being more prepared to collaborate with teachers ($M = 3.97$) and parents ($M = 4.02$), rather than with special education administrators ($M = 3.37$). In instruction, assistant principals' perceptions of their preparation to ensure that teachers understand the use of alternate assessments received the lowest mean score ($M = 1.15$). Assistant principals felt that they were well prepared to evaluate programs for students with disabilities and provide professional development on their behalf.

Research Question Three: How do assistant principals obtain the necessary knowledge and skills to assist them in fulfilling their delegated responsibilities of supervising the special education process?

Responses to the third research question were found by analyzing data from items 1-10 located in Part C of the survey. There were 12 items measuring how assistant principals obtained the knowledge and skills needed to accomplish their delegated special education duties. One question asked participants whether or not they had coursework, teaching experience or endorsement in special education. Table 16 displays the frequencies and percentages for these formal experiences. Over half (54.2%, $n = 48$) of the respondents indicated that they had special education coursework. Nearly 31% ($n = 36$) reported having teaching experience in special education. Only 13.6% ($n = 16$) of the sample reported having special education endorsement.

Table 16

Frequencies and Percentages of Assistant Principals' Formal Experiences in Special Education

Special education background variables	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Coursework	64	54.24	17	14.41
Teaching experience	36	30.51	45	38.14
Endorsement	16	13.56	65	56.78

Independent t tests

Independent-samples *t* tests were conducted in order to determine whether there were significant differences between perceived levels of preparedness of those who had endorsement and those who did not; of those who had coursework and those who did not; and of those who had teaching experience and those who did not. Some significant differences ($p < .05$) were found in leadership domains between those who had teaching experience and those without experience as well as between those who had special education endorsement and those who did not (see Tables 17, 18, and 19).

Independent-samples *t* tests were also conducted to reveal whether the means for assistant principals with teaching experience in special education were higher than the means for those who without such experience. The results, listed in Table 18, indicate that assistant principals with teaching experience felt more prepared to fulfill collaboration duties, $t(79) = -2.08$, $p < .05$, than those without teaching experience.

Table 17

Special Education Coursework: Means, Standard Deviations, t tests

	Had Coursework		Did not have coursework			
	M	SD	M	SD	N	t
Leadership domains						
Organization	3.95	0.72	3.79	0.99	64	-.761
Collaboration	3.45	1.03	3.04	0.90	64	-1.49
Instruction	3.84	0.85	3.63	0.95	64	-.910
Program Evaluation	3.93	0.81	3.86	1.05	64	-.287
Professional Development	3.93	0.90	3.50	1.08	64	-1.67

Table 18

Special Education Teaching Experience: Means, Standard Deviations, and t tests

	With teaching experience		Without teaching experience		
	(n = 36)		(n = 45)		
	M	SD	M	SD	t
Leadership domains					
Organization	3.95	0.83	3.89	0.75	-.337
Collaboration	3.62	1.01	3.15	0.96	-2.08*
Instruction	3.93	0.87	3.70	0.86	-1.23
Program Evaluation	4.00	0.89	3.85	0.84	-.748
Professional Development	3.96	0.96	3.74	0.95	-1.01

* $p < .05$

Table 19

Special Education Endorsement: Means, Standard Deviations, and t tests

	Endorsed		Not endorsed		<i>t</i>
	<i>(n = 16)</i>		<i>(n = 65)</i>		
Leadership domains	M	SD	M	SD	
Organization	4.24	0.52	3.83	0.81	-1.89
Collaboration	3.86	0.96	3.24	0.99	-2.25*
Instruction	4.20	0.65	3.70	0.89	-2.15*
Program Evaluation	4.30	0.66	3.82	0.88	-2.04*
Professional Development	4.31	0.65	3.72	0.98	-2.89*

* $p < .05$

The mean differences for the other leadership domains were not significant.

The results showed that assistant principals who were endorsed in special education felt more prepared than those without endorsement to fulfill their delegated duties in four of the five leadership domains: Collaboration, $t(79) = -2.25, p < .05$; Instruction, $t(79) = -2.15, p < .05$; Program Evaluation, $t(79) = -2.04, p < .05$; and Professional Development, $t(79) = -2.89, p < .05$ (see Table 19).

Professional Development Practices

This study addressed professional development practices by assistant principals in preparation for their delegated responsibilities in special education. Participants ranked sources of assistance to meet their professional needs in special education. Twenty-two percent of the sample ($n = 27$), indicated that they get most of their assistance from special education teachers, whereas 14% ($n = 16$) indicated that

they get most of their assistance from principals. When asked how often they attend special education conferences and workshops, 29% ($n = 34$) of the sample reported that they attend conferences and workshops quarterly.

Tables 20 and 21 show frequencies and percentages for how often assistant principals engage in special education activities to cultivate their own professional growth. Results from this study indicate that 25.4% ($n = 30$) of the participants read special education journals yearly. Although participants indicate they do read special education journals yearly, the majority (59.3%, $n = 70$) reported that they do not subscribe to special education journals.

Table 20

Assistant Principals' Reading Relating to Special Education

Read special education topics	F	%
Weekly	6	5.1
Monthly	11	9.3
Quarterly	26	22.0
Yearly	30	25.4
Missing	37	31.4
Total	118	100.0

Professional Development Needs

Participants were asked to rank their professional development needs in special education on a Likert scale where 1 was "most important" and 6 was least

Table 21

Assistant Principals' Attendance at Special Education Conferences

Attend conferences	F	%
Never	6	5.1
Monthly	13	11.0
Quarterly	34	28.8
Yearly	28	23.7
Missing	37	31.4
Total	118	100.0

Important.” Two of the survey items which specifically addressed leadership roles and responsibilities for initiating professional development activities for staff were previously analyzed. Table 22 illustrates the mean rankings for six areas of professional development as reported by assistant principals. On average,

Table 22

Mean Rankings and Standard Deviations for Areas of Professional Development

Professional Development areas	M	SD	N
Instruction/Assessment	3.49	1.48	81
Inclusive practices	4.27	1.23	74
Discipline	3.44	1.97	80
Legal aspects	3.18	1.78	78
Intervention strategies	3.71	1.72	80
IEP development	2.70	1.44	79

participants ranked inclusive practices as their most needed area for professional development ($M = 4.27$). Intervention strategies followed closely, with a mean of 3.71. Assistant principals ranked their professional development needs for instruction/assessment ($M = 3.49$) and discipline ($M = 3.44$) at about the same level. Surprisingly, legal aspects ($M = 3.18$) and IEP development ($M = 2.70$) were given lower priority among the six areas.

Internal Consistency Reliability

A reliability analysis on the Likert-scale items in the survey was performed. This analysis was used to determine its internal consistency. The reliability of the measure was determined through the calculation of Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Generally, scales that obtain alpha levels of 0.70 or greater are considered to be reliable. All but two of the 80 items (40 items for how often and 40 items for how prepared) were found to be reliable. Table 23 provides alpha scores and descriptive

Table 23

Reliability Analysis for each Leadership Domain: "How Often"

Leadership Domain	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	N	%
Organization	13	.859	66	55.9
Collaboration	6	.714	84	71.2
Instruction	10	.853	80	67.8
Program Evaluation	8	.894	84	71.2
Professional Development	2	.767	90	76.3

statistics for “how often” assistant principals performed duties within the five leadership domains—Organization, Collaboration, Instruction, Program Evaluation, and Professional Development. All items were reliable for three of the domains: Collaboration, Instruction, and Program Evaluation. Reliability for each item in the domain of Professional Development could not be measured because there were only two items. In the leadership domain for Organization, one item was found to be not reliable. If the following item was deleted, the alpha for Organization would have increased to .863: Communicate with the staff that all children are welcome.

