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Secondary School Inclusion Rates: The Relationship Between the Training and Beliefs of School Site Principals and the Implementation of Inclusion

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

SECONDARY SCHOOL INCLUSION RATES: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN

THE TRAINING AND BELIEFS OF SCHOOL SITE PRINCIPALS AND THE

IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION

by

Jacques Bentolila

2010

To: Interim Dean Delia Garcia
     College of Education

This dissertation, written by Jacques Bentolila, and entitled Secondary School Inclusion Rates: The Relationship between the Training and Beliefs of School Site Principals and the Implementation of Inclusion, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Date of Defense: November 9, 2010

The dissertation of Jacques Bentolila is approved.

_____
Interim Dean Delia Garcia
College of Education

_____
Interim Dean Kevin O'Shea
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2010

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Leah, Mikayla, Matthew, and my entire family. It is
through their unconditional love, support and dedication that this milestone was reached.
This is an example to my children that through dedication and hard work anything is
possible!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

SECONDARY SCHOOL INCLUSION RATES: THE RELATIONSHIP

BETWEEN THE TRAINING AND BELIEFS OF SCHOOL SITE PRINCIPALS

AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSION

by

Jacques Bentolila

Florida International University, 2010

Miami, Florida

Professor Elizabeth Cramer, Major Professor

Programs require strong support and guidance from those in leadership positions to ensure proper implementation (Fullen, 2001). Consequently, school site principals must rely on the training they have received to support them in making appropriate decisions. It is the school site principal's leadership that is pivotal in the success of students with disabilities (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Monteith, 2000). In fact, the principal has a moral obligation to provide an environment that supports social justice in schools (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). The inclusion of students with disabilities does just that—it ensures that these students are not segregated to a "separate but equal" education.

This study utilized a participant survey to collect data on principals' beliefs and training in special education. This information was compared to the percentage of time students with disabilities spent with their non-disabled peers in the principals' respective schools. An analysis was conducted to identify if a linear relationship exists between the selected variables and the inclusion percentages. Open-ended questions were included in

the original survey which allowed for a thematic analysis of the responses. These responses were utilized to allow participants to further express their thoughts on the identified variables.

Results indicated that there were no statistically significant relationships identified between the beliefs and training of secondary school site principals and the percentage of time that their students in special education spend with their non-disabled peers. Although the original research questions were not supported, further post hoc analysis indicated that the results obtained did support that the principals believed inclusion had a social benefit to students. Additional investigation into the academic benefits of inclusion is still needed. In addition, principals who indicated that they had some type of training in special education indicated a higher percentage that the individual student should be the focal point when making placement decisions. These results support the need for further research in the area of principal preparation programs and their relationships to the daily practice of school site principals.

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Introduction

In 1975 Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act,

now called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), required states to

provide a free and appropriate public education to every child with a disability (IDEA

Section 612 (a)(1)(A), 2004). With the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004, emphasis has

been placed on educating students with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers to

the greatest extent possible. As per IDEA, students must be educated in the Least

Restrictive Environment (LRE), which means:

> To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children
> in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children
> who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of
> children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only
> when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in
> regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be
> achieved satisfactorily. (IDEA Section 612 (a)(5)(A), 2004).

Since the inception of this law and its subsequent reauthorizations, school systems

nationwide have been moving more consistently towards the inclusion of students with

disabilities in general education instructional settings. Recent national data demonstrate

that almost half (49.9%) of all students with disabilities ages 6-21 are educated within the

context of general education for most of the school day (Office of Special Education and

Rehabilitative Services [OSERS], 2007).

At the state level, the Florida Department of Education encourages districts to

provide students with disabilities access to the general education classroom for at least

80% of the school day. This means that students with disabilities should have the

opportunity to be educated in the same setting as their non-disabled peers for at least 80%

of their school day. This corresponds with national findings indicating that students with disabilities are being educated in the general education classroom for 79% of the school day (OSERS, 2007). Currently, Florida reports that 51% of students with disabilities are educated in the general education classroom for at least 80% of the school day which is 1.1% higher than the national average (OSERS, 2007).

While educators have moved, assuredly or reluctantly, away from the segregation of students with disabilities and toward the inclusion of these students in general education classes (Bartlett, Weisenstein, & Etscheidt, 2002), there is still no consistent view on what is the best placement; and this topic remains quite controversial (Hagen-Burke & Jefferson, 2002; Yell & Katsiyannis, 2004). Additionally, there is no clear universally-recognized definition of inclusion (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998).

There are various interpretations of inclusive practices that are utilized in defining inclusion. IDEA defines inclusion as students with disabilities being educated in the classroom with non-disabled peers, and that they take part in state developed standardized test (Boscardin, 2005). The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) defines inclusion as the time that students with disabilities spend with their non-disabled peers, but does not define what must occur during that specified time. Bartlett et al. (2002) define inclusion as educating students with disabilities in the school/classroom they would otherwise attend if they did not have a disability. Bartlett et al. further define inclusion as bringing the services needed to support the student to the classroom, the presence of which need only benefit that particular child.

Regardless of how districts or schools interpret the definition of inclusion, the bottom line is educating students with disabilities (SWD) in an inclusive setting is a

radically different teaching philosophy than has been applied previously. In the not too distant past, educating SWD in separate classrooms was the acceptable practice. A shift in attitudes and procedures such as inclusion requires an active role of the principal who is the instructional leader of his/her school.

Principals' Roles in Inclusion Implementation

The implementation of inclusive practices, or any new program, relies heavily on the school site administration (Fullan, 2001). The challenge starts with developing a plan that will unite the two separate worlds of general and special education (Boscardin, 2005; Murphy, 2001). The years of separate but equal education of students with disabilities is a thing of the past, and moving forward will require the development of effective strategies to help all students within the inclusive environment achieve to their fullest potentials. Research supports the fact that the role of the school site principal is vital to the implementation of a successful inclusion program (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Boscardin, 2005; Fullan, 2001). It is the school site principal who sets the tone, values, and acceptable practices for the potential success of any program developed at the school level (Brady, 2005).

Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004) conducted a review of the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) study on effective school leadership. Theirs was a meta-analysis of classroom, school, and leadership practices that were highly correlated with student achievement. After reviewing the data, amongst other outcomes, they concluded that: (a) leadership matters, (b) effective leadership can be defined, and (c) effective leaders know what to do and when to do it. The researchers found that good leaders have multiple leadership styles and know what situations require

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what specific style of leadership. This ability to implement the most effective style was determined as imperative to good leadership. Also, the McREL study found a significant correlation between effective school leadership and student achievement. Identified were three key indicators of effective leadership: being a change agent, intellectual stimulation on current educational issues, and advocating for all stakeholders.

The school site principal is the supportive leader of all initiatives. This holds true for principals leading the inclusion movement; they will need to possess effective leadership in order to assist in the changes necessary to implement an inclusion program (Waters et al., 2004). It is the role of the principal to make the decisions of what programs will receive support in both human and financial equity (Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, 1999). Essentially, administrators must provide the vision, develop it logistically, and be able to fund it (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Kelley, Thorton, & Daugherty, 2005). The principal also designs the philosophy that builds a school's schedule as well as makes the budgetary decisions that impact programs within the school. Both issues could directly affect a school inclusion program in that together they create the foundation upon which the program will be built. The vision of a successful inclusion program must be supported by qualified individuals. Once the teachers are in place, it becomes the principal's commitment and ability to provide support and resources to teachers that will assist them in meeting the needs of students with disabilities (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Boscardin, 2005; Riehl, 2000). This all needs to occur in an environment that is perceived as consistent towards all stakeholders so that the elements needed to implement this change are readily accepted (Theoharis, 2007).

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It is imperative to recognize that the ability and willingness of school site principals to support emerging programs or initiatives increase their chances for implementation and potential success (Fullan, 2001). Implementing programs such as inclusion is a radical change to the current school management style and requires a new type of instructional leader (Fullan, 2001; Shellard, 2003). Many school site principals feel poorly prepared for dealing with inclusion and students with disabilities (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2004; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). Monteith (2000) indicated that principals must have an understanding of the concept of least restrictive environment and special education in general to effectively implement procedural requirements. Yet, often principals do not have the fundamental background and training in special education. DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003) concurred that principals must have fundamental knowledge to perform essential special education leadership tasks; however, most principals lack coursework and field experience in special education.

Due to the important role the school site principal plays in implementing an inclusion program, additional research in this area is warranted. The research community would benefit from identifying whether a relationship between principals' backgrounds, training and beliefs with regards to inclusion exists; and, if so, how such a relationship might influence the way individuals are prepared for entering the principal position. Principal preparation programs are an avenue to influence the perceptions of future leaders and could provide the needed background to support implementing the inclusion initiative.

Purpose of the Study

According to IDEA (2004), students with disabilities have the right to be educated alongside their non-disabled peers. Beyond the fact that the right to be included is mandated by a federal law, it is a moral obligation to create schools that exist within the parameters of social justice (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). Theoharis (2007) defines social justice leadership as when "principals make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (p. 223). When the inclusion of students with disabilities is viewed through the lens of social justice, then inclusion should be implemented because it is the morally correct thing to do. Social justice in schools can never be realized if any group is marginalized by the system, and educating students with disabilities in segregated classrooms creates a marginalized class (Theoharis, 2007).

According to the OSERS (2007), 51% of students with disabilities are being educated outside of the general education classroom. They also report that students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) are more likely to be included than students with more severe disabilities. The school site principal is the individual in the best position to influence the implementation of inclusion settings. Fullen (2001) described principals who are leading change as having a moral purpose. He defines moral purpose as acting with the intention of making a positive impact on all the stakeholders of the organization. This suggests that the school site principal is the individual with the largest impact in changing the status quo to move students with disabilities out of the unjust world of "separate but equal" and into the world of inclusion.

The principal's role is imperative in implementing change in schools (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Fullen, 2001; Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Monteith, 2000). The position of the school site principal has transformed from a building manager to the instructional leader (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Shellard, 2003; Wakerman, Browder, Flowers & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2006). In order for any innovative program to be successfully implemented in a school, the school site principal must have the fundamental knowledge to lead that change (Wakerman et al., 2006). In the case of inclusion, this fundamental knowledge is in the area of special education. Unfortunately, most principals report that they are ill-prepared in the area of special education (DiPaola et al., 2004; Monteith, 2000). They lack the background to understand the legal ramifications involved in special education programs.

The proposed study was influenced by both the legal and moral obligation to educate students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers. It was also guided by the fact that the school site principal is in the best position to influence the implementation of such an initiative. The implementation of an inclusion program must be done because it is in the best interest of the child. However, many times this implementation is carried out not with the child's interest at the core, but rather as a cost cutting effort (Rea, McLaughlin & Walther-Thomas, 2002).

Limited research exists that describes how principals are prepared for implementation of an inclusion program, and even fewer studies are available on how the secondary schools' principals' beliefs and training may be correlated with the implementation of inclusion. Subsequently, the proposed study investigated if there was a

relationship between the beliefs, background and training of school site principals and the percentage of time students with disabilities spend with their non-disabled peers.

Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the relationship that exists between the identified variables in the study listed below, principals' training and beliefs, and the actual time students with disabilities are spending with their non-disabled peers. Specifically it surveyed principals to determine how their background, beliefs and training relate to students in special education and inclusion. In addition, the survey inquired about their beliefs on the academic and social benefits of inclusion, class placement decisions regarding students with disabilities, and perceptions about related budgetary ramifications. The results of the principals' survey were compared to the percentage of time students with disabilities spent with their non-disabled peers in the respective schools.

Previous studies have attempted to use surveys to assess principals' attitudes towards inclusion. Salisbury (2006) conducted a survey of elementary school principals and concluded that principals with positive experiences and training with students with disabilities influenced their beliefs on inclusion. Praisner (2003) conducted a study of eight elementary school principals who were involved in the development of an inclusion program. She concluded that the administrative support strongly influenced the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting.

