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**Knowledge and Skills Essential for Secondary Campus-based Administrators to
Appropriately Serve Students with Special Needs**

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**Knowledge and Skills Essential for Secondary Campus-based Administrators to
Appropriately Serve Students with Special Needs**

by

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Dedication

"I belong with you,

You belong with me,

You're my sweetheart

The Lumineers

This is dedicated to my husband and best friend, Doug, who has been my never-ending support system. He listened attentively as I pontificated about my research, waited with me anxiously as results came in, served as an editor and overall support system. He had the confidence in me that I sometimes could not find myself and knew when to shut the door and just let me work. Without your love and strength I would have never been able to do this.

Thank you Doug.

I love you.

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Knowledge and Skills Essential for Secondary Campus-based Administrators to Appropriately Serve Students with Special Needs

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To explore the reported knowledge and skills held by secondary campus-based administrators pertaining to the instructional and programmatic needs of students with disabilities, a mixed-methods nationwide study of administrators was conducted. Data were collected through an internet survey delivered via email, yielding a total of 159 secondary campus-based administrators. The theoretical framework of Critical Pedagogy served as an analytical tool for investigating whether the lack of knowledge and skills of special education policy and procedures on the part of participating secondary campus-based administrators may contribute to the use of oppressive practices when serving the needs of students with disabilities. Additionally, using the lens of Critical Pedagogy, three national sets of leadership standards (CEC, 2008; ISLLC, 2008; and ELCC, 2011) for general and special education administrators were compared. The analysis of national leadership standards revealed a gradual yet limited progression toward a moral imperative (Burrello, Wayne-Sailor, & Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2012) to include more stakeholders in the education process and development of individual education programs at the secondary level for students with disabilities. Quantitative data obtained from the

internet-based survey were analyzed using a frequency distribution. Using naturalistic inquiry without a predetermined focus or preordained categories of analysis (Patton, 2002), qualitative responses to open-ended survey questions were investigated to discover and identify emergent themes. Findings indicate a breakdown in communication between administrators and students with disabilities and their families has occurred. Secondary campus-based administrators need and want more training in all areas of special education policy and procedures. Specifically they would like more coursework and professional development concerning special education law, information concerning specific disabilities, accommodations or modifications appropriate for said disabilities, RTI and Identification, discipline, understanding the IEP/BIP process, and how to work with teachers concerning special education requirements. Critical Pedagogy is advanced as a useful tool to be used by program directors for leadership preparation and professional development to assist them in determining the most appropriate and beneficial type(s) of leadership preparation, mentoring, and follow-up training to facilitate the transformation of secondary campus-based administrators' leadership practices on behalf of students with disabilities and their families.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

For the past decade, No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) has called for districts and schools to maintain and report detailed measures of accountability that are based on the progress of all students. NCLB mandates the assignment of each student to one or more student subgroups, which categorize students by race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, special education, and English language learners. If students within any subgroup demonstrate a lack of academic progress, their performance can have a negative effect on the rating of acceptability of the entire school. According to the National Center on Educational Outcomes (2013), “If any subgroup in a school does not make ‘adequate yearly progress’ (AYP) toward ‘proficiency,’ the school is labeled ‘in need of improvement.’ Consequences are applied after a second year of failure to meet AYP” (para. 3).

NCLB (2002) stipulates the expectation that 100% of students demonstrate proficiency in reading and writing by 2014. Additionally, NCLB requires the inclusion of students with disabilities (SWD) in statewide high stakes assessments and accountability ratings. In 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEA) was reauthorized in response to the requirements of NCLB. IDEA mandates that students with special needs have access to the same standards-based curriculum as their nondisabled peers. With the provision of supplementary aids and services, SWD are expected to be capable of fully engaging in the general education curriculum so they are adequately prepared to participate in state’s accountability and assessment system (Moll, 2005). The ability to balance specific group accountability requirements of NCLB and the

individualized protection guarantees of a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) is viewed as one of the greatest tests of education leadership (Faust, 2004).

When SWD perform poorly in statewide assessments under NCLB (2002) and IDEA (2004), school campuses and/or school districts may be judged negatively due to not meeting AYP (Altman, Thurlow, & Vang, 2010). Thus, these mandated statewide assessments have increased the expectation that campus leaders be capable of supporting all students including those with special and diverse learning needs. There is a general belief that strong school leaders are cornerstones of good schools and that without the leadership of campus-based administrators, efforts to raise student achievement cannot succeed (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Nevertheless, there is a gap between what campus-based administrators are expected to do and how they are actually trained (Murkuria & Obiakor, 2006).