Table 24 displays the alpha scores and descriptive statistics for the “how prepared” items in each leadership domain. In Organization, 13 items for “how prepared” yielded an alpha score of .904, exhibiting strong internal reliability. Of the 13 items, one item was found not reliable. If the item asking assistant principals how prepared they felt to provide oversight for special education services in the least restrictive environment was deleted, the alpha score would increase to .909. The

Table 24

Reliability Analysis for each Leadership Domain: “How Prepared”

Leadership domain	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	N	%
Organization	13	.909	82	69.5
Collaboration	6	.862	83	70.3
Instruction	10	.923	83	70.3
Program Evaluation	8	.895	83	70.3
Professional Development	2	.838	89	75.4

survey instrument performed well in the other three leadership domains for items assessing how prepared the sample felt to carry out special education duties. Testing the reliability of the items within the domain of Professional Development was not conducted because there were only two items.

Summary

The underlying purpose of this study was to examine the practices and perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of elementary assistant principals in special education. Given that the literature surrounding this topic is limited, data gathered from this survey could assist in gaining insight into the supervision of special education at the building level. After investigating the activities of assistant principals in five leadership domains—Organization, Collaboration, Instruction, Program Evaluation, and Professional Development, it was found that participants of this study spend the most time creating school environments where all students, including students with disabilities, and their families feel accepted in their schools. The demographic data analysis revealed that the majority of participants were female. Approximately 67% of participants reported having over 10 years of experience as educators. All of the participants reported that they have been delegated supervisory duties in special education in their schools.

Analysis of the data with regard to organizational duties revealed that assistant principals, on average, spend the most time establishing a climate of respect for diverse populations ($M = 3.93$) and communicating to staff that all students and their families are welcome in their schools ($M = 3.91$). These findings were further supported by participants as results revealed that they often ensure that parents of

students with disabilities are included in developing their children's educational programs ($M = 3.66$). On the other hand, they reported spending less time monitoring extracurricular activities to ensure that students with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate ($M = 2.42$). Assistant principals (100%) reported that they are delegated discipline for students with disabilities. Surprisingly, results indicated that they rarely ensure that teachers conduct functional behavior assessments ($M = 2.35$) and that behavior plans are implemented ($M = 2.62$). Similar findings showed that assistant principals rarely provide oversight of special education services for students in more restrictive settings such as hospitals and residential settings ($M = 2.57$).

Findings from this study indicate that, generally, assistant principals carry out collaboration duties less often than organizational duties. Of the six collaborative duties, assistant principals reported spending more time collaborating with teachers regarding student performance ($M = 3.35$) and with parents to provide information regarding special education ($M = 3.31$). Results indicated that they rarely collaborate with special education administrators ($M = 2.37$). Similar findings indicated that they rarely provide pertinent information for due process hearings, keep records of home visits, or collaborate with community-based service providers ($M = 1.52, 1.56,$ and 2.24 respectively).

Assistant principals reported being delegated instructional duties as they often ensure that teachers use instructional strategies that have been proven effective for all learners ($M = 3.81$). On average, they often ensure that students with disabilities are included in state and local assessments ($M = 3.73$). On the other hand, they ensure

that teachers understand the use of alternate assessments less often ($M = 2.75$). Findings from this study indicate that assistant principals are delegated duties in instruction, nevertheless, they rarely perform two instructional duties: they rarely review students' academic performances to determine if assistive technology is needed to meet the educational needs of students ($M = 2.35$) or ensure that general and special education teachers be given the opportunity to jointly attend collaborative workshops ($M = 2.58$).

Analysis of the data with regard to program evaluation duties revealed that assistant principals perform several duties at same rate. On average, assistant principals often ensure that students' individualized programs are reviewed annually and that parents are notified of any assessments or changes in their child's placements ($M = 3.44$ and 3.60 , respectively). Results indicated that participants, on average, ensure that teachers use assessment data to improve instruction ($M = 3.43$). However, assistant principals initiate student observations for students experiencing difficulties in the general curriculum less often ($M = 2.67$).

Overall, participants of this study perceived their preparation levels for creating positive school environments higher than for any other duty. Assistant principals felt well prepared to communicate to staff that all students and their families are welcome in their schools ($M = 4.44$), establish a climate of respect for diverse populations ($M = 4.36$), provide multi-disciplinary teams when developing IEPs ($M = 4.36$), and monitor inclusion classes to ensure adequate support to students ($M = 4.14$). Results revealed that assistant principals felt well prepared to collaborate with parents regarding special education matters ($M = 4.02$), whereas they felt only a

little prepared to keep records of home visits made to parents ($M = 2.71$). Similarly, they perceived themselves less prepared to provide pertinent information regarding students for due process hearings ($M = 2.76$).

In instruction, assistant principals rated themselves well prepared to ensure that students with disabilities take part in state and local assessments ($M = 4.28$). Alarming, they perceived themselves not prepared to ensure that teachers understand the purpose and use of alternate assessments ($M = 1.15$). Assistant principals, on average, perceived their preparation for other instructional duties somewhat to well prepared. For program evaluation, assistant principals, on average, felt well prepared to carry out most duties. However, they felt that they were better prepared for compliance-related duties such as providing parents with notification of changes in assessments or placements ($M = 4.25$), notification of their child's academic progress ($M = 4.20$), and monitoring IEPs for annual reviews ($M = 4.20$). Findings suggest that assistant principals obtain their knowledge and skills to supervise special education by attending conferences and reading special education journals. However, they rely even more on special education teachers for information regarding special education.

This study inquired about assistant principals' perceived preparation to fulfill their special education duties with regards to their formal experiences in special education. Results indicated that assistant principals who reported having coursework in special education did not significantly differ in their perceived preparation levels from those without special education coursework. Mean differences were significant only in the area of collaboration when comparing those who reported having teaching

experience in special education to those without this teaching experience. However, there were significant mean differences related to their perceived preparation between participants who reported having special education endorsements versus those who did not in all leadership domains except for Organization.

This chapter has presented an analysis of quantitative data which provided insight into the current leadership practices and perceived preparation of elementary assistant principals for their delegated duties in special education. The findings are discussed in Chapter 5 along with recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

Currently the supervision of special education is a topic of concern, with increasing significance at the building level. Issues regarding the referral process, general curriculum access, assessments, and accountability all have stimulated research inquiries. Despite research studies in school administration and supervision, the literature provides little information about what elementary assistant principals are doing to supervise special education programs. This study endeavored to provide insight into the current roles and responsibilities delegated to assistant principals. Survey responses of elementary assistant principals indicated a range of experiences in supervising special education. A total of 118 surveys were analyzed and 90 participants responded to all of the study's research questions:

1. What are the roles and responsibilities in special education delegated to elementary school assistant principals?
2. How do elementary school assistant principals perceive their preparation to fulfill their roles and responsibilities in special education?
3. How do assistant principals obtain the necessary knowledge and skills to assist them in fulfilling their delegated roles and responsibilities in special education?