This study built on existing research by Praisner (2003) and Salisbury (2006) in several ways. The current study focused on the attitudes and beliefs of secondary school principals. In order for a principal to be included in this study, he/she had to be located in a middle or high school. Second, this study took part in a heterogeneous urban school

district. This study was conducted in Miami-Dade County, Florida, which is currently the fourth largest school district in the U.S. It consists of a student population that is made up mostly of ethnic/racial minority students and second language learners. Conducting this study in this district allowed for more generalization to minority students, specifically students who are English Language Learners (ELL).

Finally, this study was innovative in that it compared the results obtained from the principals' survey to student data. Survey results were compared to percentages of time students with disabilities were educated alongside their non-disabled peers. This study looked to identify any relationships between the identified variables and the percentage of inclusion. This information could be used to assist in improving principal preparation programs so that principals enter school sites prepared to support innovative programs such as inclusion.

Research Questions

This study investigated if a relationship existed between the identified variables, principals' background, training and beliefs, and the actual time students with disabilities spent with their non-disabled peers. More specifically, the research questions were as follows:

1. Do principals' prior training in special education and inclusion have a linear relationship to the percentage of time students with disabilities spend with non-disabled peers?

2. Do principals' beliefs about the academic benefits of inclusive settings have a linear relationship to the percentage of time students with disabilities spend with their non-disabled peers?

3. Do principals' beliefs about the social benefits of inclusive settings have a linear relationship to the percentage of time students with disabilities spend with their non-disabled peers?

4. Do principals' beliefs about the placement (instructional setting) of students with disabilities have a linear relationship to the percentage of time students with disabilities spend with their non-disabled peers?

5. Do principals' beliefs about budgeting/financial support of inclusion programs have a linear relationship to the percentage of time students with disabilities spend with their non-disabled peers?

Operational Definitions

In this section, certain terms that were frequently used in this study are defined. Other terms, which were not frequently used but require definitions, are explained as they are introduced.

Categorical Formulas or Funding

These are mathematical formulas used to determine the additional dollars a district would receive based on the student's specific disability (Mahitivanichcha & Parrish, 2005).

Census-based or Population-based Funding

Funding for students with disabilities in a school is based on the actual number of students located at the school (Mahitivanichcha & Parrish, 2005).

General Curriculum

General curriculum refers to the same curriculum as non-disabled children. This is the curriculum that has been identified by a district to meet the needs of students in a standard academic track.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the practice of educating all or most children in the same classroom, including children with physical, mental, and developmental disabilities.

Inclusive Setting

An inclusive setting is an environment where students with disabilities are educated alongside their non-disabled peers.

Least Restrictive Environment

The least restrictive environment is the most appropriate setting where the needs of students with disabilities can be met while at the same time spending the maximum amount of time with their non-disabled peers.

Master Plan Points (MPP)

Master Plan Points (MPP) are the credits provided to employees of Miami-Dade County Public Schools when they take part in staff professional development.

Resource Room

Resource rooms are classrooms taught only by a special education teacher, where students who need specialized services attend to receive more individualized help. The students spend a portion of their educational day in this setting.

School Site Principal

The school site principal is the instructional leader given the authority to oversee the curriculum and day to day operations of local schools.

Social Justice

Social justice in inclusion is the philosophy of educating students with disabilities in the general education setting because it is the moral and right thing to do. These students have an inalienable right to be educated in this setting. The act of educating students with disabilities in a separate setting is seen as an act of moral injustice.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

A specific learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may impact the ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term also encompasses perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

Student with Disability

A student with disabilities is a student who, by a series of tests, has been identified as having a disability that impedes his or her educational progress. These students receive services and support from the special education program designed to enable them to be educated to their full potential.

<center>**Chapter Summary**</center>

The inclusion of students with disabilities into the least restrictive environment is not a new concept, yet the implementation of this federal requirement has been interpreted differently by school districts and remains a challenge for many. The school

system being studied (Miami-Dade County Public Schools) is one in which new programs require strong support and guidance from those in leadership positions to ensure proper implementation (Fullen, 2001). Consequently, school site principals must rely on the training they have received to support them in making appropriate decisions. Given that decisions are generally impacted by personal beliefs, these also become an integral part of the decision making process The school site principal orchestrates many of the variables that come into the decision making process to determine the allocation of resources to implement any program. Subsequently, it is the school site principal's leadership that is pivotal in the success of students with disabilities (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Monteith, 2000). In fact, the principal has a moral obligation to provide an environment that supports social justice in schools (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). This is the concept that all students with disabilities have the right to be educated as their non-disabled peers, and that no subgroup should be marginalized. The inclusion of students does just that—it ensures that students with disabilities are not segregated to a "separate but equal" education.

This study attempted to identify if there was a linear relationship between the principals' beliefs and training in special education, and the actual time students with disabilities were included in the general education environment. Current principal preparation programs are based on a managerial concept (Grogan & Andrews, 2002) and are not able to prepare them to promote social justice in schools (Theoharis, 2007). Additional research identifying the importance of the principal's role in the implementation of an inclusion program would assist in revamping principal preparation programs.

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This study utilized a participant survey to collect data on principals' beliefs and training in special education. This information was compared to the percentage of time students with disabilities spent with their non-disabled peers in the principals' respective schools. An analysis was conducted to identify relationships that may exist between the variables and the inclusion percentages. This information can then be used to conduct further research on the principal's role in the implementation of inclusion programs. In addition, this information could be utilized to improve how principal preparation programs address special education.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of the related research and practices of the principals' role in inclusion provided the framework for the development of this study. This study was designed to investigate if there was a relationship between the principals' training in and beliefs about special education/inclusion and the time students with disabilities spend with their non-disabled peers. The principals' beliefs to be examined included the academic and social benefits of inclusion, class placement decisions regarding students with disabilities, and perceptions about related budgetary ramifications.

Research was reviewed on school site principals' beliefs and attitudes, as well as training related to inclusion to identify their impact on the implementation of an inclusion program. The amount of empirical evidence outlining the beliefs/attitudes of principals on the topic of inclusion was limited, and almost non-existent for the secondary level. Additionally, research was reviewed to identify the variables related to inclusion that may potentially affect principals. The variables identified were: academic and social benefits, placement decisions, budgetary ramifications of an inclusive program, and principals' beliefs and social justice as it pertains to inclusion. Each of these variables is reviewed as it pertains to this study and pertinent information is identified.

Academic and Social Benefits of Inclusion at the Secondary Level

The purpose of our educational system is to provide a basis of knowledge and acceptable behaviors for its students. Educating students with disabilities is no different; the objective of any Individual Education Plan (IEP) is to set students' goals to be achieved. An inclusion program should take these same goals and expectations with the

same academic and social benefit and move them into the general education environment. The social benefit for both students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers in inclusive classrooms is well-documented (McDonnell, Mathot-Buckener, Thorson & Fister, 2001; Rea et al., 2002). The research on the academic benefits of inclusion is usually conducted on a smaller scale and does not speak to the generalized benefits of an inclusion program.

Rea et al. (2002) conducted a descriptive study using archival qualitative and quantitative data to compare the performance of middle school students identified as having specific learning disabilities (SLD) served in an inclusive setting, as compared to similar students being served in a pull-out special education program. The participants for this study consisted of students identified as SLD in two middle schools in the same southeast urban school district. The study focused on the academic and social performances of the students in the study.

Rea et al. (2002) reviewed class grades and students' performance on standardized tests. The results demonstrated that students educated in inclusive settings earned significantly higher grades in all four areas (language arts, mathematics, science and social studies) of academic instruction. The statistical analysis of the subtest data from the standardized tests revealed a higher standard score for those students with SLD receiving instruction in an inclusive model as compared to those educated in a pull-out setting. The results also indicated that students in an inclusive setting attended school more than their peers in a pull-out model, but the two groups had no significant difference in the number of behavioral referrals. This study was conducted with a small sample; and the use of teacher grades to ascertain academic achievement is subjective

and dependent on a preconceived notion of the abilities of the students in the different settings.

In another study, Cawley, Hayden, Cade, and Baker-Kroczynski (2002) reviewed a collaborative project between a university and a junior high school located in an inner-city. The purpose of this study was to examine the science achievement and behavior of students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers in general education science classes compared to the general education science classroom without students with disabilities. This study focused on the academic performance, social adjustment and attendance of both the students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. The study's participants were students with serious emotional disturbances (SED) or SLD who were included in a science classroom where there was a general and special education teacher present for the entire length of the period.

The results of the Cawley et al. (2002) study indicated that in the area of academics, the students with disabilities passed the district final exam for science at the same rate (69%) as their non-disabled counterparts. In the area of behavior, the students with disabilities had no significant behavior problems, nor did they have an adverse affect on their non-disabled peers. The students with disabilities received fewer discipline referrals in the inclusion classes. Finally, in the area of attendance, there was no significant difference between the two groups of students.

A limitation of this study was that it was conducted on a small scale within one school. The school utilized had a previous relationship with a local university that assisted them in meeting the needs of their students. This study could be expanded, and

more generalized by duplicating it in a larger school system that does not have that direct support of a university.

The academic and social benefits of inclusion were further studied by Foreman, Arthur-Kelly, Pascoe, and King (2004) who evaluated the educational experiences of students with profound disabilities in inclusive classrooms as opposed to those in a more segregated setting. The purpose of the study was to identify what behaviors were observed in the two settings as well as to identify if there were important differences among the experiences of the participants. The participants for this study consisted of eight matched pairs of school-aged students with profound disabilities, one of whom was educated in an inclusive general education classroom and the other in a self contained special education setting.

Foreman et al. (2004) used a systematic observation and recording of student behavior and communicative indicators relevant to educational programs serving this population. The results indicated that the students with profound disabilities in the general education setting seemed to demonstrate a larger overall time in desired behavior than did students in special classes, even though the results were not significant for this small sample. As for the students with disabilities and their communication with peers, the results indicated a statistically significant difference between the two settings.

Foreman et al.'s findings support previous research indicating that the participation of students with disabilities in the general education setting is beneficial. Specifically, it showed that the non-disabled students in the general education setting were beneficial to the education and progress of the students with disabilities. This belief

of a beneficial relationship would be paramount for the development and support of an inclusion program at any level.

Further research in the areas of academic and social benefits of an inclusion program would improve the current body of research that is available. This is especially true at the secondary school level. This proposed study is based on the belief that the principal's background, beliefs and training have an effect on the programs implemented at the school site, but at the secondary level this effect may be magnified due to the construction of the delivery model. The implementation of an inclusion program is more problematic with budgeting, teacher certification, and the ability to provide students the most appropriate placement to meet their individual needs. This study looked to identify if a relationship existed between the principal's belief in the benefits of an inclusion program, and the actual implementation of such a program in the principal's school. The identification of such a relationship would be beneficial in the preparation of future school leaders.

Placement Decisions

The rights of students with disabilities to be placed in inclusive classrooms and the process to make these decisions are embedded in state and federal law. Yell and Katsiyannis (2004) reviewed the legal requirements for placement of students with disabilities as it is stated in IDEA (2004) and Section 504 and then proposed recommendations to assist school officials to meet these requirements. Their recommendation for schools was that Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams take the individual needs of each student into account and that the student's placement provides meaningful educational benefits. They also identified inappropriate factors for

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determining placement. In these factors, they noted that the availability of services, space, and administrative convenience were not to be determining factors. It is the need of the student with the disability that should be leading the placement decisions and not the needs of the school providing the services. Even though the Yell and Katsiyannis study reviewed the appropriate placement of students with disabilities it emphasized that "administrative convenience" should not be the determining factor. This further supported the need to conduct this study which involved comparing the administrator's views, often representing the interests of the school, with the percentage of time students with disabilities had access to general education.