IDEA (2004) also requires schools to provide SWD with a FAPE. Ensuring the provision of FAPE, however, has often been subject to controversy and criticism resulting in a fertile area for litigation (Wagner & Katsiyannis, 2010). The most frequent subject of special education case law is the requirement that a FAPE be provided for all SWD (Deloney, 1997; Murdick, Gartin, & Fowler, 2014; Yell, 2012). As documented in the U.S. Department of Education Annual Report to Congress by the Office for Civil Rights Fiscal Year 2006, more than 1,227 complaints concerned the provision of FAPE (p.20). Ignoring FAPE places administrators and school systems at risk for costly punitive damages (Easterbrooks, Lytle, Sheets, & Crook, 2004). Campus-based administrators play an instrumental role in ensuring the rights of students are protected

and their educational opportunities result in a quality education (Wagner & Katsiyannis, 2010). They must make sure both they and their employees understand the importance of providing SWD with a FAPE and make sure efforts are made to meet the needs of this student population (Easterbrooks et al, 2004). Denial of FAPE can lead to compensatory education, litigation, and financial compensation.

Clearly, campus-based administrators are critical to the development and maintenance of high quality schools. Without their leadership, efforts to raise student achievement cannot succeed (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Inclusion of content specific to SWD has typically been minimal in leadership preparation programs (Cusson, 2010); thus, it is highly unlikely school leaders have received adequate training in special education and special education law (Pazey & Cole, 2013; Powell, 2010). Consequently, a gap between what campus-based administrators are expected to do and how they are actually trained exists (Mukuria & Obiakor, 2006). In reality, many school administrators have reported feeling unprepared and/or overwhelmed by expectations placed on them to adhere to an inclusive learning environment for students with special needs (Doyle, 2001). Given these deficiencies of training, it is an unfair expectation that the inadequately prepared administrator can facilitate special education services in their buildings (DiPaola et al., 2004).

This study explores the knowledge held by secondary campus-based administrators pertaining to the instructional and programmatic needs of SWD. The potential negative and/or oppressive impact that a lack of knowledge and skills pertaining to special education law and policy may have on SWD is discussed as well as how this

oppression may be transformed. This chapter contains the context of the problem, problem statement, the theoretical framework, purpose of the study, and research questions. A list of key terms and definitions is also provided, followed by a rationale that supports the need for this study, assumptions, and significance of the study. The underlying assumptions inherent in the purpose of the study, an analysis of significance of the study as it contributes to theory and practice, and the organization of the study serve as the conclusion.

Context of the Problem

Campus-based administrators have been charged to serve as instructional leaders capable of ensuring their instructional personnel can provide all students within the school with the knowledge and skills necessary for demonstrating they have made adequate yearly progress, academically. That is to say, s/he must be effective in working with teachers and others, helping them be effective in providing the educational experiences needed by all students, including those with disabilities. According to IDEA (2004), campus-based administrators and other members of a particular student's multidisciplinary team must collaborate to formulate an individual education program (IEP) appropriate for any student eligible to receive special education services. Generally, his/her IEP must assure the provision of a FAPE and be based on the principles of the least restrictive environment (LRE). The IEP team must initially determine whether, with the use of supplementary aids and services, a student with a disability can be educated with his or her nondisabled peers in the general education classroom prior to considering a more restrictive placement decision. The campus-based administrators' role is critical to

the process of developing the IEP for SWD, particularly in light of the need to assure their placement in general education classrooms to the maximum extent appropriate (IDEA, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

Despite the important role school leaders play in the administration of special education processes and procedures, many lack the requisite knowledge, skills, and expertise for addressing the instructional and programmatic needs of children with disabilities (Monteith, 1998). Over 15 years ago, Monteith (1998) stressed these leaders “must command an understanding of special education to implement procedural requirements effectively and provide appropriate educational services for disabled students in their schools” (p. 390). In reality, many school administrators have indicated they feel unprepared and overwhelmed by the expectations placed on them to provide an inclusive learning environment within their schools (Doyle, 2001). Preparing campus-based administrators to lead in inclusive schools must begin by creating inclusive leadership preparation programs that can adequately prepare school leaders for the complexity of their positions. Thus, leadership preparation programs need to provide training in the area of serving students with special needs (Bineham & Pazey, 2014; Collins & White, 2002; Pazey & Cole, 2013).

While training in special education and special education law has been rated as important by professors in educational leadership preparation programs; such training has typically not been offered or minimally included in administrator preparation (Cusson, 2010). In fact, most administrator preparation programs have failed to address the need to

expand the knowledge base for future administrators to include special education issues (Angelle & Bilton, 2009; Pazez & Cole, 2013). This lack of preparation has created a critical problem, as campus-based administrators are ill prepared to handle issues related to special education programs and the students such programs are intended to serve.