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study and provides implications based on its findings. Suggestions for further study also are made.

Discussion of Findings

Based on analyses of data collected from this study, several conclusions can be drawn. Findings related to delegated roles and responsibilities in special education, perceived preparation, and professional development for special education are discussed in this section.

Roles and Responsibilities in Special Education

All participants (118) in this study reported that they were delegated duties in special education. Nearly all (90.7%) reported facilitating special education meetings, and indicated handling referrals for special education. Bateman and Bateman (2001) stated that newly appointed administrators are often delegated duties in special education. This study supports their assertion as participants who had 1-5 years of experience as educators reported carrying out special education duties more often than those with over ten years experience. For example, the average for participants with one to five years of experience carrying out organizational duties was 3.65, or “very often,” compared to participants’ with over ten years average of 3.05, or “often.” In the area of instruction, participants with one to five years of experience averaged performing these duties between six and ten times a month ($M = 3.57$), while those with over ten years of experience fulfilled instructional duties three to five times per month ($M = 2.99$).

Findings for how often assistant principals discipline students with disabilities were critical in this study. Overwhelmingly, 100% ($n = 118$) of the sample reported that they are responsible for the discipline of students with disabilities. Interestingly, only 3.4% revealed they ensure that behavior assessments and behavior plans are

being implemented for students with chronic behavior problems. These findings were significant in that IDEA includes in its provisions that students with behavior disabilities must be given due process prior to removing them from their educational environment (IDEA, 2004). According to NCLB attendance is a criterion for schools to make annual yearly progress (AYP). In order to fulfill this obligation, school leaders must ensure that students who exhibit behavior problems have their needs met in schools to the greatest extent possible, making sure that behavior intervention plans be kept current and that they address students' behavior needs. This study shows a lack in monitoring behavior plans, which could be problematic for schools trying to meet AYP.

It appears that newly appointed school leaders are entering the field with greater responsibilities for supervising all students, including students with disabilities. These findings could be the result of changes in policy and legislation, such as NCLB and IDEA, which may have influenced school leadership preparation programs. Principal preparation programs may be including in their curriculum issues and current topics that relate to access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities. This notion concurs with DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran and Walther-Thomas' (2004) explanation of novice administrators being well prepared for special education leadership as a result of their previous teaching experience and advanced preparation.

Organization

According to the findings of this study, elementary assistant principals have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in carrying out policy-related

duties. The majority (90%) of the sample indicated they make certain that a multi-disciplinary team is in place when developing an IEP. Their preparation to perform this function substantiates their knowledge of their delegated responsibility for facilitating IEP meetings. As indicated by the responses, assistant principals reported that they feel well prepared ($M = 4.33$) to ensure that all members of IEP teams are represented during IEP meetings. The results also revealed that assistant principals feel well prepared to ensure that IEPs are implemented according to IDEA's provisions ($M = 4.34$).

The study, however, did not investigate whether or not elementary assistant principals ensure that all members equally contribute to the development of an IEP. The premise of IDEA's provision of multi-disciplinary teams developing a child's individualized education program is to create a holistic program for the child. If all members of an IEP team, including parents contribute meaningfully, then children with disabilities will have a better chance of having their academic and social needs met. While the results indicate that assistant principals understand their delegated roles and responsibilities in organization, findings reveal that their collaborative practices in special education are questionable.

Collaboration

Elementary assistant principals rated how often they fulfill collaboration tasks much lower than organizational tasks. Assistant principals indicated that they fulfill their responsibilities in organizing and facilitating IEP teams often. However, the study revealed that collaboration in special education was performed less often. One of the lowest averages reported was the average score for collaboration with special

education administrators ($M = 2.36$). The literature suggests that schools have become more inclusive and collaboration between school leaders and special education administrators has become imperative (Crockett, 2004; Dipaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2004). It should follow that assistant principals collaborate with special education administrators as often as they fulfill their roles with IEP development because such collaboration leads to sustaining support for students with disabilities.

School leaders must collaborate with district special education administrators to advocate for sufficient resources that support high-quality instruction of children with disabilities (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001). One reason why assistant principals rated tasks in collaboration lower than in other leadership duties may be that assistant principals work in school districts that employ a “top-down” leadership system (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). It is plausible that participants of this study believe they have little to no authority over decisions about special education programs. With the belief that all special education decisions are made at the central office level, assistant principals may feel they have little to no control over these matters. Witt and McLeod (2002) explained that this belief may serve as a systemic barrier to implementing special education programs at the building level. Hence, further research should investigate decision making for the special education process.

Instruction

Findings from this study revealed that elementary assistant principals' roles and responsibilities in instruction are increasing. Assistant principals indicated that they perform most of the instructional duties often (6-10 times per month) to very

often (more than 10 times per month). As for standardized assessments, assistant principals on average, make certain that students with disabilities are included in state and local assessments very often ($M = 3.73$). Conversely, they ensure that teachers understand the purpose of alternate assessments less often ($M = 2.76$). These findings may be linked to accountability requirements and numbers of students to which specific regulations apply. According to NCLB and IDEA, all students must participate in state assessments. On the other hand, in accordance with the national standards, several states including Virginia have suggested that no more than one percent of the student population be included in alternate assessments.

Given both national and state mandates, responses may indicate assistant principals' understanding of the mandates. Then again, the responses could have been the case of social desirability. Social desirability refers to individuals behaving or responding in ways they believe is acceptable to society (Changing Minds, 2007). Since accountability is a current issue in education, participants for this study may have responded in a manner associated with their administrative positions. If this is the case, then this finding in particular supports Gaston's (2005) study which explained the social status and issues associated with the assistant principalship.

Program Evaluation

Part of this study sought to measure how often elementary assistant principals evaluate individual programs for students with disabilities and how prepared they feel to conduct the evaluations. Evaluating special education programs involves reviewing individual education programs, making observations, and notifying parents of students' progress. According to the results of this study, participants revealed that

they do carry out these duties often. On the contrary, findings show that a portion of the sample never initiates observations by other professionals for struggling students. Crockett (2005) found that some schools in Virginia utilize instructional support teams. These teams are valuable resources as they offer information regarding student learning and implement intervention strategies for students who experience learning and behavior difficulties in the general curriculum.

Since instructional intervention methods are important in problem-solving for struggling students (Faust, 2005), it is interesting to note that 38% ($n = 45$) of the sample never or rarely initiate student observations for students experiencing difficulty in the general curriculum, nor do they communicate with all sources quarterly regarding students' academic progress (37 %, $n = 44$). These findings are alarming as current literature suggests that instructional intervention methods may reduce the number of special education referrals.

Assistant principals reported that they ensure parents receive notification of assessments prior to making placement decisions regarding their child's education, and they are very well prepared to conduct annual IEP reviews. As mentioned previously, both are procedural duties and it appears that elementary assistant principals of this study understand their roles and responsibilities in carrying out such duties. These findings agree somewhat with Doyle's (2001) study which indicated that understanding the legal aspects of special education is important to school leaders. As found in this study, school leaders may be focusing more on compliance-related duties in special education, rather than ensuring academic achievement for

students with disabilities. It is probable that school leaders are reacting to mandates rather than initiating school reform.