In another study, Silla-Zaleski, Bauman, and Stufft (2007) investigated principals' attitudes as they relate to the 2005 Gaskin Settlement. The Gaskin Settlement, which resulted from a class action lawsuit brought forth on behalf of students with disabilities, mandated Pennsylvania schools to increase the placement of students with disabilities in the general education classroom. This study surveyed principals within the district to get their responses in the following categories: (a) demographic information, (b) opinion of the Gaskin Settlement, (c) how successful they are in including students across disability categories, and (d) staff attitudes.

The results of Silla-Zaleski et al. (2007) study indicated that there was a significant relationship between the opinions regarding the Gaskin Settlement and type of school (rural, suburban and urban), with urban principals being more in agreement with the settlement. Elementary principals were more in agreement with the settlement than their secondary level counterparts. Finally, a pattern was found that principals who completed four or more special education courses were more likely to disagree with the

Gaskin Settlement. This is counterintuitive to what may be expected for administrators

with special education course experience; in essence, they were disagreeing with

educating students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The researchers

recognized the importance in the principals' role in implementing inclusion programs at

their school sites and the importance of having principals lead the evolution of the

inclusion movement

Even though the school site principal does not legally have the right to single -

handedly approve or deny a student involvement in an inclusion program, they do create

the environment in which a student will be educated. The school site principal's beliefs

and training may influence the resources and programs available to service the students at

his/her school (Silla-Zaleski et al., 2007). In turn, the unofficial influence principals may

have on the school organization could knowingly or unknowingly influence how students

with disabilities are serviced at their schools.

The present study looked to gain further insight on whether a school site

principal's background, training and beliefs impacted the actual amount of time students

with disabilities were educated with their non-disabled peers. Specifically, knowing what

beliefs are related to either a successful or struggling program might provide insight into

what professional development could be offered to assist in implementing inclusion

programs.

Budgetary Ramifications

The school site principal is charged with developing programs, staffing all areas

to enable a school to function, and ensuring that the limited funds available to do this are

spent equally among all stakeholders in his/her school (Fullen, 2001). With this

knowledge, principals must make decisions that many times affect the students in their

building, and their personal background, beliefs and training may have an impact on the

amount of funding/support provided to various programs.

Mahitivanichcha and Parrish (2005) conducted a study to examine the variation in

special education services across states and whether this could be explained by the

funding formulas used. Special education funding is divided into two categories: census-

based and population-based funding, and the more common categorical formulas.

Categorical formulas are mathematical formulas used to determine the additional dollars

a district would receive based on the student's specific disability. The researchers

believed that the funding formula used could influence the classification of students as

needing special education services or it could also influence the services received by the

students. They found that although there may be some evidence of a relationship, the

relationship is very complex and there is no consistency. Minus this evidence of a

relationship, the cost and financing of a special education program can strongly influence

the delivery options available to students with disabilities (Bartlett et al., 2002).

In another study, Odom et al. (2001) examined the instructional costs of inclusive

and traditional non-inclusive special education services for preschool children with

disabilities. The researchers utilized three different surveys of 16 preschool programs to

collect information on the cost of teaching students in the classroom (instructional costs).

The programs researched ranged from private tuition-funded classrooms to those that

were housed and run by the local educational agency (LEA).

The results of Odom et al. (2001) indicated that teachers' salaries were the largest

expense in all of the programs. When the cost to the LEA was used as the basis of

comparison, the inclusive settings were less expensive to run than the traditional service models. If the LEA did not have to pay the tuition of the private programs then their programs were less expensive to implement than the LEA's team teaching models. The researchers identified that a major weakness of their study was that they did not factor in the non-instructional costs of the programs. This particular study was able to compare the actual budgetary differences in implementing an inclusion program versus a traditional setting for students with disabilities, but they focused only on preschool settings. An investigation into whether principals believe that inclusion is actually more economical to implement may increase understanding of the variations of students participating in inclusion settings. This increased understanding could assist principals in making the day-to-day decisions at the school level.

Principals at all levels are making instructional decisions that are affecting students on a daily basis. Realistically, their beliefs regarding how their decision may affect their school's budget may influence program choices. The effects of funding issues surrounding students with disabilities range from the political arena to the actual placement decisions being made at the school sites (Parrish & Wolman, 2004). Investigating the perceptions of how budgetary ramifications are affecting the decision making abilities of school site principals is essential in order to provide students with disabilities access to the least restricted environment.

The literature that explores the relationship between the financial incentives and placement decisions for students with disabilities is limited. Financial decisions are not created or made in isolation, and it would be difficult to identify all the existing relationships that could affect these decisions (Mahitivanichcha & Parrish, 2005). With

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this in mind, it would be logical to believe that a principal's perception of the financial impacts of certain special education placement practices could impact the implementation of these practices within their particular school.

Principals' Attitudes and Perceptions Regarding Inclusion

At the school site level, the principal is highly influential in every aspect of the school (Fullen, 2001). It is the school site principal who makes budgetary decisions, creates and voices the scheduling philosophy of the school, and makes hiring decisions for the staff. In such an influential position, identifying whether the background, beliefs and training of the school site principal has a relationship to the programmatic decisions of an inclusion program would provide insight on what supports must be in place to ensure the success of the implementation of such a program.

Praisner (2003) conducted an investigation on the attitudes of elementary school principals toward the inclusion of student with disabilities. The participants were 408 randomly selected elementary school principals in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania completing the Principals and Inclusion Survey (PIS). The PIS contained four sections: (a) demographics, (b) training and experience, (c) attitudes toward inclusion, and (d) principal beliefs about most appropriate placements.

The research findings of the Praisner (2003) study were broken down into three areas: (a) factors related to placement perceptions, (b) role of experience with students with disabilities, and (c) types of training in inclusive practices. Results from this study yielded that the principal was seen as having a strong influence on the placement decisions of the IEP team, despite the fact that the decision was made by the team. Additionally, the past experiences principals had with students with disabilities also

influenced their attitudes towards inclusion. Finally, the study indicated that principal preparation programs had to address inclusion in their course of study as the data indicated principals with more exposure in this area had a more positive attitude towards inclusion.

Although the Praisner (2003) study shed light on the principals' attitudes about inclusion, there were some limitations. The study was conducted in a district with a very homogeneous community. The results focused on the attitudes principals had about inclusion based on their responses, but did not investigate whether there was a correlation between their inclusion responses to the actual amount of inclusion in their schools. Finally, a limitation of the study was that it only addressed the attitudes and beliefs of principals at the elementary level. The current study expanded Praisner to identify if a relationship exists between the identified variables and principals at the secondary school level.

Another investigation conducted by Carter and Hughes (2006) investigated the perspectives of general and special educators, paraprofessionals, and principals regarding the inclusion of high school students with severe disabilities. The participants in their study came from 11 comprehensive high schools within an urban school district. The breakdowns of students across the district's schools were 53% African American, 38% Caucasian, and 10% other. The district data reported that 49% of students were eligible to receive free or reduced meals. There were 16 principals who participated in the study with an average of 14.6 years of classroom experience, and 5.4 years of administrative experience.

Carter and Hughes (2006) determined that principals generally believed that the inclusion program had substantial benefits for students with disabilities. Teachers identified barriers to inclusion limited time to plan together, lack of resources, and behavior challenges. Principals play an important role in controlling planning time, resources, and discipline plans, and, therefore, can have an influence on these potential barriers and attitudes towards inclusion (Carter & Hughes, 2006). Principals did not identify a difference between the instructional priorities for students in the general and special education programs. The researchers suggested that this indifference to the difference between general and special education may be a reason they did not identify a need for more professional development.

Additionally, Carter and Hughes (2006) compared the beliefs and attitudes of principals to those of other key stakeholders in their buildings. The study focused on the high school (secondary) level where a decline in the use of inclusive practices generally exists. A limitation of this study was that it focused on the inclusion of severe disabilities and did not investigate students with specific learning disabilities.

A study by conducted by Salisbury (2006) examined the perspectives of eight principals who were involved in developing inclusive elementary schools. The participants were chosen by their district based on selection criteria provided by the researchers. Of the participating principals, most were white women with an average of 10 years experience in school administration.

The results indicated that schools in the sample varied markedly in the percentage of time students with disabilities were educated outside the general education classroom. Interestingly, all of the schools in the sample were considered, by themselves and others,

to be at the forefront of inclusion. The data on the percentage of time students with disabilities spent outside the general education setting did not correspond well with ratings of school quality. Finally, all of the schools in the sample enrolled students with severe disabilities, yet during the interviews the principals indicated that for the most part, these students were educated outside the general education setting.

The Salisbury (2006) study used a small sample of elementary schools and did not look into the inclusive practices of students at the secondary level. The researchers indicated that the discrepancies between what principals' perceive versus what actually occurs can create the impediment for change and undermine their efforts. Therefore, further insight into principals' perceptions of inclusion and the actual results of their inclusion programs would definitely fill a gap in the research. In addition, conducting a study in the secondary school setting broadened the research in that area.

Principals' Special Education Training

The background, training and experience of the secondary school principal may play a factor in the rate of student inclusion in general education classrooms. Lasky and Karge (2006) conducted a study to investigate principals' beliefs, formal training, and experiences they received when preparing for the principal position. The principals were specifically asked what information they received during their preparation program, what experiences they brought with them to train and prepare teachers, and how prepared they felt to carry out these responsibilities. This was done via an investigator-designed survey. There were 205 principals who returned usable surveys; therefore, they became the sample group.

The results indicated that many of the principals had experience with students with disabilities when they were teachers, but never took part in an Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting until they became principals. The majority of the respondents indicated that they received most of their special education training on the job. They agreed that course work was critical to their development but that special education training was lacking from many preparation programs.

That study supports the importance of the principal preparation program's role in the development of principals prepared to deal with special education. Lasky and Karge (2006) recommended that research-based standards be incorporated into principal preparation programs. Even though this study identified the importance of principal preparation programs, it would be beneficial to the field of education if a relationship could be identified between training and the implementation of special education programs.

The background and training received by principals is what prepares them for the task of running a school. If this training is primarily obtained on the job then the ability of a principal to provide a well-rounded program that services all students in the school's population could be negatively affected. Identifying whether a relationship exists between the background and training of a principal and the implementation of an inclusion program may support the need for additional special education programs embedded into leadership preparation programs.

Principals' Implementation of Social Justice

The concept of educating all students in the least restrictive environment has its basis in the law, but the fact that all students should be given the same opportunities in

education could also be seen as a moral/ethical issue despite any formalized law. Theoharis (2007) conducted an empirical study to investigate how principals address issues of social justice in their schools and how they are sustaining this principle despite resistance in public schools. The participants consisted of seven principals from secondary and elementary school settings. Data collected were in-depth interviews with the principals, document reviews, field logs, and group participant interviews.

The results indicated that the principals implemented social justice strategies because they believed it was the moral or right thing to do. The first strategy they used to address issues of social justice was to raise student achievement in marginalized groups such as English Language Learners and students with disabilities. Second, they improved school structures to be more inclusive and eliminate programs that segregated student subgroups. Third, the principals provided teacher professional development that focused on building equity among all subgroups. Finally, they strengthened school culture and community by constructing an inviting environment and reaching out to marginalized families in the community. Despite these strategies, these principals still faced opposition to implementation of inclusion programs both from within their school and their district offices (Theoharis, 2007).

Theoharis's (2007) research emphasized the importance of principal preparation programs. He stated that these programs fail to prepare principals to implement social justice in schools. Theoharis believes that the strategies identified in his study could be the starting point for revamping principal preparation programs to better prepare principals to weather resistance when creating a school environment to support social justice. Including students in the general education setting falls in line with the type of

social justice change for which he is advocating. This study identified principals' beliefs in this area, and broadens the understanding of their preparedness to implement this type of social justice.

Educating students is a responsibility taken on by few, but the benefits are felt by everyone in our society. School systems are immersed in a political and legal world where educating the future is guided and regulated by laws to ensure that the rights of students are not jeopardized by the larger system. The right to a free and appropriate public education is guaranteed by our political system; providing students with the skills needed to be contributing members of our society is the morally correct thing to do. The belief that educating our children in an inclusive setting should be implemented, even if we are not bound to do so, brings on a sharper sense of urgency and deeper commitment in all involved.

Chapter Summary

The success of an inclusion programs on a district-wide level will require more knowledge regarding the thoughts and beliefs of the school's leadership, how these thoughts and beliefs are developed, and the extent to which they impact the implementation of these programs. Research suggests that it is the positive beliefs, ideas, and attitudes of both teachers and principals that will be the building blocks for a successful inclusion program (Fullan, 2001). Subsequently, the more that is learned about principal beliefs and attitudes about inclusion, the better principal preparation programs can mold future instructional leaders.

Principals are at the center of most of the decisions being made at the school site. It is their influence that has considerable influence regarding placement decisions for

students with disabilities (Parrish & Wolman, 2004). Also, the principal sets the tone in the school, and that tone then gets translated into decisions made by the school staff, decisions such as placement of students with disabilities (Parrish, 2004).

Research supports the belief that there is an academic and social benefit to educating students with disabilities in the general education setting (Cawley et al., 2002; Rea et al., 2002). This research supports implementing inclusion, but the principal is the gatekeeper to the resources available at the school site. Once schools are provided their funding for the year, the school site principal makes the budgetary decisions that direct finances towards programs that are supported (Mahitivanichcha & Parrish, 2005). The resources could be in the form of supplies, teacher allocations, and even room assignments. All the decisions discussed establish a school climate of support for programs, and the existence or lack of this climate will establish a culture that can build or stifle any program.

The ultimate argument for the implementation of an inclusion program is one from the stand point of social justice. Theoharis (2007) believes that no school can be equitable if any of its subgroups are marginalized. The act of segregating students with disabilities into a self-contained or pullout model of education does not provide an equitable education. Given this view, including students with disabilities in the general education setting is the moral and right thing to do. Setting up this type of environment is challenging and school site principals must be prepared to counteract any resistance encountered at the school site.

This study investigated the background, training and beliefs of school site principals to determine if there was a relationship between these variables and the amount

of time students with disabilities spent with their non-disabled peers. The variables

investigated were related to academic benefits, social benefits, placement, and budgetary

ramifications and the training of the school site principal.

Chapter III

METHOD

The purpose of this research was to investigate secondary school principals'

beliefs about inclusion and their experience/training in special education to determine if

there was a relationship between these factors and the percentage of time students with

disabilities, in their respective schools, were being educated with their non-disabled

peers. Data were collected regarding principals' beliefs on the academic and social

benefits of inclusion; the appropriate instructional placement/setting for students with

disabilities; and budgeting/financial cost of inclusion programs. The data collected were

compared to the actual time students with disabilities spent in an inclusion setting to

determine if a relationship could be established. This chapter addresses the research

questions, the sample, time frame, instrumentation, data collection, research design and

data analysis.

This study consisted of a questionnaire designed to obtain demographic

information, as well as responses to the research questions based on a 4-point Likert

scale. The results were statistically analyzed via a simple linear regression analysis using

SPSS software to determine if there was a relationship between the time students with

disabilities spent with their non-disabled peers and the identified variables. The variables

investigated were the training and experience of the principals in respect to special

education and inclusion, as well as the principals' beliefs about the academic benefits of

inclusion, the social benefits of inclusion, the placement of students with disabilities

(SWD), and the budgeting/financial requirements of an inclusion program (see Appendix

A).

Participants

All principals in middle and high schools in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) who met the criteria of this study were targeted as possible participants. In this study, secondary schools were defined as traditional middle (grades 6 to 8) and high schools (grades 9 to 12). Schools denoted as K – 8 Centers, Center Schools, Charter Schools, Magnet Schools and Alternative Education sites were not be included as their student population and the schools' ability to implement traditional inclusion programs did not match the purpose of this study. In addition, principals from any school opened within the last 2 years or any school not having its full complement of grade levels were not included in the study.

Principal participation in this study was voluntary, and all possible measures were taken to protect participants' confidentiality. This was accomplished by using numerically coded surveys so that the participants did not identify their names or work locations. In addition, no references to the participants' names or work locations were utilized in this investigation.

According to the M-DCPS website (www.dadeschools.net, 2008), there were 50 middle schools and 31 high schools that match the criteria of this study, for a total of 81 possible schools. All 81 principals were sent a survey electronically, and by mail. After the initial deployment of the survey, the principals who did not respond were contacted by the researcher via phone. Their participation was requested and the survey was re-sent. After 30 days from the initial mailing, the principals who returned completed and useable surveys formed the sample group.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics Part 1 Principal's Survey

Questions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1 What is your age?	59	35.00	60.00	46.2712	6.57799
2 What is your gender?	62	.00	1.00	.4516	.50172
3 How many years of experience did you have as a classroom teacher?	62	4.00	17.00	8.2258	3.17609
5 How many total years of experience have you had as a school site principal?	61	.00	15.00	5.4180	3.22772
9 Do you have a degree in the area of Special Education	62	.00	1.00	.1613	.37080
10 Have you had personal experience with a family member or friend with a disability?	61	.00	1.00	.5574	.50082

(*table continues*)

Table 1 (*continued*)

Questions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
11 Please indicate the number of college courses in Special Education you have received.	61	.00	100.00	7.1967	17.05366
12 Please indicate the number of Master Plan Points (i.e., 10 MPP) of professional development in Special Education you have received.	61	.00	360.00	30.0656	51.24740
13 Please indicate the number of college courses of formal training in Inclusion you have received.	60	.00	10.00	.6833	1.74173
14 Please indicate the number of Master Plan Points (i.e., 10 MPP) of professional development in Inclusion.	61	.00	80.00	11.3770	18.68347

A total of 62 surveys were returned, representing a 76.54% return rate. Table 1 indicates the following: The average age of participants was 46 years old and 45% of the respondents were males. The participants had an average of 5.4 years of experience as a school site principal. The survey indicated that 16% of the participants had a degree in special education, 61% indicated taking a college course in special education, and 23% indicated taking a college course in inclusion. When asked if the participants had any professional development offered outside of the college setting, 67% indicated training in

special education, and 57% indicated training in inclusion. Of the total participants, 56% indicated that they had some personal experience with a family member or friend with a disability.

Setting

This study was conducted in M-DCPS. This district is the fourth largest urban school district in the U.S. with an enrollment of 345,150 students, of whom 25,361 were identified as students with disabilities (M-DCPS, Statistical Highlights, 2009). The district racial ethnicity breakdown was 62.5% Hispanic, 25.7% African American, 9.1% White Non-Hispanic and 2.7% Other. During the school year 2008 – 2009 the district average of students on free or reduced lunch was 63.4% (M-DCPS, Statistical Highlights, 2009).

The inclusionary criteria established to include school principals in this study were that the principal must have been in a secondary school setting and in a traditional school site. A traditional school site was one with the district standard grade configuration and the full complement of grade levels (not a newly opened facility). The district had 81 secondary schools that met the definition to be included in this study. For the purpose of this study all the principals of these schools were asked to complete the research survey.

Data Collection

The inclusion percentages of all participating schools were obtained by district generated reports. M-DCPS monitors individual schools' inclusion rates and produced a monthly report that illustrates the percentage of time students with disabilities spent with their non-disabled peers. These data were provided as a total school percentage as well as

disaggregated by disability group. The information sought is considered public

information and; therefore, was available to the public. This information was used to

determine if a relationship existed based on the responses provided by the participants on

the principals' survey.

Instrument/Survey Used

A Principal's Belief Survey was constructed (see Appendix B) to collect the data

needed for this research utilizing information gathered during the study's literature

review. Validity was estimated utilizing expert judge validity techniques (Newman &

Newman, 1994). The survey was shared with five college professors with expertise in the

areas of special education, research design and implementation, school leadership and

inclusion. In addition, a focus group made up of six special education doctoral students in

various leadership roles and experience with special education reviewed the survey

instrument. Both groups reviewed, and provided feedback on the survey's format, content

and usability. In part 1 their feedback resulted in the addition of questions regarding the

experience received at the assistant principal level, the training received in special

education as opposed to inclusion, as well as transforming the training questions to allow

the participant to indicate their hours as oppose to a scale being provided.   In part 2 the

focus group's feedback resulted in utilizing a 4-point Likert scale. Finally, the survey was

reviewed by a focus group of practicing school site assistant principals to ascertain that

the variables selected were addressing the appropriate category. Their feedback

confirmed that the questions utilized were addressing the constructs they intended.

Assistant principals were used as they too are in leadership roles at the school sites, and

their participation would have taken away from the possible candidates for the final

version of the study. Upon completion of the survey and reviewing the results no significant relationship was present. This prompted the researcher to run a Cronbach Alpha to verify reliability of the questions being used. This analysis allowed for correlation between the items identified to determine question reliability (Newman & Newman, 1994).

The purpose of the Principal's Survey was to collect data on the training of the principal with respect to special education and inclusion, as well as the principal's beliefs about the academic benefits of inclusion, the social benefits of inclusion, the placement of students with disabilities, and the budgeting/financial requirements of an inclusion program. Each variable was addressed multiple times in the survey in separate questions. The answers to these questions were regrouped to confirm the respondent's beliefs on the variable. Four open-ended questions were provided to obtain more detailed information on the principal's beliefs on how their prior training/experience in special education has affected inclusion in their school, their beliefs on the academic and social benefits of inclusion, their beliefs of the most appropriate placement/setting for students with disabilities, and their beliefs of how the budget/financial situation at their school affects the implementation of inclusion.

The survey collected data based on a Likert scale that consisted of a range of one (1) to four (4). This required the participants to commit to their responses and not take a neutral stance to any question. This was done so that the compiled data would produce a result that commits to supporting a position, be it positive or negative, towards the variable in question; therefore, providing a better opportunity to identify a relationship if one exists. There are 15 statements that addressed the variables of placement (e.g. all

students with disabilities should be educated in an inclusive setting), academic benefits (e.g. the academic benefits of inclusion warrant its implementation), social benefits (e.g. students in inclusion settings are involved in fewer discipline referrals), training (e.g. I feel confident in my ability to implement an inclusion program), and budgeting/financial requirements (e.g. inclusion settings are too costly to fully implement).

The full survey with all statements addressing these variables is available in Appendix B. The results from the responses were aggregated by mean results for each variable that was then compared to the percentage of time students with disabilities spent with their non-disabled peers to identify if any statistically significant linear relationships between specified variables existed.

Procedures

Prior to the implementation of this study, the researcher obtained University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to carry out research in a school setting. Permission from the school systems research review board was also obtained in order to access school data. Once this was completed, a request was submitted to M-DCPS to obtain the most up-to-date report on the inclusive percentage of all the schools in the study. This request was made after the time M-DCPS conducted one of its Full Time Equivalent (FTE) survey periods. This FTE period identifies all students that are officially enrolled at each school and a student's presence during this FTE period is essential for his or her inclusion in future standardized tests data. This is also the time of year when principals have leveled out class enrollment and stabilized inclusion settings. These data were utilized to determine any relationships between the variables identified earlier.

All possible participants were sent a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and participants' rights via the participant's informed consent form. If a principal made the decision to participate in the study he/she had the option of completing and returning the survey electronically or via U.S. mail. A second attempt to obtain participants was made 2 weeks after the initial letters were sent. The principals who did not respond were contacted via telephone to try to obtain their participation. Approximately 25 principals were contacted by phone. The cover letter, consent form, and survey were sent electronically or by mail as per the requests of the principal. Data analysis commenced 30 days after the initial mailing of the survey packets.

Research Design

An ex post facto research designed was utilized in this study. Newman and Newman (1994) indicate that ex post facto research and correlational research are sometimes utilized interchangeably. This type of research cannot infer causation because it does not have experimental control to achieve internal validity. Even with its weakness ex post facto design is appropriate for the research questions being utilized as they are dealing with relationships (Newman & Newman, 1994).