Preparation for Supervision of Special Education

Research studies (Praisner, 2003; Protz, 2005; Short, 2004; Witt & McLeod, 2002) suggest that few school leaders have had courses or endorsement in special education, but that school leaders need and want additional training in special education. This study supports earlier research in that few participants reported having had courses or endorsement in special education. Teaching experience in special education as reported by assistant principals was also considered in this study. Each of these forms of professional development could potentially increase preparation to fulfill delegated duties in special education, but were perceived differently by respondents in this study.

Participants felt that having endorsement in special education prepared them to supervise special education more than having just coursework or teaching experience. This study found that special education coursework alone did not increase perceived preparation for supervision in the five leadership domains—Organization, Collaboration, Instruction, Program Evaluation, and Professional Development. Assistant principals felt that an endorsement in special education led to a greater understanding of school leadership needed to ensure that students, including those with disabilities, experience academic success. Results also revealed that having teaching experience in special education helps to prepare assistant principals for collaboration, since those with special education teaching experience reported feeling more prepared to collaborate with other professionals than those without such

experience. This may be a result of special education teachers developing close working relationships with general education teachers, thus strengthening their skills in collaboration.

Participants of this study appeared to have a general idea of their professional development needs for special education. However, responses varied across six areas. Assistant principals indicated that they need and want training in instruction and assessment, inclusive practices, discipline, legal aspects, intervention strategies, and IEP development. A statistical analysis of these six areas revealed that participants preferred professional development for inclusive practices over any other area identified. This finding could be the result of administrative reactions to policy changes that suggest that students with disabilities be included in the general curriculum. As the result of NCLB's accountability measures and recent reauthorizations of IDEA, local education agencies must justify why students with disabilities will not participate in any area of the general curriculum. Therefore, strengthening inclusive practices may be a priority for professional development for these respondents.

Out of six identified areas for professional development assistant principals on average, ranked discipline fifth. This finding is striking as 100% ($n = 118$) of the sample reported that they are delegated this duty, a finding supported by current literature (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Gaston, 2005; Glanz, 2004; Marshall & Hooley, 2006; Matthews & Crow, 2003; Weller & Weller, 2002). Since discipline is a procedural function, carrying out discipline measures may have become routine for assistant principals. However, procedures for disciplining students with

disabilities differ from standard discipline measures, especially for school suspensions or expulsions.

School administrators must take additional measures prior to removing students with disabilities from their educational settings. These measures often involve initiating and facilitating manifestation determination hearings, supervising functional behavior assessments and ensuring that behavior intervention plans are being implemented. According to IDEA, if a child with a disability breaks a school rule that may result in a suspension or expulsion the school must conduct a manifestation determination. This extensive procedure involves reviewing evaluations and diagnostic results, relevant information provided by the parent, observations, and current IEP placements. It is the school's responsibility to determine whether the child's disability did or did not impair his or her ability to understand the impact and consequences of the behavior and his or her ability to control the behavior subject to the disciplinary action.

Furthermore, schools must determine whether special education services were provided and appropriate for the child's IEP placement. Often as a result of manifestation determinations additional measures are taken such as, conducting functional behavior assessments for the purpose of developing behavior intervention plans. Functional behavior assessments and behavior intervention plans serve as preventive measures to address specific behaviors that impede students' learning. Given the complexities of discipline related to special education, it seems as though this area of professional development would have been given higher priority by

respondents. Further study is needed to understand whether assistant principals fully understand the purposes and nuances of these procedures.

McEwan (1994) stressed the importance of reading professional literature in special education for professional growth and Walther-Thomas et al. (2000) supported this idea. They argued that school leaders increase their knowledge of special education issues by reading professional literature in the field as well as by attending special education conferences. Results from this study indicated that 25% of the sample read special education journals yearly; 36% more often. Although participants said they do read special education journals yearly, the majority (59%) reported that they are not subscribers.

In order to better prepare assistant principals for issues regarding access to the general curriculum, schools could create and maintain libraries of professional journals that provide research-based practices in school leadership. To provide more efficient, effective access to journal information, school districts could implement reading teams that allow school leaders time to debrief journal articles, research studies, and books that offer strategies for inclusive schools. In addition, assistant principals can increase their knowledge of special education by attending local, state, and national conferences that provide training for special education leadership.

To add, there are other forms of professional development that will assist school leaders in supervising special education such as newsletters distributed by professional organizations. The Council for Exceptional Children provides a wealth of online resources that provide school leaders with current research and best practices. In Virginia, school leaders have access to their superintendent's memos

which often include current information regarding special education. All mentioned will provide valuable information to assistant principals to help them better understand and fulfill their leadership roles and responsibilities in special education.

Implications

This research study involved creating and administering a self-reporting survey for elementary assistant principals and was designed specifically to evaluate their roles and responsibilities in special education. The findings of this study must be viewed as the beginning of research about assistant principals' roles in special education. The ability to generalize the results of this preliminary study is limited because the sample was self-selected from a professional organization in a small geographic region. However, the information gained from this study regarding the roles and responsibilities of elementary assistant principals in special education does provide a basis for implications for supervision at the building level. This study also offers implications for further research regarding the roles and responsibilities of secondary assistant principals.

Implications for Supervision at the Building Level

Assistant principals of this study perceived themselves prepared to supervise certain areas of special education. There were, however, areas in which assistant principals revealed that they were "not" or are only "somewhat prepared." In order to benefit school districts, school administrators, and students with disabilities, this study suggests several implications for current practice.

First, assistant principals are primarily responsible for carrying out discipline procedures in their buildings. However, results indicated that few of them ensure that

functional behavior assessments are being conducted and behavior intervention plans are monitored. Furthermore, they felt less prepared for this function than for most of their duties in organization. This should indicate that school leaders need to develop a greater understanding of their roles in supporting IDEA's provision of removing students from their educational settings. By understanding the purpose of functional behavior assessments and behavior intervention plans, school leaders are more likely to become proactive and to assist teachers in targeting specific behaviors and the conditions that impede students' learning.

Second, given that more students with disabilities are being educated in the general classroom and their accountability requirements, supervision of their educational programs should increase. Assistant principals revealed that they are delegated responsibilities in instruction and they often evaluate educational programs. However, results indicated that they provide less often, opportunities for professionals to observe students experiencing difficulties in the general curriculum. By initiating student observations for struggling students, school leaders could better promote intervention strategies that target specific learning challenges and increase learning. Another way that school leaders can enhance the success of students in the general classroom is to make sure general and special educators be given time to plan and attend collaborative workshops. According to the findings, assistant principals carry out both practices less often than other instructional duties.

In regards to accountability, most students are expected to participate in state and local assessments. It is imperative that school leaders understand that only a small percentage of students with disabilities should participate in alternate assessments.

This should indicate that school leaders make certain that teachers understand the purpose and criteria for these tests. Results showed that few assistant principals perform this duty “often.” As the administrators responsible for this task, assistant principals should increase their knowledge of the requirements for alternate assessments to ensure compliance with this regulation.