Data Analysis

All the information obtained from the Likert scale responses, as well as the data from the information requests, was entered into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software file to be analyzed. All data collected were entered into SPSS in numerical format; any data not originally provided by the participants in numerical format was transcribed based on a predetermined conversion protocol. The Likert scale

information for like variables was averaged and then entered into SPSS to represent the participant's response.

After all available data were entered into SPSS; a data analysis was conducted via a simple linear regression analysis of the dependent variable, percentage of time spent with non-disabled peers, and the five independent variables:

1. The training of the principal with respect to special education and inclusion.

2. The principal's beliefs about the academic benefits of inclusion.

3. The principal's beliefs about the social benefits of inclusion.

4. The principal's beliefs about the placement of students with disabilities.

5. The principal's beliefs about the budgeting/financial requirements of an inclusion program.

Linear regressions were utilized because they are more flexible than traditional analyses of variance. The data analysis did not produce significant results therefore there was no need to conduct the F test or to control for a Type I error.

The open-ended questions were analyzed to obtain more detailed information to assist in explaining the SPSS data analysis results. The open-ended questions were:

1. Describe how your prior training/experience in special education has affected inclusion in your school.

2. What are your beliefs about the academic and social benefits of inclusion?

3. What do you believe is the most appropriate placement/setting for students with disabilities?

4. How do you believe the budget/financial situation at your school affects your implementation of inclusion?

These questions were developed to provide a deeper insight into the principal's belief in inclusion. They were developed based on the literature review and input from the experts utilized for the face validity process and then used with the entire survey instrument. This project utilized coding categories and the identification of themes in the analysis in order to provide additional information to the quantitative data collected (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Coding categories were identified in order to assist in identifying regularities and patterns that exists in the responses from the participants. These categories were translated into trends or common conceptions held by the participants. The purpose of the open-ended questions was to allow the participants to further express their beliefs in the constructs being studied.

The responses from each question were reviewed with the intent of identifying a common theme. Each participant's response to the open ended question was read one at a time. Each new response was coded as a possible theme. Each additional response was reviewed. If the participant's answer could be grouped with an existing possible theme, it was recorded to indicate that theme was repeated. If the response indicated a new theme, this new theme was provided a new code. This was repeated with each participant who responded to the open-ended questions. It should be noted that the open ended questions were not always answered by the participants, and even then some did not always answer every question. After reviewing all the responses for one question, the results for the themes identified were coded so the research could identify the number of times a theme was indicated by the participants. The total number of responses received for each theme was divided by the total number of responses received in order to develop a percentage for each theme. The percentages were analyzed and the top two themes were identified

for further use in this study. The top two responses were utilized due to the fact that the difference between the second response and those that followed was large enough as to make the other responses insignificant. The only exception to this was question 33. In this question one theme was received in over half the responses. The second and third theme identified was very close in the percentage of time it was recorded. The decision to still use the top two themes was made in order to maintain consistency in the procedures utilized in this study.

Chapter Summary

A principals' survey was utilized to collect information on the background and beliefs of secondary school principals who met the criteria established in this study. The survey utilized a Likert scale to collect information on the training of the principal with respect to special education and inclusion, the principal's beliefs about the academic benefits of inclusion, the principal's beliefs about the social benefits of inclusion, the principal's beliefs about the placement of students with disabilities, and the principal's beliefs about the budgeting/financial requirements of an inclusion program. Once obtained, this information was entered into a statistical analysis program to identify any relationship that existed between the identified variables and the percentage of time students with disabilities spent with their non-disabled peers. Additionally, open-ended responses on the survey were utilized to obtain a deeper understanding of the principals' beliefs in the constructs being studied.

This information will add to and expand the body of literature that exists on school site principals and their relationship to the time that students with disabilities spend with their non-disabled peers. This study was conducted at the secondary level to

expand the limited studies that have been conducted in this area, and to collect data that

may assist in the improvement of principal preparation programs.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

The following chapter reviews the results obtained from the data collection from the Miami-Dade County Public School district as well as the individual principal surveys. First, a review of the preliminary analysis was conducted on all results collected in the principals' survey. Any items that indicated further exploration were analyzed and additional variables of interest were created. During this preliminary analysis age and gender were not significant therefore they were not included in subsequent analysis. Part 2 of the survey (questions 15 – 28) was analyzed to identify any results that would require a question being eliminated; all valid questions of like constructs were then combined to create the five construct areas that were utilized for further exploration. The results from the preliminary exploration were then utilized in the main analysis. The main analysis compared the results from the survey with the original research questions. Finally, a post hoc analysis was conducted on items that were identified as benefiting from further exploration.

Preliminary Analysis

Demographics

A descriptive analysis was conducted on the demographics section of the principals' survey (questions 1–14). The results from this analysis are in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Data

Questions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
3 How many years of experience did you have as a classroom teacher?	62	4.00	17.00	8.2258	3.17609
4 How many years of experience did you have as an assistant principal?	62	2.00	18.00	7.5726	3.42106
5 How many total years of experience have you had as a school site principal?	61	.00	15.00	5.4180	3.22772
6 How many years have you been a principal at the secondary level?	62	.00	12.00	5.0242	2.96624
7 How many years were you a principal at the elementary level, if applicable?	54	.00	4.00	.3889	1.05360
8 How many years have you been at your current location?	61	.00	20.00	3.7049	3.57115
9 Do you have a degree in the area of Special Education?	62	.00	1.00	.1613	.37080
10 Have you had personal experience with a family member or friend with a disability?	61	.00	1.00	.5574	.50082

(*table continues*)

Table 2 (*continued*)

Questions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
11 Please indicate the number of college courses in Special Education you have received.	61	.00	100.00	7.1967	17.05366
12 Please indicate the number of Master Plan Points (MPP) (i.e., 10 MPP of professional development in Special Education you have received.	61	.00	360.00	30.0656	51.24740
13 Please indicate the number of college courses of formal training in Inclusion you have received.	60	.00	10.00	.6833	1.74173
14 Please indicate the number of Master Plan Points (i.e., 10 MPP) of professional development in Inclusion.	61	.00	80.00	11.3770	18.68347

The mean and standard deviation were compared and any discrepancy was further investigated. Questions 11, 12, 13, and 14 had standard deviations that were higher than their means indicating that further statistical explorations were needed. In addition, these questions dealt with a principal's training in the area of special education and inclusion. Given that the training and background of the principals were major components of this study, further exploration could lead to the possible creation of new variables to be utilized in the data analysis to see which best fit the data that were collected.

Further Exploration of Questions 11, 12, 13, and 14

Table 3 depicts the further exploration of question 11; it was determined that the variation in the data collected for this variable was large. In order to assist in exploring this variable further two additional variations of processing these data were developed.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics Question 11 and Variations of Original

Questions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
11 Please indicate the number of college courses in Special Education you have received.	61	.00	100.00	7.1967	17.05366
Question 11 depicted as a range	61	.00	4.00	1.5410	1.57664
Question 11 depicted as yes/no	61	.00	1.00	.6066	.49257
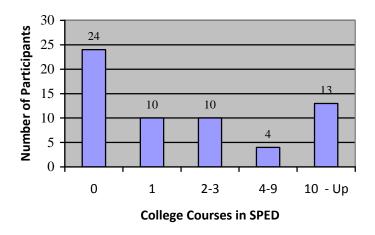
Figure 1. Question 11 range frequency.

The first new variable was created by transforming the original data collected from the surveys into a range. The range that was utilized was created from the data provided in the steam and leaf plot. Ranges were created that would represent the data collected, but at the same time reduce the large variation and outliers in the data. In addition, the original data were transformed into a simple yes/no variable. The data illustrated that 38.7 % of respondents indicated that they did not have any college courses in special education, while 59.7 % indicated that they had at least one college course. This new variable allowed the researcher to explore the possible relationship that might have existed between having some background/training as opposed to having none.

Table 4 depicts the further exploration of question 12; it was determined that the variation in the data collected for this variable was large. In order to assist in exploring this variable further two additional variations of processing these data were developed.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics Question 12 and Variations of Original

| Questions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
12 Please indicate the number of Master Plan Points (i.e., 10 MPP of professional development in Special Education you have received.	61	.00	360.00	30.0656	51.24740
Question 12 depicted as ranges.	61	.00	4.00	1.7869	1.58235
Question 12 depicted as yes/no	61	.00	1.00	.6721	.47333
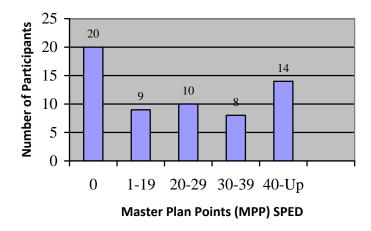
Figure 2. Question 12 range frequency.

The first new variable was created by transforming the original data collected from the surveys into a range. The range that was utilized was created from the data provided in the steam and leaf plot. Ranges were created that would represent the data collected, but at the same time reduce the large variation and outliers in the data. In addition, the original data were transformed into a simple yes/no variable. The data indicated that 32.3 % of respondents indicated that they did not have any master plan points or district training in special education, while 66.1 % indicated that they had at least one training session. This new variable allowed the researcher to explore the possible relationship that might have existed between having some background/training as opposed to having none at all.

Table 5 depicts the further exploration of question 13; it was determined that the variation in the data collected for this variable was large. In order to assist in exploring this variable further two additional variations of processing these data were developed.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics Question 13 and Variations of Original

Questions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
13 Please indicate the number of college courses of formal training in Inclusion you have received	60	.00	10.00	.6833	1.74173
Question 13 depicted as ranges.	60	.00	4.00	.4167	.88857
Question 13 depicted as yes/no	60	.00	1.00	.2333	.42652
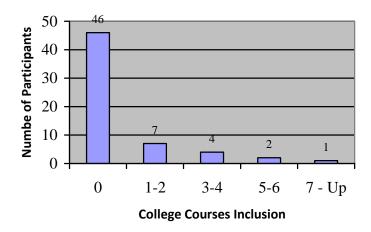
Figure 3. Question 13 range frequency.

The first new variable was created by transforming the original data collected from the surveys into a range. The range that was utilized was created from the data provided in the steam and leaf plot. Ranges were created that would represent the data collected, but at the same time reduce the large variation and outliers in the data. In addition, the original data were transformed into a simple yes/no variable. The data

indicated that 46 % of respondents indicated that they did not have any college courses in

inclusion, while 14 % indicated that they had at least one college course in inclusion.

This new variable allowed the researcher to explore the possible relationship that might

have existed between having some background/training as opposed to having none at all.

Table 6 depicts the further exploration of question 14; it was determined that the

variation in the data collected for this variable was large. In order to assist in exploring

this variable further two additional variations of processing these data were developed.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics Question 14 and Variations of Original

| Question	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
14 Please indicate the number of Master Plan Points (i.e., 10 MPP) of professional development in Inclusion	61	.00	80.00	11.3770	18.68347
Question 14 depicted as rages.	61	.00	10.00	2.9180	3.55103
Question 14 depicted as yes/no	61	.00	1.00	.5738	.49863
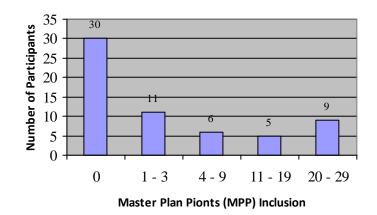
Figure 4. Question 14 range frequency.

The first new variable was created by transforming the original data collected from the surveys into a range. The range that was utilized was created from the data provided in the steam and leaf plot. Ranges were created that would represent the data collected, but at the same time reduce the large variation and outliers in the data. In addition, the original data were transformed into a simple yes/no variable. The data indicated that 26 % of respondents indicated that they did not have any master plan points or district training in inclusion, while 35 % indicated that they had at least one training session in inclusion. This new variable allowed the researcher to explore the possible relationship that might have existed between having some background/training as opposed to having none at all.