As academic expectations increase for all students, including students with disabilities, it is vital that school leaders ensure that students with disabilities be given the supports that will assist them in the general curriculum. Leaders should understand the purpose of providing accommodations to support the educational needs of students. Such supports may include assistive technology. As the results show, assistant principals rarely review students’ present levels of performance to determine if assistive technology is needed. Since assistant principals are typically the administrators who facilitate IEP meetings, they must ensure that those accommodations that provide academic support to the student are carefully considered.

Third, school districts should have in place staffing methods to ensure that school leaders who have endorsement in special education be placed in schools that have greater needs for inclusive education. For example, schools where the special education population is above 20% of the total student population should have on staff school leaders who are endorsed in special education. Results from this study indicate that assistant principals who have special education endorsement feel better prepared to supervise special education in most areas. These findings point out those

assistant principals who have received formal training in special education may perceive themselves more prepared to promote and sustain inclusive environments.

Assistant principals indicated that they are primarily obtaining the information that they need to do their jobs from special education teachers in their schools. This finding supports the findings of Protz (2005) and Moorehead (2002). Both researchers agree that reliance on special education teachers to provide answers concerning the law could be reasonably viewed as exercising poor management skills. Special education teachers may serve as resources for information regarding procedures in special education. However, assistant principals should seek other sources that will provide them with leadership knowledge and skills to better supervise special education.

Many assistant principals may enter their positions with no formal training in special education, however, there are other ways for them to acquire the expertise they need to supervise special education. This study suggests that assistant principals rely on special education teachers, attend conferences and workshops, and read journals to gain knowledge of special education. In addition to these methods, school leaders may access web-based programs to gain knowledge of current issues in special education. Some professional organizations often host audio conferences on the legal aspects of special education. With an expanding wealth of resources on the internet, many publications regarding special education can be “googled” for immediate access. Given these alternate methods for gaining knowledge of special education, school leaders are better able to keep abreast of current practices in supervision. Nevertheless, further study is needed to understand the most effective

method of preparing assistant principals for their delegated responsibilities in special education.

Implications for Further Research

While the study focused on specific responsibilities within five leadership domains, it would have been beneficial to the study to have made a distinction as to the types of special education duties and the amount of supervision needed for each function. A limitation of the study was having a sample of only elementary assistant principals. Since assistant principals' roles vary among elementary, middle and high school settings (Walton, 2005), it would be beneficial to investigate the delegated roles and responsibilities for assistant principals in secondary schools. For example in the elementary setting, scheduling is not as departmentalized as in middle and high school; therefore, students in elementary special education programs may be pulled out of the general class to work on specific skill areas. This practice, however, may not be appropriate for students in the middle or high school. A clear illustration of how roles and responsibilities delegated to assistant principals in special education vary among primary and secondary grade levels would add to the research in this field.

Conclusions

A review of current literature indicates that there is a gap regarding the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals in special education. Schools are expanding and the requirements to educate all learners are mounting. As a result, national attention has been directed towards best practices in school leadership. Key leadership factors were identified throughout the literature. This study explored five

domains; Organization, Collaboration, Instruction, Program Evaluation and Professional Development. These identified domains were found to be associated with effective leadership to support schools in raising the achievement for all students, including those with disabilities.

Ensuring appropriate educational opportunities for students with disabilities while increasing their academic achievement is one of the greatest challenges that public schools face. This task has caused changes in the roles and responsibilities for assistant principals. A close look at the actual duties performed by assistant principals revealed that they are delegated many duties in special education. These duties involve supervising special education programs. According to this study, assistant principals are responsible for initiating, facilitating, implementing, and evaluating specialized programs for students with disabilities. Explored further were the perceptions of assistant principals' preparation to fulfill their delegated duties.

School leaders, including assistant principals must rely on their own knowledge and expertise. They must use their professional skills to collaborate with a variety of others to get answers and guidance. The results from this study indicate that assistant principals who have endorsement in special education perceive themselves well prepared to fulfill their roles and responsibilities in most of the leadership domains. Also revealed in this study, assistant principals obtain the knowledge and skills they need by attending special education conferences and workshops at least quarterly. This finding suggests that the school leaders are beginning to reach out to professional organizations to assist them in increasing their understanding of special education. It is assumed from this finding that assistant principals need and want

additional training in this area to better serve students with disabilities. Further study is needed to explain the relationship between the performance of assistant principals and their participation in various forms of professional development such as special education seminars, workshops and conferences.

This study is significant in that it adds to the body of literature sharing that elementary assistant principals are assuming leadership roles in special education. As explained, assistant principals can increase their professional knowledge by reading professional literature, attending workshops and conferences, participating in web-seminars, or simply talking about special education issues with colleagues. Findings suggest that assistant principals need additional training in the legal aspects of special education, it must be understood by assistant principals that special education leadership involves more than responding to compliance-related duties. Assistant principals should understand that their delegated roles and responsibilities in special education require them to become proactive. Proactive measures involve monitoring closely the educational programs for students with disabilities to ensure that they are meeting their educational goals.

Frequent decisions are made concerning special education students—placement, services, and often the most problematic, discipline (Protz, 2005). As a result, school leaders are often faced with decisions that could compromise student learning and delivery of free appropriate public education (FAPE). Therefore, assistant principals who are delegated supervisory duties in special education must seek opportunities that will allow them to grow professionally. In doing so, they will increase learning opportunities in the general curriculum for students with disabilities.

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Appendix A
*Assistant Principals and Special Education
Informed Consent Letter*

Date: June 11, 2007

Dear Colleague:

As a former special education teacher, assistant principal, and current doctoral student I understand both the rewards and challenges associated with assisting in the supervision of school programs, including special education. I am conducting dissertation research and am very interested in your perceptions regarding the supervision of special education at the building level and I am enlisting your support.

This dissertation study serves a two-fold purpose. The primary focus of the study is to examine the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals in the special education. The second purpose of the study is to contribute information relevant to the preparation of assistant principals and the planning of future professional development activities in special education. The questions are mostly close-format to assist in ease of response. It is estimated that it will take each respondent approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey. Please complete the questions on the survey as honestly and truthfully as possible. If you prefer to take the survey using a paper copy, please email me at vswalt@wm.edu with your mailing address. I will send a copy of the survey with a self-addressed envelope.

All information gathered from the results of your survey will be kept strictly confidential. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may choose not to participate and without penalty. Should you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time. You also have the opportunity to enter a drawing for a FREE \$10 gift certificate to *Starbucks*. To enter the drawing you must complete the survey, and provide your email address at the end of the survey. The drawing will be held on July 15, 2007. Ten participants will be randomly chosen to receive gift certificates by mail, no later than August 15, 2007.

If you have any questions regarding this study you may contact me at (757) 241-0365. A copy of survey results will be available upon request. Please contact me via email if you wish to have a summarized copy of the results. I greatly appreciate your time and effort, and am committed to use the information you provide to enhance the field of education.

Thank you for your participation,

Valerie A. Walton
Doctoral Candidate
The College of William & Mary
vswalt@wm.edu or valerie.walton@att.net

Appendix B
Assistant Principals and Special Education
Survey

PART A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Please check the box to indicate your response to each item.

1. YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AS AN ADMINISTRATOR

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- Over 10 years

2. GENDER

- Male
- Female

3. PLEASE INDICATE THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN YOUR SCHOOL

4. Do 50% or more students in your school receive free or reduced lunch?

- Yes
- No

5. APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF STUDENTS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES IN YOUR SCHOOL

6. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN OR ARE YOU CURRENTLY DESIGNATED TO PERFORM ANY OF THE FOLLOWING DUTIES?

If yes, which aspects? (Check all that apply.)

- Facilitate Special Education Meetings
 - Discipline Students with Disabilities
 - Supervise Curriculum and Instruction
 - Forward Referrals for Special Education Services
 - Initiate Placement for Students with Disabilities
 - Provide Professional Development related to Special Education
 - Conduct Special Education Teacher Evaluations
 - Other (describe)
-
-
-

**Assistant Principals and Special Education
Survey**

<p>PART B: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION</p> <p>As school leaders, assistant principals are often delegated the responsibility of supervising the special education process. This section describes the activities involved. In column A, please indicate how often you perform each function. In column B, please indicate how prepared you feel you are with the necessary knowledge and skills for the functions you perform. Indicate your response for each task by circling a number in both columns A and B.</p> <p>As the Assistant Principal I...</p>	<p>A</p> <p>As the assistant principal, <u>how often</u> do you perform this function?</p> <p>1 = Never (N) (0 times per month)</p> <p>2 = Rarely (R) (1-2 times per month)</p> <p>3 = Occasionally (O) (3-5 times per month)</p> <p>4 = Often (OF) (6-10 times per month)</p> <p>5 = Very Often (VO) (11 or more times per month)</p> <p>Never Often R O OF Very</p>	<p>B</p> <p>How <u>prepared</u> do you feel you are with the necessary knowledge and skills to facilitate this function?</p> <p>1= Not prepared</p> <p>2= A little prepared</p> <p>3= Somewhat prepared</p> <p>4= Well prepared</p> <p>5= Very well prepared</p> <p>Not Prepared Very well Prepared</p>
1. facilitate child study meetings	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2. facilitate IEP / 504 meetings	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3. ensure that all teachers use a variety of teaching strategies and approaches that have been proven effective in educating students with disabilities	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4. collaborate with current and past teachers about the learning challenges and what has worked with a particular student	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5. review students' records and other pertinent information prior to IEP meetings	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
6. provide opportunities for observations by an individual who is knowledgeable about disabilities for students experiencing difficulties in the general curriculum	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7. implement intervention strategies for students experiencing learning difficulties prior to submitting a referral for special education	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8. collaborate with parents to provide meaningful information about special education and related services	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

***Assistant Principals and Special Education
Survey***

In column A, please indicate how often you are delegated to carry out each activity. In column B, please indicate how prepared you feel you are with the necessary knowledge and skills for the tasks to which you are delegated. Indicate your response for each task by circling a number in both columns A and B.

As the Assistant Principal I...	A As the assistant principal, <u>how often</u> do you perform this function?					B How <u>prepared</u> do you feel you are with the necessary knowledge and skills to facilitate this function?				
	Never Often	R	O	OF	Very	Not Prepared				Very well Prepared
9. communicate with all personnell at least once every nine weeks and determine if students with IEPs are making progress towards their IEP goals	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
10. review IEPs to ensure appropriate placement	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
11. work closely with the district's special education director to make maximum use of all learning resources	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
12. ensure that teachers understand the purpose and use alternate assessments (VGLA, VSEP, VAAP) when appropriate for students with disabilities	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
13. ensure that teachers conduct functional behavior assessments for students exhibiting behavior problems	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
14. ensure that behavior intervention plans are current and being implemented appropriately	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
15. review present levels of performance to determine if assistive technology is needed to meet the educational needs of the student	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Assistant Principals and Special Education Survey

In column A, please indicate how often you are delegated to carry out each activity. In column B, please indicate how prepared you feel you are with the necessary knowledge and skills for the tasks to which you are delegated. Indicate your response for each task by circling a number in both columns A and B.

As the Assistant Principal I...	A					B				
	As the assistant principal, <u>how often</u> do you perform this function?					How <u>prepared</u> do you feel you are with the necessary knowledge and skills to facilitate this function?				
	1 = Never (N) (0 times per month) 2 = Rarely (R) (1-2 times per month) 3 = Occasionally (O) (3-5 times per month) 4 = Often (OF) (6-10 times per month) 5 = Very Often (VO) (11 or more times per month)					1= Not prepared 2= A little prepared 3= Somewhat prepared 4= Well prepared 5= Very well prepared				
	<i>Never Often</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>OF</i>	<i>Very</i>	<i>Not Prepared</i>				<i>Very well Prepared</i>
16. ensure that effective, positive behavior supports are available to all students, including students with disabilities	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
17. observe and evaluate co-teaching strategies	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
18. ensure that instructional assistants are fully informed about and are able to deliver the required supports, services and accommodations as outlined in the student's IEP	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
19. ensure that general and special education teachers have common planning time	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
20. ensure that staff members have access to information on special education and encourage them to take advantage of available materials	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
21. provide pertinent information regarding students when participating in due process hearings	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
22. make certain that students with disabilities are being included in state and local assessments	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
23. monitor inclusion classes to ensure adequate support for students with disabilities	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

**Assistant Principals and Special Education
Survey**

<p>In column A, please indicate <u>how often</u> you are delegated to carry out each activity. In column B, please indicate <u>how prepared</u> you feel you are with the necessary knowledge and skills for the tasks to which you are delegated. Indicate your response for each task by circling a number in both columns A and B.</p>	<p>A</p> <p>As the assistant principal, how <u>often</u> do you perform this function?</p> <p>1 = Never (N) (0 times per month)</p> <p>2 = Rarely (R) (1-2 times per month)</p> <p>3 = Occasionally (O) (3-5 times per month)</p> <p>4 = Often (OF) (6-10 times per month)</p> <p>5 = Very Often (VO) (11 or more times per month)</p> <p>Never Often R O OF Very</p>	<p>B</p> <p>How <u>prepared</u> do you feel you are with the necessary knowledge and skills to facilitate this function?</p> <p>1= Not prepared</p> <p>2= A little prepared</p> <p>3= Somewhat prepared</p> <p>4= Well prepared</p> <p>5= Very well prepared</p> <p>Not Prepared Very well Prepared</p>
As the Assistant Principal I...		
24. encourage staff members to take part in professional development that will expand their knowledge of working with students with disabilities	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
25. monitor extracurricular activities to ensure that students with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
26. keep records of home visits made to parents	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
27. communicate to the staff that all children and their families are welcome in the school	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
28. oversee all service providers who are in the school	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
29. collaborate with community-based service providers	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
30. establish a climate of respect for diverse populations	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
31. provide information to staff pertaining to the instruction of children with disabilities	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

*Assistant Principals and Special Education
Survey*

PART C: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Have you had any coursework in Special Education?