Part 1 of the principal's survey was analyzed and explored to identify any patterns and trends that required further investigation. The variables of interest that were identified as needing further exploration were analyzed and additional variations to the original questions were created to be utilized in further data analysis. The validity of the data of this part of the survey was confirmed and variables of interest were utilized in the post hoc analysis.

Constructs

A descriptive analysis was conducted on part II of the principal's survey (questions 15 – 29). The results from this analysis are reflected in the table below.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics Part II of Principal's Survey

Questions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
15 All students with disabilities should be educated in an inclusive setting.	62	1.00	4.00	1.9516	.96543
16 A student's behavior has a major emphasis on determining placement in general.	62	1.00	4.00	2.6290	.94494
17 I feel confident in my ability to implement an inclusion program.	62	2.00	4.00	3.5968	.52666
18 The method used to fund my inclusion program is sufficient to sustain its needs.	62	1.00	4.00	2.3710	1.07481
19 Students with disabilities being educated in an inclusive classroom take away from the non-disabled students meeting their academic potential.	62	2.00	4.00	3.4194	.69065
20 Inclusion settings are too costly to fully implement.	62	1.00	4.00	3.1613	.87203

(table continues)

Table 7 *(continued)*

Questions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
21 Students' achievement scores on standardized tests should determine placement in an inclusion program.	62	1.00	3.00	1.6935	.73749
22 Special education teacher allocations are sufficient to meet the needs of my school's inclusion program.	60	1.00	4.00	2.2667	1.14783
23 I have been adequately trained in inclusion to implement a successful inclusion program.	61	1.00	4.00	2.6885	.78615
24 The academic needs of a student with a disability can be serviced in a resource room as well as in a general education classroom.	62	1.00	4.00	2.5806	.87868
25 My school has adequate staff necessary to implement an inclusion program without affecting other scheduled programs.	62	1.00	4.00	2.5484	1.08155

(table continues)

Table 7 *(continued)*

Questions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
26 Students with disabilities being educated in an inclusive setting display more appropriate behavior than those in a resource room setting.	61	1.00	4.00	2.6393	.89504
27 My understanding of inclusion is sufficient to implement a successful inclusion program.	59	2.00	4.00	3.2203	.58921
28 Inclusion is the most appropriate setting for a student with a disability.	62	1.00	4.00	2.3387	.72301
29 The academic benefits of inclusion warrant its implementation.	61	1.00	4.00	3.2459	.82977

The questions utilized in part two of the survey were designed based on the five

constructs that were being studied by this investigation. In reviewing the results it was

preliminarily determined that the data collected from the surveys on these questions were

valid and could be utilized for further exploration. The data from the like questions were

combined to create the variables that would represent the constructs that were utilized in

further exploration of the research questions. Questions 15, 21, and 28 were combined to create the placement construct. Questions 19, 24, and 29 were combined to create the academic construct. Questions 17, 23, and 27 were combined to create the training construct. Questions 16, 22, and 26 were combined to create the behavior construct. Finally, questions 18, 20, and 25 were combined to create the budget construct. The following table indicates the descriptive statistics for these new constructs that were utilized in further statistical analysis while investigating the research questions.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for New Constructs

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Placement Construct: Combination of questions 15, 21, 28	62	1.00	3.33	1.9946	.56456
Academic Construct: Combination of questions 19, 24, 29	62	2.00	4.00	3.0780	.48447
Training Construct: Combination of questions 17, 23, 27	62	2.00	4.00	3.1720	.53474
Behavior Construct: Combination of questions 16, 22, 26	62	1.67	4.00	2.5215	.57139
Behavior2 Construct: Combination of questions 16 and 22	62	1.00	4.00	2.4516	.79810
Budget Construct: Combination of questions 18, 20, 25	62	1.00	4.00	2.6935	.77600

A correlation analysis was conducted on the new constructs that were created utilizing the original answers to the questions in part II of the principal's survey. The correlations between the new constructs and the individual items indicated that all correlations were above .547 with the exception of question 26 which had a correlation of .411. Question 26 was thrown out and the behavior construct was utilized without this question included. The correlations for the remaining items and their constructs ranged from .547 to .883 supporting the usage of the combined constructs to be in further statistical analysis. The data to identify possible relationships in the research questions utilized the five new constructs of placement, academic, training, behavior and budget. Upon completion of the analysis no significant relationship was identified. The researcher returned to the original survey questions and conducted a Cronbach's Alpha analysis. This analysis revealed the Cronbach's Alpha for the placement construct to be .455, the academic construct to be .125, the training construct to be .735, the behavior construct to be -.40 and the budget construct to be .650. These indicated that the original questions had low reliability and may have been a reason for this study not finding any statistically relevant relationships.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable of time that students with disabilities (SWD) spent with their non-disabled peers was obtained from district data reports. The data collected were the percentage of time that SWD spend 80% or more of their time with non-disabled peers. An example of these data would be that 35% of the SWD at the location spend 80% of their day with their non-disabled peers. Table 9 contains the descriptive data representing the dependent variable.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variable

Questions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total percentage of SPED students at that location spending 80% or more with non-disabled.	62	11.57	94.40	47.5456	17.81386
Valid N (listwise)	62				

The original dependent variable, and the variations developed during the study, was utilized in the investigation of the research questions. This analysis was utilized to test the research questions of this study as well as to identify additional research opportunities that may come about from this research project.

Research Question Analysis

Question 1

Do principals' prior training in special education and inclusion have a linear relationship to the percentage of time students with disabilities spend with non-disabled peers?

Research Question 1 looked to see if a linear relationship existed between the training a principal received and the inclusion percentage at his or her respective school. A correlation analysis was conducted with the dependent variable and the survey questions that addressed principal training (Questions 11–14). The variations of the original survey questions that were developed as described previously were also included in this analysis.

Table 10

Pearson Correlation Data for Principal Training Question 11 Versus Dependent

Variable and Variations of Both

		Question 11	Question 11 depicted as ranges	Question 11 depicted as yes/no.
Inclusion Percentage	Pearson Correlation	-0.061	-0.189	-.268(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.638	0.145	0.036
	N	61	61	61
Inclusion Percentage Range	Pearson Correlation	-0.019	-0.154	-0.236
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.884	0.236	0.067
	N	61	61	61

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 11

Correlation Data for Principal Training Question 12 Versus Dependent Variable and

Variations of Both

		Question 12	Question 12 depicted as ranges.	Question 12 depicted as yes/no.
Inclusion Percentage	Pearson Correlation	0.030	-0.017	-0.192
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.820	0.896	0.137
	N	61	61	61
Inclusion Percentage Range	Pearson Correlation	0.090	0.034	-0.157
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.489	0.792	0.227
	N	61	61	61

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 12

Correlation Data for Principal Training Question 13 Versus Dependent Variable and

Variations of Both

		Question 13	Question 13 depicted as ranges.	Question 13 depicted as yes/no
Inclusion Percentage	Pearson Correlation	-0.106	-0.121	-0.224
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.419	0.357	0.086
	N	60	60	60
Inclusion Percentage Range	Pearson Correlation	-0.135	-0.146	-0.236
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.303	0.266	0.070
	N	60	60	60

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 13

Correlation Data for Principal Training Question 14 Versus Dependent Variable and

Variations of Both

		Question 14	Question 14 depicted as ranges.	Question 14 depicted as yes/no.
Inclusion Percentage	Pearson Correlation	-0.015	-0.028	-0.180
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.910	0.831	0.165
	N	61	61	61
Inclusion Percentage Range	Pearson Correlation	0.022	0.000	-0.147
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.865	0.997	0.257
	N	61	61	61

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results of this analysis indicated that there was only one significant

relationship between the dependent variable and if a principal did or did not have at least

one course in special education. In Table 10 the significance between the total percentage

of SPED students at that location spending 80% or more of their time with non-disabled peers and if a principal had any college courses in special education was a -.268(*). This negative relationship indicates that if a principal had at least one college class in special education the students with disabilities in their school spent less time with their non-disabled peers as compared to the principals who indicated that they had no classes in special education.

Question 2

Do principals' beliefs about the academic benefits of inclusive settings have a relationship in the percentage of time students with disabilities spend with their non-disabled peers?

Research Question 2 asked if a relationship existed between the principals' beliefs about academic benefits and the dependent variable of the inclusion percentages at their respective schools. A correlation analysis was conducted with the dependent variable and the constructs to identify if a relationship existed. Table 14 displays the results of the correlation analysis.

Table 14

Correlation Data for Constructs Versus Dependent Variable

		Placement Construct: Questions 15, 21, 28	Academic Construct: Questions 19, 24, 29	Training Construct: Questions 17, 23, 27	Behavior Construct: Questions 16 and 22	Budget Construct: Questions 18, 20, 25
Inclusion Percentage	Pearson Correlation	-0.004	-.290(*)	-0.092	-0.198	-0.132
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.976	0.022	0.475	0.124	0.307
	N	62	62	62	62	62

Note.   **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
            *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The data in Table 14 indicated that the only significant correlation existed between the academic construct and the dependent variable (-.290*). This finding of significance would not have occurred if the study controlled for multiple comparisons. Therefore this analysis did not indicate a relationship.

Question 3

Do principals' beliefs about the social benefits of inclusive settings have a linear relationship in the percentage of time students with disabilities spend with their non-disabled peers?

Research Question 3 asked if a linear relationship existed between the principals' beliefs of the social benefits of inclusion and the actual time that students with disabilities spent with their non-disabled peers. A linear correlation analysis was conducted with the dependent variable and the behavior construct to identify if a linear relationship existed. Table 14 indicates that there was no significant relationship between these two variables.

Question 4

Do principals' beliefs about the placement (instructional setting) of students with disabilities have a linear relationship in the percentage of time students with disabilities spend with their non-disabled peers?

Research Question 4 asked if a linear relationship existed between the principals' beliefs about placement of students with disabilities and the actual time that students with disabilities spent with their non-disabled peers. A correlation analysis was conducted with the dependent variable and the placement construct to identify if a linear relationship existed. Table 14 indicates that there was no significant relationship between these two variables.

Question 5

Do principals' beliefs about budgeting/financial support of inclusion programs have a linear relationship in the percentage of time students with disabilities spend with their non-disabled peers?

Research Question 5 asked if a linear relationship existed between the principals' beliefs about financial support of inclusion and the actual time that students with disabilities spent with their non-disabled peers. A linear correlation analysis was conducted with the dependent variable and the budget construct to identify if a relationship existed. Table 14 indicates that there was no significant relationship between these two variables.

The results of the correlation analysis between the dependent variable and the constructs derived from this study indicate that the original research questions of this research were not supported. The results generated additional questions in order to further investigate the results to see if another factor could account for the results. Those additional questions were

1. Does the configuration of the school—middle versus high school—influence the inclusion percentages at that location?

2. Is there a range or threshold of the inclusion percentage that would be influenced by the school site principal's training or beliefs?

3. Do the age and/or gender of the administrator have an influence?

4. Do the different types of disabilities have an influence?

Open-ended questions were incorporated into the original principal survey. The responses to these open-ended questions, original survey questions, and additional data that were

originally collected from the district were able to be utilized in further analysis. The additional questions were developed to try to address the results obtained and were investigated and addressed in a post hoc analysis.

<div align="center">**Post Hoc Analysis**</div>

During the initial data collection, data on the percentage of each secondary grade level (6-12) student with disability who spent at least 80% or more time with their non-disabled peers were collected. In addition, data were collected for the percentage of inclusion by the category of student disability. These data along with the survey questions and constructs were analyzed for any relationship. The data indicated that there was no significant linear relationship between any of the selected variables.

Further post hoc analyses were conducted utilizing the open-ended questions incorporated into the original survey instrument. The open-ended questions were analyzed for common themes. The themes for each question were listed and every time the theme was repeated it was recorded. The top two themes identified for each question were then coded to be utilized in further investigation utilizing a Chi-Squared analysis.

Question 30

Describe how your prior training in special education has affected inclusion in your school.

Participants were provided the opportunity to describe how they believe their training in special education affected the implementation of inclusion in their schools. Participants' responses were analyzed for common themes that could be utilized in further analysis of the original research questions. Table 15 indicates the themes identified for this question and the number of responses recorded for each theme.

Table 15

Open-ended Question 30 Theme Analysis: Prior Training

Theme	Responses	Percent
Believe all children can learn.	3	7.0
On the job training helped implementation *	23	53.5
Received little training, but still implemented program. *	11	25.6
Had formal training (College Courses).	5	11.6
Experience with friend/family member with disability.	1	2.3
Total responses	43	

Note. * Utilized in further analysis

Question 31

What are your beliefs about the academic and social benefits of inclusion?

Participants were provided the opportunity to describe their beliefs of the benefits

of inclusion in reference to students' academic and social instruction. Participants'

responses were analyzed for common themes that could be utilized in further analysis of

the original research questions. Table 16 indicates the themes identified for this question

and the number of responses recorded for each theme.

Table 16

Open-ended Question 31 Theme Analysis: Benefits of Inclusion

Theme	Responses	Percent
One size does not fit all.	8	16.3
Co-teacher collegiality is vital link.	4	8.2
Inclusion raises the bar for students with disabilities; they are exposed to general curriculum. *	13	26.5
Students with disabilities benefit from. spending time with their non-disabled peers. *	24	49.0
Total responses	49	

Note. * Utilized in further analysis

Question 32

What do you believe is the most appropriate placement/setting for students with

disabilities?

Participants were provided the opportunity to describe their belief of the ideal

placement/setting for students with disabilities. Participants' responses were analyzed for

common themes that could be utilized in further analysis of the original research

questions. Table 17 indicates the themes identified for this question and the number of

responses recorded for each theme.

Table 17

Open-ended Question 32 Theme Analysis: Appropriate Settings

Theme	Responses	Percent
One size does not fit all; it depends on the individual student. *	27	54
Student with disability must be ready for inclusion.	2	4
Inclusion needs appropriate support.	3	6
Placement depends on student's disability. *	13	26
Least restrictive environment.	4	8
Depends on standardized assessments.	1	2
Total responses	50	

Note. * Utilized in further analysis

Question 33

How do you believe the budget/financial situation affects your implementation of

inclusion?

Participants were provided the opportunity to identify their beliefs of how the

budget impacts their ability to implement what they perceive to be an effective inclusion

program. Participants' responses were analyzed for common themes that could be utilized

in further analysis of the original research questions. Table 18 indicates the themes

identified for this question and the number of responses recorded for each theme.

Table 18

Open-ended Question 33 Theme Analysis: Funding

Theme	Responses	Percent
Allocation/Budget determines successful inclusion program (not utilized as this answer states funding is important, but did not commit to saying if funding is sufficient).	7	13.7
Funding is insufficient to implement program. *	26	51.0
Additional teacher training is needed.	2	3.9
Need for smaller class size.	5	9.8
Funding is sufficient. *	8	15.7
Not enough time to implement program.	2	3.9
Too many different disabilities to service.	1	2.0
Total responses	51	

Note. * Utilized in further analysis

The information gathered from the thematic analysis was combined with the data

gathered from the Principal's Inclusion Survey. The open-ended questions were analyzed

and the top two themes that were recorded as being written by the participants were

utilized in further analysis. A correlation analysis was conducted with these new themes

and the original dependent variable, and there was no significant relationship indicated.

Then a Chi-Squared analysis was conducted to identify if there were any factors that

influenced the results obtained in this research study. Since the original data analysis did

not identify a relationship with the original research questions, this researcher wanted to

investigate all factors that could explain the results obtained and possible topics for

further study. During this post hoc investigation three variables from the Principal's

Survey were identified as possibly contributing, or providing further clarification, to the study when compared to the themes obtained in the open-ended questions. These three variables were the participant gender, having a degree in special education, and having at least one professional development session in inclusion. Table 19 depicts the data collected.

Table 19

Participants' Gender and Training Responses

| | | | On The Job Training (OJT) vs Little Training | | |
			.00	1.00	Total
Gender	.00	Count	11	5	16
		% within Gender	68.8%	31.3%	100.0%
		% within OJT vs Little Training	52.4%	50.0%	51.6%
	1.00	Count	10	5	15
		% within Gender	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
		% within OJT vsLittle Training	47.6%	50.0%	48.4%
Total		Count	21	10	31
		% within 2 Gender	67.7%	32.3%	100.0%
		% within OJT vs Little Training	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 19 indicates that both male and female respondents reported that they received their "training" on the job, 66.7% and 68.8% respectively. In their open-ended questions, the majority of both genders indicated that they attribute their training to on

the job training. The Pearson Chi-Square significance level was .602, which is not

significant.

Table 20

Special Education Degrees and Belief of Inclusion Benefits

| | | | Reports academic bar raised vs socially exposed to non-disabled peers | | Total |
			.00	1.00	
Do you have a degree in the area of Special Education (SPED)?	.00	Count	11	19	30
		% within degree SPED	36.7%	63.3%	100.0%
		% within Reports academic bar raised vs socially exposed to non-disabled peers	84.6%	86.4%	85.7%
	1.00	Count	2	3	5
		% within degree SPED	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
		% within Reports academic bar raised vs socially exposed to non-disabled peers	15.4%	13.6%	14.3%
Total		Count	13	22	35
		% within degree SPED	37.1%	62.9%	100.0%
		% within Reports academic bar raised vs being socially exposed to non-disabled peers	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Crosstab

Table 20 indicates that it did not matter if the respondent did or did not respond to

having a degree in special education, the majority of both groups (62.9%) indicated that

inclusion had a social benefit to students with disabilities in their open-ended questions.

The Pearson Chi-Square significance level was .626, which is not significant.

Table 21

Special Education Degrees and Placement Beliefs

Crosstab					
			Reports students individual needs determine placement vs the student's disability		
			.00	1.00	Total
Do you have a degree in the area of Special Education (SPED)?	.00	Count	21	12	33
		% within degree in SPED	63.6%	36.4%	100.0%
		% within Reports students individual needs determine placement vs the student's disability	80.8%	92.3%	84.6%
	1.00	Count	5	1	6
		% within degree in SPED	83.3%	16.7%	100.0%
		% within Reports students individual needs determine placement vs the student's disability	19.2%	7.7%	15.4%
Total		Count	26	13	39
		% within degree in SPED	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
		% within Reports students individual needs determine placement vs the student's disability	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 21 indicates that 83.3% of respondents who indicated that they had at least one training in the area of special education identified the student's individual needs to be the most important factor in placement, where only 63.6% of those not having any training indicated the student's needs as important. The Pearson Chi-Square significance level was .333, which is not significant. Although there was no significance, the responses from the participants who have background/training in special education, when given the opportunity to elaborate on constructs, recognized the importance of the individual student in making placement decisions. Those participants indicating no training, when given the opportunity to elaborate on constructs, also recognized the importance of the individual student in making placement decisions.

Table 22

Inclusion Training and Placement Decisions

<div align="center">Crosstab</div>

			Reports students individual needs determine placement vs the student's disability		
			.00	1.00	Total
Please indicate if you have any Master Plan Points (MPP) of professional development in Inclusion.	.00	Count	5	8	13
		% within MPP in Inclusion.	38.5%	61.5%	100.0%
		% within Reports students individual needs determine placement vs the student's disability	20.0%	61.5%	34.2%

(table continues)

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Table 22 *(continued)*

| | | | Reports students individual needs determine placement vs the student's disability | | |
			.00	1.00	Total
	1.00	Count	20	5	25
		% within MPP in Inclusion.	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
		% within Reports students individual needs determine placement vs the student's disability	80.0%	38.5%	65.8%
Total		Count	25	13	38
		% within MPP in Inclusion.	65.8%	34.2%	100.0%
		% within Reports students individual needs determine placement vs the student's disability	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 22 indicates that when the respondents who had at least one training in the area of inclusion were compared to the same placement factor the following results were obtained. Of the respondents who had at least one training session in inclusion, 80% identified the student's individual needs as the major placement factor as compared to 38.5% of who indicated not having any inclusion training. The Pearson Chi-Square significance level was .014, which is not significant. Although the results are not significant this post hoc investigation suggested that when the participants were able to elaborate on constructs those having some training in the area of special education or

inclusion had increased sensitivity to the individual needs of the students with disabilities.

Based on these results a general linear model univarite analysis was conducted to further investigate if the combination of having some training in inclusion and the open-ended question response of the individual student as the focus of a decision had a relationship to the original dependent variable. The results of this analysis indicated that whether the variables were held separate from each other, or combined, they had no significant relationship to the dependent variable. The percentage of time students with disabilities spent with their non-disabled peers did not have a statistical relationship to the variables identified during the post hoc analysis of the open-ended principal survey question results.

Chapter Summary

A thorough investigation was conducted with the data collected and the main dependent variable of the percentage of time that students with disabilities spend with their non-disabled peers. This investigation produced results that did not support the original research questions of this study. Additional factors were identified and a post hoc analysis was conducted in order to address other possible factors that may have influenced the results obtained in this study. During the post hoc analysis, having some form of training in the area of special education or inclusion seemed to increase the likelihood that the school site administrator would take the students' with disabilities individual needs into account when making placement decisions. However, when further statistical analysis was conducted this finding still did not have a statistical relationship to

the original dependent variable. In the next chapter the results of this investigation will be discussed.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

The following section details the conclusions derived from the results of this study. First presented is a brief overview of the study followed by a summary of the results with respect to relevant literature in the area of inclusion and educational leadership. Last, the study's limitations, implications for practice, and suggestions for future research are presented.

This study sought to compare the inclusion data collected in an urban school district to the background and training of the secondary school site principal. This was done utilizing a survey instrument asking the principals to respond to both demographic questions as well as questions focused on the constructs being studied utilizing a Likert scale. The data and survey instrument were utilized to investigate if a linear relationship existed between the identified variables, principals' background, training and beliefs, and the dependent variable of the percentage of time students with disabilities spent with their non-disabled peers. Data were collected and analyzed on a total of 62 surveys; this represents a 76.54 % return rate.

Overall, the results of this study indicated that the original research questions were not supported. Additional post hoc analyses were conducted utilizing variables that were obtained via an analysis of the open-ended questions included on the survey to rule out any other confounding variables, and again no significant linear relationships were identified. Further analysis for a correlation was conducted on the new variables established and the original dependent variable. No significant linear relationship was identified. Generally, the results of this study do not support the findings of relevant

literature but do provide opportunities for further research in the area of special

education/inclusion and educational leadership.

Connection to Literature

Even though the overall findings of this study did not support the original

research questions, data are supported by current research in the area of inclusion and

educational leadership. This study looked to see if there was a relationship between the

background and training of school site principals and the actual time the students with

disabilities in their schools spent with their non-disabled peers. The research reviewed

indicated that the social benefits of an inclusion program are well documented

(McDonnell et al., 2001; Rea et al., 2002). This social benefit was supported by this

current study. In the open-ended questions the majority of the respondents, 62.9%,

indicated that they believed that students in the inclusion program were benefiting

socially from their placement. This social benefit supports the inclusion of students with

disabilities in the general education classroom, and it also exposes them to grade level

academic expectations. As in Carter and Hughes (2006), the participants in this study

generally believed that the inclusion program was beneficial to the students with

disabilities.

Praisner (2003) indicated that past experiences principals had with students with

disabilities also influenced their attitudes towards inclusion. This study supported this

theory in that 70% of the principals experiencing some type of training identified the

needs of the individual student as being the driving force in placement decisions. This

past experience/exposure to inclusion allows the principals to see the student as the focus

of attention, which in turns drives the decision making engine in the placement process.