- Yes
- No

2. Are you endorsed in any area of special education?

- Yes
- No

3. Do you have any special education teaching experience? If yes, how long?

- Yes How long _____
- No

4. Where do you get most of your assistance in meeting your professional needs in special education? Rank each item from most to least (1= most and 8= least)

- _____ Central Office
- _____ Special education teacher / Child Study Chairperson
- _____ Principal
- _____ Conferences / Workshops
- _____ Professional Literature
- _____ Policy Manuals
- _____ Special education courses
- _____ Other (please specify) _____

5. Do you subscribe to special education professional journals?

Yes _____ No ____

6. How often do you spend time reading professional literature on special education topics?

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Yearly

7. How frequently do you attend special education in-services, conferences or workshops?

- Never
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Yearly

*Assistant Principals and Special Education
Survey*

8. How familiar are you with issues regarding "access" to the general curriculum students with disabilities?

- Not Familiar
- Somewhat Familiar
- Very Familiar

9. Please rate your graduate program in preparing you to supervise special education. Respond by selecting one level of preparation.

- No preparation / No courses in special education
- A little preparation / 1-2 courses in special education
- Some preparation / 2-3 courses in special education
- Adequate preparation / 3-4 courses in special education
- Extensive preparation / minor or degree in special education

10. Please rank the following areas of professional development in special education, where 1 is most important to you and 6 is least.

(1 = most important to 6 = least important)

_____ IEP development _____ Inclusive practices _____ Discipline
_____ Instruction / Assessment _____ Legal aspects
_____ Other (please indicate) _____

Feel free to provide any additional information that you feel may explain further your roles and responsibilities in special education. Also note any concerns you have as an assistant principal in meeting these designated assignments or expectations.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY

ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SURVEY

Feedback Form

1. Please rate this survey on the following components of the survey:

a. Length of the survey	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
b. Clarity of words	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
c. Overall appearance	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
d. Ease of comprehension	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
e. Clarity of rating scales	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent

2. Please comment on your reactions to the following components of the survey and provide feedback on how these areas can be improved.

a. Special education functions: (Were these easy to understand? Did they apply to elementary school assistant principals? Suggestions for improvement?)

b. The clarity and comprehensibility of the words and sentences: (What words or phrases were difficult to understand? Suggestions for improvement?)

c. Length of the survey: How long did it take for you to complete it?

d. Would you recommend that this survey be available online?

e. Format and appearance of the survey:

f. Any other comments (You may continue with any suggestions for improvement here and on the back of this page):

Appendix D1

Frequency and Percentages for How Often and How Prepared for Organizational Duties

	Facilitate child study meetings	Facilitate IEP/504 meetings	Initiate behavior assessments	Monitor behavior plans	Promote positive behavior supports	Inform staff of the needs of students with IEPs	Support inclusion classes
Never							
f	4	0	13	7	3	8	8
%	3.4	0.0	11	5.9	2.5	6.8	6.8
Rarely (1-2 times monthly)							
f	22	0	43	42	17	21	10
%	18.6	0.0	36.4	35.6	14.4	26.3	8.5
Occasionally (3-5 times monthly)							
f	31	17	21	25	28	19	25
%	26.3	14.4	17.8	21.2	23.7	16.1	21.2
Often (6-10 times monthly)							
f	14	24	2	13	21	21	28
%	11.9	20.3	1.7	11.0	17.8	17.8	23.7
Very often (11 or more times monthly)							
f	19	12	6	4	19	11	20
%	16.1	10.2	5.1	3.4	16.1	9.3	16.9
Missing							
f	28	35	33	27	30	28	27
%	23.7	29.7	28.0	22.9	25.4	23.7	22.9

	Facilitate child study meetings	Facilitate IEP/504 meetings	Initiate behavior assessments	Monitor behavior plans	Promote positive behavior supports	Inform staff of the needs of students with IEPs	Support inclusion classes
Not prepared							
f	5	4	6	7	1	6	2
%	4.2	3.4	5.1	5.9	0.8	5.1	1.7
A little prepared							
f	6	8	9	6	5	6	3
%	5.1	6.8	7.6	5.1	4.2	5.1	2.5
Somewhat prepared							
f	15	13	37	29	24	19	13
%	12.7	11.0	31.4	24.6	20.3	16.1	11.0
Well prepared							
f	32	34	16	30	32	37	35
%	27.1	28.8	13.6	25.4	27.1	31.4	29.7
Very well prepared							
f	32	31	20	19	29	21	38
%	27.1	26.3	16.9	16.1	24.5	17.8	32.2
Missing							
f	28	28	30	27	27	29	27
%	23.7	23.7	25.4	22.9	22.9	24.6	22.9

	Encourage extracurricular activities for swd	Maintain a positive school environment	Establish a climate of respect	Provide a multi- disciplinary team when developing IEPs	Provide oversight in the LRE	Monitor IEP timelines
Occasionally (3-5 times monthly)						
f	10	16	19	29	19	22
%	8.5	13.6	16.1	24.6	16.1	18.6
Often (6-10 times monthly)						
f	16	21	21	26	14	24
%	13.6	17.8	17.8	22.0	11.9	20.3
Very often (11 or more times monthly)						
f	8	37	39	24	9	25
%	6.8	31.4	33.1	20.3	7.6	21.2
Missing						
f	28	31	27	27	28	28
%	23.7	26.3	22.9	22.9	23.7	23.7

	Encourage extracurricular activities for swd	Maintain a positive school environment	Establish a climate of respect	Provide a multi- disciplinary team when developing IEPs	Provide oversight in the LRE	Monitor IEP timelines
Not prepared						
f	12	3	1	1	14	1
%	10.2	2.5	0.8	0.8	11.9	0.8
A little prepared						
f	10	2	3	3	9	4
%	8.5	1.7	2.5	2.5	7.6	3.4
Somewhat prepared						
f	21	10	7	10	21	5
%	17.8	8.5	5.9	8.5	17.8	4.2
Well prepared						
f	22	13	31	27	21	32
%	18.6	11.0	26.3	22.9	17.8	28.8
Very well prepared						
f	26	69	49	49	25	47
%	22.0	53.4	41.5	41.5	21.2	39.8
Missing						
f	27	27	27	28	28	27
%	22.9	22.9	22.9	23.7	23.7	22.9

Appendix D2

Frequency and Percentages for How Often and How Prepared for Collaboration Duties

		Collaborate with the following:					
		Teachers	Parents	Administrators	Community service providers	Provide pertinent information during due process hearings	Keep records of home visits made to parents
Never							
f		6	2	26	23	59	63
%		5.1	1.7	22	19.5	50.0	53.4
Rarely (1-2 times monthly)							
f		16	18	27	28	19	15
%		13.6	15.3	22.9	32.2	16.1	12.7
Occasionally (3-5 times monthly)							
f		29	38	23	20	4	7
%		24.6	32.2	19.5	16.9	3.4	5.9
Often (6-10 times monthly)							
f		15	16	6	5	5	2
%		12.7	13.6	5.1	4.2	4.2	1.7
Very often (11 or more times monthly)							
f		22	17	8	5	1	4
%		18.6	14.4	6.8	4.2	0.8	3.4
Missing							
f		30	27	28	27	30	27
%		25.4	22.9	23.7	22.9	25.4	22.9

Collaborate with the following:

	Teachers	Parents	Administrators	Community service providers	Provide pertinent information during due process hearings	Keep records of home visits made to parents
Not prepared						
f	3	2	11	11	25	33
%	2.5	1.7	9.3	9.3	21.2	28.0
A little prepared						
f	7	4	12	17	18	10
%	5.9	3.4	10.2	14.4	15.3	8.5
Somewhat prepared						
f	17	20	21	21	15	16
%	14.4	16.9	17.8	17.8	12.7	13.6
Well prepared						
f	27	28	25	22	15	14
%	22.9	23.7	21.2	18.6	12.7	11.9
Very well prepared						
f	37	36	21	17	16	18
%	31.4	30.5	17.8	14.4	13.5	15.3
Missing						
f	27	28	28	30	29	27
%	22.9	23.7	23.7	25.4	24.6	22.9

Appendix D3

Frequency and Percentages for How Often and How Prepared for Instructional Duties

	Conduct teacher observations	Promote intervention strategies	Monitor assessments	Determine need for assistive technology	Observe co-teaching methods
Never					
f	0	3	7	22	8
%	0.0	2.5	5.9	18.6	6.8
Rarely (1-2 times monthly)					
f	10	20	37	35	33
%	8.5	16.9	31.4	29.7	28.0
Occasionally (3-5 times monthly)					
f	24	22	25	20	21
%	20.3	18.6	21.2	16.9	17.8
Often (6-10 times monthly)					
f	24	25	11	8	15
%	20.3	21.2	9.3	6.8	12.7
Very often (11 or more times monthly)					
f	28	20	9	6	13
%	23.7	16.9	7.6	5.1	11.0
Missing					
F	32	28	29	27	28
%	27.1	23.7	24.6	22.9	23.7

	Conduct teacher observations	Promote intervention strategies	Monitor assessments	Determine need for assistive technology	Observe co-teaching methods
Not prepared					
f	3	3	4	8	5
%	2.5	2.5	3.4	6.8	4.2
A little prepared					
f	5	4	15	26	10
%	4.2	3.4	12.7	22.0	8.5
Somewhat prepared					
f	23	18	21	26	20
%	19.5	15.3	17.8	22.0	16.9
Well prepared					
f	30	30	29	14	33
%	25.4	25.4	24.6	11.9	28.0
Very well prepared					
f	30	35	19	17	23
%	25.4	29.7	16.1	14.4	19.5
Missing					
f	27	28	30	27	27
%	22.9	23.7	25.4	22.9	22.90

	Ensure instructional planning	Make sure students with disabilities included in assessments	Provide information to staff about instructing swd	Make sure teachers attend collaborative teaching seminars	Monitor related services
Never					
f	13	2	4	16	7
%	11.0	1.7	3.4	13.6	5.9
Rarely (1-2 times monthly)					
f	26	11	31	32	23
%	22.0	9.3	26.3	31.4	19.5
Occasionally (3-5 times monthly)					
f	16	23	24	15	28
%	13.6	19.5	20.3	12.7	23.7
Often (6-10 times monthly)					
f	13	27	19	15	15
%	11.0	22.9	16.1	12.7	12.7
Very often (11 or more times monthly)					
f	23	27	13	8	16
%	19.5	22.9	11.0	6.8	13.6
Missing					
f	27	28	27	27	29
%	22.9	23.7	22.9	22.9	24.6
Not prepared					
f	7	1	2	6	2
%	5.9	0.8	1.7	5.1	1.7

	Ensure instructional planning	Make sure students with disabilities included in assessments	Provide information to staff about instructing swd	Make sure teachers attend collaborative teaching seminars	Monitor related services
A little prepared					
f	6	2	3	7	8
%	5.1	1.7	2.5	5.9	6.8
Somewhat prepared					
f	10	12	16	15	20
%	8.5	10.2	13.6	12.7	16.9
Well prepared					
f	30	31	39	27	33
%	25.4	26.3	33.1	22.9	28
Very well prepared					
f	37	44	29	36	28
%	31.4	37.3	24.6	30.5	23.7
Missing					
f	28	28	29	27	27
%	23.7	23.7	24.6	22.9	22.9

Appendix D4

Frequency and Percentages for How Often and How Prepared for Program Evaluation Duties

	Assessments	Student observations	Communicate at least once every nine weeks IEP progress	Screening; evaluation procedures	Notification procedures	Ensure teachers understand and use assessment information	IEP annual review	Progress notification
Never								
f	7	14	11	6	5	1	5	5
%	5.9	11.9	9.3	5.1	4.2	0.8	4.2	4.2
Rarely (1-2 times monthly)								
f	23	31	33	15	16	14	18	22
%	19.5	26.3	28.0	12.7	13.6	11.9	15.3	18.6
Occasionally (3-5 times monthly)								
f	25	23	20	34	16	37	21	21
%	21.2	19.5	16.9	28.8	13.6	31.4	17.8	17.8
Often (6-10 times monthly)								
f	21	15	16	22	27	23	26	18
%	17.8	12.7	13.6	18.6	22.9	19.5	22.0	15.3
Very often (11 or more times monthly)								
f	10	7	11	13	27	16	21	25
%	8.5	5.9	9.3	11	22.9	13.6	17.8	21.2
Missing								
f	32	28	27	28	27	27	27	27
%	27.1	23.7	22.9	23.7	22.9	22.9	22.9	22.9

	Assessments	Student observations	Communicate at least once every nine weeks IEP progress	Screening; evaluation procedures	Notification procedures	Ensure teachers understand and use assessment information	IEP annual review	Progress notification
Not prepared								
f	4	5	5	5	2	1	3	2
%	3.4	4.2	4.2	4.2	1.7	0.8	2.5	1.7
A little prepared								
f	11	13	10	3	4	7	7	5
%	9.3	11.0	8.5	2.5	3.4	5.9	5.9	4.2
Somewhat prepared								
f	22	23	15	27	11	18	8	11
%	18.6	19.5	12.7	22.9	9.3	15.3	6.8	9.3
Well prepared								
f	31	24	33	20	26	31	27	29
%	26.3	20.3	28.0	16.9	22.0	26.3	22.9	24.6
Very well prepared								
f	19	26	28	34	48	34	46	43
%	16.1	22.0	23.7	28.8	40.7	28.8	39.0	36.4
Missing								
f	31	27	27	29	27	27	27	28
%	26.3	22.9	22.9	24.6	22.9	22.9	22.9	23.7

Appendix D5

Frequency and Percentages for How Often and How Prepared for Professional Development Duties

		Ensure staff has access to resources/information	Encourage staff to participate
Never	f	3	4
	%	2.5	3.4
Rarely (1-2 times monthly)	f	22	30
	%	18.6	25.4
Occasionally (3-5 times monthly)	f	29	31
	%	24.6	26.3
Often (6-10 times monthly)	f	24	15
	%	20.3	12.7
Very often (11 or more times monthly)	f	13	11
	%	11.0	9.3
Missing	f	27	27
	%	22.9	22.9

		Ensure staff has access to resources/information	Encourage staff to participate
Not prepared	f	2	2
	%	1.7	1.7
A little prepared	f	7	7
	%	5.9	5.9
Somewhat prepared	f	20	20
	%	16.9	16.9
Very well prepared	f	24	26
	%	20.3	22.0
Missing	f	29	27
	%	24.6	22.9