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Finally, this study brought to light the importance of IDEA and the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for students with disabilities as well as the argument for social justice. Yell and Katsiyannis (2004) studied the legal requirements of IDEA (2004) and Section 504. Their recommendations for schools were that Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams take the individual needs of each student into account and that the student's placement (LRE) provides meaningful educational benefits. This study supports that principals exposed to some training in special education or inclusion did see the students' individual needs to be a driving force in the placement decision, and they also indicated that the inclusion setting was seen as socially beneficial. Theoharis's (2007) study supported the idea that principals would implement an inclusion program because it is the right thing to do, or what he referred to as social justice. This study did not specifically look at the principals' beliefs in social justice, but the fact that the majority of the respondents (62.9%) believed that inclusion had a benefit to the students even if they had no training or background in this area supports the idea that the concept of including everyone was "the right thing to do." The individual student's needs should be the driving force behind educational decisions.

The current study did not support the original research questions as it did not identify a relationship between the actual inclusion percentage data and principals' background and training, but it did collect data that supported the current research in the area of inclusion and educational leadership. Principals do believe that inclusion is beneficial for students with disabilities as seen by the number of principals that indicated the social benefits of inclusion in their open-ended responses. Further, the current research supports the fact that some training in the area of special education or inclusion

is related to the principals' beliefs toward the placement of student with disabilities. Although a statistically significant relationship was not established, the research did expand and support the current research literature.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study have important implications for current practice. One of the most salient points in the literature is that training of any kind in the area of special education or inclusion had an impact on the beliefs of secondary school site principals. The statistical analysis did not find a significant relationship. However, when participants were able to elaborate on constructs principals indicating exposure to training in special education had a higher percentage stating that the students with disabilities were the focal point in the placement decision. This could be utilized in the construction of topics covered in principal preparation programs.

Lasky and Karge (2006) conducted a study that supports the importance of the principal preparation program's role in the development of principals prepared to deal with special education. They recommended that research-based standards be incorporated into principal preparation programs. Angelle and Bilton (2009) found that even limited exposure to special education through principal preparation programs increases the comfort levels of novice principals. This could have an impact on how principal preparation programs are constructed. Having future administrators exposed to special education and inclusion may increase their ability to put the students' needs first which would impact the programs being implemented. In an environment of administrative decision making where one is expected to be an expert in many areas, having some sort

of background, even if it is limited, may provide the edge needed to keep the students'

needs in perspective.

Limitations

Limitations of this study should be noted. The primary means of obtaining data

from the principals was via a survey instrument. This required the principals to self-report

the number of credits or master plan points they have earned in the area of special

education and inclusion. Their beliefs were reported utilizing a Likert scale. The fact that

the principals' self-reported the training they have had may have caused the results in this

area to be skewed. Even thought a 4-point Likert scale was utilized so that the even

number of possible responses would cause the respondents to make a commitment to

their belief, the results were subjective to what the individual principals wanted to share

with this researcher. In addition, the survey instrument utilized expert judge validity

techniques. Upon further analysis utilizing the Cronbach's Alpha it was determined that

the constructs that were developed did not have high reliability which in turn would

affect the results of the study.

Second, the survey included open-ended questions that were utilized in the post

hoc analysis. Although these questions did provide additional insight into the secondary

principals' beliefs, it should be noted that not every participant provided a response to

these questions. Some participants answered a few, and some chose to skip this section

entirely. Their responses also varied in length and since the survey was not completed in

the presence of the researcher follow up/probing questions were not able to be utilized to

expand on the original answers. In addition, the concept of social justice was not directly

addressed by the survey instrument. Providing the opportunity for the participants to provide their beliefs on social justice would have strengthened the study.

Third, this study set out to measure if a linear relationship existed between the actual percentage of time students with disabilities (SWD) spend in inclusive classrooms with the beliefs and training of school site administrators. It should be noted that the Miami-Dade County Public School district has emphasized increasing the percentage of time that SWD spend with their non-disabled peers. This directive, along with the fact that IDEA also requires that school site administrators educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, may have had an effect on the outcome of this study. This may also explain why principals with little or no training in special education had higher inclusion rates. They may have been more driven in their decision making about placement by administrative pressures than by individual student needs.

Finally this study did not make any distinction in the extent or model of inclusion that was being implemented. The available data of time spent with non-disabled peers does not denote the model of inclusion being implemented (co-teaching, support facilitation or collaboration). This is also true in the survey utilized. The questions about principals' beliefs did not make any distinction in the model of inclusion being utilized so the principal could believe that the co-teaching model of inclusion is extremely beneficial, but support facilitation is not. The survey however was not designed to take these variables into consideration.

Suggestions for Future Research

The results of this study recommend several areas for future research. This study looked to establish a relationship between the background and training of school site

principals and the actual time students with disabilities spent with their non-disabled peers. During the collection of data it became evident that the majority of principals indicated that inclusion was socially beneficial. However, the academic benefits of inclusion were not identified as beneficial by the participants. Further research on the actual academic benefits of inclusion should be investigated. Students with disabilities in an inclusive setting should be exposed to the same academic rigor as their non-disabled peers, and they usually partake in the same standardized exams. An investigation on the results of standardized testing of the student in an inclusive setting would add to the research in this area. In addition, the actual graduation rate of students with disabilities as compared to their non-disabled peers would also indicate if there are academic benefits of being in an inclusive setting at the secondary level.

This research focused on the background and training of the secondary school site principal in the area of special education and inclusion. This study collected data via a principals' survey that required the respondents to self-report this data. Future studies in which the background and training of the participants was supported by school transcripts or district professional development records would allow for more precise data analysis. A threefold analysis of principals with college credits, those with district training, and those with no official training would provide sufficient data to make comparisons. The district training would have to be identified by the researcher as many respondents reported they received training in inclusion, but this study was unable to determine if this training was in the area of scheduling inclusion classes as opposed to what an inclusive classroom should look like. The type of training could make a difference in the overall results obtained. Further studies should seek data from districts indicating the type of

training for which principals were credited so the research would not rely on the self-reporting of the participant.

Finally, further research may want to consider utilizing a larger cross section of school districts. This current study was conducted in a large urban school district with a large minority student population; in fact, the minority in the district studied could be considered the majority. Utilizing multiple school districts would eliminate specific school district initiatives in the area of inclusion so as to isolate the principals' influence on these types of decisions.

Summary

This study investigated the relationship between the background, training, and beliefs of the secondary school site principal and the actual time students with disabilities spend with their non-disabled peers. No known previous study has expressly studied the effects of this relationship with secondary school principals and inclusion rates. Subsequently, there is a need for additional research on the actual implementation and success of inclusion programs at the secondary level. This study was conducted in a large urban school district where a strong emphasis has been placed on increasing the inclusion percentages in all grades. Further studies may wish to include a larger cross section of school districts. Although the original research questions of this study were not proven, evidence was collected that showed that principals who identified that they had some type of background or training did focus on the individual student's needs when making inclusion decisions. This indicates that training could be an important factor in the preparation of school site principals and does warrant further investigation. Further research may be warranted to expand the limited areas of this study and to validate the

findings by exploring how principal preparation can be utilized to increase the percentage

of students with disabilities being serviced in inclusive settings.

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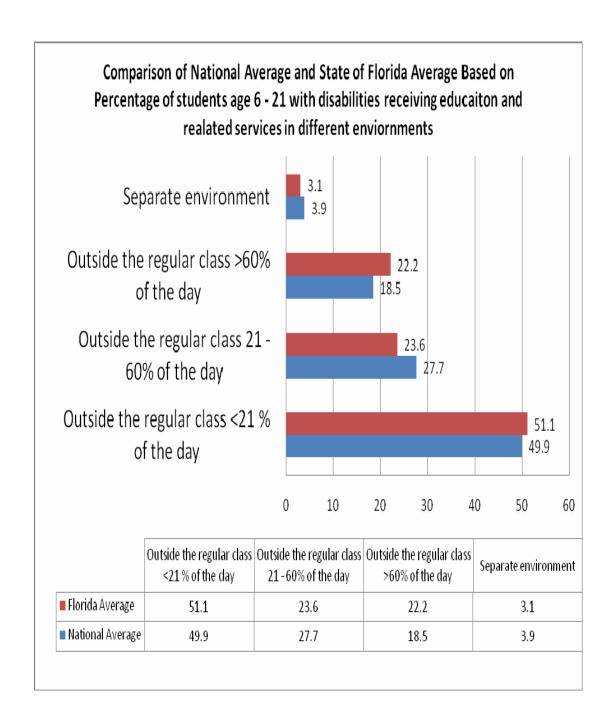
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Appendix A

Figure 1: Inclusion Precentages 2009

Comparison of National Average and State of Florida Average Based on Percentage of students age 6 - 21 with disabilities receiving educaiton and realated services in different enviornments

	Outside the regular class <21 % of the day	Outside the regular class 21 -60% of the day	Outside the regular class >60% of the day	Separate environment
Florida Average	51.1	23.6	22.2	3.1
National Average	49.9	27.7	18.5	3.9

Appendix B

Principal's Belief Survey

The purpose of this survey is to obtain data on the background and beliefs of secondary school principals on inclusion. There is no right or wrong answers to any of these questions and your complete honesty will provide vital insight into the implementation of future inclusion programs. You and your responses will remain anonyms. Thank you for your participation.

_____

Part 1

1. What is your age? _____

2. Please indicate your gender.

Male	Female

3. How many years of experience did you have as a classroom teacher? _____

4. How many years of experience did you have as an assistant principal? _____

5. How many total years of experience have you had as a school site principal? _____

6. How many years have you been a principal at the secondary level? _____

7. How many years were you a principal at the elementary level, if applicable? _____

8. How many years have you been at your current location? _____

9. Do you have a degree in the area of Special Education?

Yes	No

10. Have you had personal experience with a family member or friend with a disability?

Yes	No

11. Please indicate the number of college courses in Special Education you have taken. _____

12. Please indicate the number of Master Plan Points (i.e., 10 MPP) of professional development in Special Education you have received. _____

13. Please indicate the number of college courses of formal training in Inclusion you have taken. _____

14. Please indicate the number of Master Plan Points (i.e., 10 MPP) of professional development in Inclusion you have received. _____

Part 2: Please indicate the number that represents your agreement with the statement to the left.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4
15. All students with disabilities should be educated in an inclusive setting.				
16. A student's behavior has a major emphasis on determining placement in general.				
17. I feel confident in my ability to implement an inclusion program.				
18. The method used to fund my inclusion program is sufficient to sustain its needs.				
19. Students with disabilities being educated in an inclusive classroom take away from the non-disabled students meeting their academic potential.				
20. Inclusion settings are too costly to fully implement.				
21. Students' achievement scores on standardized tests should determine placement in an inclusion program.				
22. Students with disabilities in inclusion settings are involved in fewer discipline referrals.				
23. I have been adequately trained in inclusion to implement a successful inclusion program.				
24. The academic needs of a student with a disability can be serviced in a resource room as well as in a general education classroom.				
25. My school has adequate staff necessary to implement an inclusion program without affecting other scheduled programs.				
26. Students with disabilities being educated in an inclusive setting display more appropriate behavior than those in a resource room setting.				

27. My understanding of inclusion is sufficient to implement a successful inclusion program.				
28. Inclusion is the most appropriate setting for a student with a disability.				
29. The academic benefits of inclusion warrant its implementation.				

Please complete the following questions to provide the researcher with a better understanding of your beliefs.

30. Describe how your prior training/experience in special education has affected inclusion in your school.

31. What are your beliefs about the academic and social benefits of inclusion?

32. What do you believe is the most appropriate placement/setting for students with disabilities?

33. How do you believe the budget/financial situation at your school affects your implementation of inclusion?

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