According to Grossman (2002), “Humans have an inborn potential to reject and mistreat people who are different than we are” (p. 3). The primary responsibility of the Office for Civil Rights (OCR, 2013) is “to ensure equal access to education” (see <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>, para. 1). Their scope of authority and enforcement extends to a call to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability, including SWD. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAA, 2008) are national laws that prohibit discrimination based on disability. Section 504 stipulates, "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html>, para. 1) whereas the ADAA broadens the application of law to any public entity. Section 504 regulations require a school district to provide access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for each qualified student with a disability who resides in the school district's jurisdiction as well as access to educational programs and facilities, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability.

In May 2000, the U. N. World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance described the failure to provide training that addresses the needs of a diverse classroom as an act of overt discrimination due to the failure to take action. Additionally the Conference report stressed that discrimination “can result from the absence of specific training” (para. 16) designed to sensitize educators to issues of diversity and enable them to “combat discrimination” (para. 16) in various educational venues. Garcia (1984) attributed one form of discrimination to bias and stereotypes due to limited information. When applied to the field of special education administration, the need to combat the oppression of SWD underscores the urgency for leadership preparation programs to arm future school leaders with a “respect for diversity” that “entails an awareness of societal structures of oppression and critical social consciousness” (Brown, 2011, p. 350). The tenets of Critical Pedagogy can serve as useful tools for combatting discriminatory and oppressive actions—whether intentional or unintentional—made effectual due to the lack of training in special education and special education law offered within educational leadership preparation programs.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy, drawn from Paulo Freire’s classic work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2000) is utilized as the theoretical framework for this study. According to McLaren (2003), Critical Pedagogy serves as a useful tool for analyzing the nature and overall fabric of schooling. The objective of Critical Pedagogy is to “empower

the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices” (McLaren, 2003, p. 186). Therefore, Critical Pedagogy can provide a theoretical platform against which the notion of disability can be deconstructed and repositioned, as SWD are often excluded, marginalized and excluded in schools (Liasidou, 2012).

Administrators’ lack of training causes them to see students with special needs as an abstract category. Without the appropriate training, they do not understand the needs of the teachers who work with SWD or the students themselves. Unless school administrators recognize that these students have been “unjustly dealt with and deprived of their voice” (Freire, 2000, p. 50) they may not be able to recognize the importance of seeking training to understand students’ disabilities and the needs of the teachers who work with them.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the knowledge held by secondary campus-based administrators pertaining to the instructional and programmatic needs of SWD.

Research Questions

A lack of knowledge pertaining to the instructional and programmatic needs of SWD on the part of secondary campus-based administrators can lead to oppressive outcomes for these and their families. As a theory, Critical Pedagogy highlights the potential for campus-based administrators to lead and make decisions that reduces the oppression of SWD.

In order to address the purpose of this study, the following research questions were examined:

1. How do secondary campus-based administrators gain knowledge concerning special education policy and procedures?
2. What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators believe they possess or draw upon when working with students with disabilities (SWD) and the teachers who serve them?
3. What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators believe they need when working with SWD and the teachers who serve them?
4. What specific preparation do secondary campus-based administrators believe would improve their understanding of special education policy and procedure?

Definition of Terms

Several key terms are relevant to the current discussion. Definitions of these terms are presented here.

Adequate yearly progress (AYP). All public school campuses, school districts, and the state are evaluated for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Districts, campuses, and the state are required to meet AYP criteria on three measures: Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, and either Graduation Rate (for high schools and districts) or Attendance Rate (for elementary and middle/junior high schools). (see <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ayp/>).

Campus-based administrator. Principals, assistant principals, vice

principals or persons with other titles who have administrative responsibilities on school.

Disability. An impairment that substantially affects one or more major life activities. (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 425).

Free appropriate public education (FAPE). Special education and related services provided in conformity with and IEP; are without charge; and meets standards of the state department of education (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 426).

Free and appropriate public education (FAPE). A cornerstone of special education law, according to federal law (IDEA, 20 U.S.C. § 1401 [a][18]), a FAPE is (a) provided at public expense, (b) meets the standards of the State educational agency, (c) includes an appropriate preschool, elementary, or secondary school education, and (d) conforms with the individualized education plan (IEP).

Individual Disabilities with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004). Law originally “enacted by Congress in 1975 to ensure that children with disabilities have the opportunity to receive a free appropriate public education” (see <http://nichcy.org/laws/idea>).

Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP is legal document created collaboratively by multidisciplinary team of individuals whose primary purpose is to develop a plan designed to provide specific components addressing the best interest of a student with disability in need of specialized instruction and related services. The IEP document contains the following components: a student’s present level of academic achievement and functional performance, measurable goals, evidence of educational progress, appropriate accommodations and alternative assessments, transition

requirements, and IEP team meetings are discussed and developed to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability (Wright & Wright, 2007)

Least restrictive environment (LRE). The LRE is a legal requirement to educate children with disabilities in general education classrooms with children who are not disabled to the maximum extent possible (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 427). Good faith efforts must be made, with the use of supplementary services and supports, to ensure the child is able to continue his or her placement in a less restrictive environment before he or she is placed in a more restrictive setting (Yell, 2012). The school district is required to provide a continuum of placements to appropriately serve the individualized needs of SWD as stipulated in their IEP (Yell, 2012).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). A federal act amending the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the components of NCLB purport to close the achievement gap with specific stipulations and potential sanctions tied to issues of accountability, flexibility, and choice so no child is left behind (Public Law (P.L.) 107-110).

Parent. Parent, guardian, or surrogate parent; may include grandparent or stepparent with whom a child lives and foster parent (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 429).

Response to intervention (RTI). RTI represents a process used to provide tiered instructional interventions and supports prior to referring a student for testing to determine if s/he has a specific learning disability (SLD). RTI focuses on the child's response to scientific, research-based interventions (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 430).

Secondary school. Schools identified as serving students in grades 6-12, middle schools and high schools.

Special education. Refers to specially designed instruction, provided at no cost to the parents, designed to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability (Wright & Wright, 2007, p. 430).

Universal design for learning (UDL). UDL is “a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn (see <http://www.cast.org/udl/>, para. 1), involving a process of designing a curriculum, method of instruction, means for assessment, and/or a physical environment that is accessible to everyone, including SWD (see www.lovepublishing.com/FAPE/Glossary.html).

Rationale

Currently, a paucity of comprehensive research on the level of knowledge and skills pertaining to special education and special education law that secondary campus-based administrators possess exists (Cusson, 2010; Pazey & Cole, 2013). Consequently, more nationwide research is necessary. Questions concerning NCLB (2002) and the requirements for schools to meet AYP should be examined. Campus-based administrators’ understanding of how they can utilize the disaggregated results of students who require special services to positively affect student outcomes relevant to meeting AYP should also be investigated.

Assumptions

This study purports to examine whether secondary campus-based administrators have considered or are aware of the potential negative and/or oppressive impact that a lack of knowledge and skills pertaining to special education law and policy may have on SWD as well as how this oppression may be transformed. Several assumptions inherent

in the purpose of this study should be noted. First, there is an assumption that a lack of knowledge pertaining to special education law and policy exist/s. Second, that Critical Pedagogy provides a useful lens for investigating how principals' knowledge and skills (or lack thereof) pertaining to special education law and policy may contribute to transforming oppressive practices. Third, that current school leaders involved in this study have completed an accredited principal preparation program. Fourth, the underlying motive of each of the secondary campus-based administrators who agree to participate in this study is to fulfill the professional duties of their position. And fifth, there is an assumption that current school leaders have had the opportunity to work with SWD.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because school administrators serve as the instructional leader and must have the skills necessary to assure that all students in the school make adequate yearly progress (AYP). They must be aware of the special needs and latest research that impacts this significant proportion of students in their school. SWD are often excluded, marginalized and excluded in schools (Liasidou, 2012). Any lack of knowledge possessed by campus-based administrators in the areas of standardized testing, pre-referral assessments and interventions, and FAPE can furtheracerbate problems specific to SWD as school leaders are charged with the oversight of such issues on their campuses and make sure each are appropriately addressed. When campus-based administrators do not follow the mandates of special education law and policy, and the processes and procedures outlined in IDEA, consequences to students, parents and school districts can be great. Ultimately the students are the victims of the lack of knowledge

and skills of campus-based administrators. Results obtained from this study can provide information to leadership preparation programs and professional development providers concerning the reported needs of campus-based administrators relative to special education.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the general introduction and background of the problem as well as pertinent terminology. Chapter 2 presents an explanation of the theoretical framework, a comparison of professional leadership standards, a description of how the theoretical framework relates to these standards, a body of literature that addresses research investigating secondary campus-based administrators preparation needs relative to special education when serving students with special needs, a discussion of the findings in context to the theoretical framework, implications of practice, areas of future research and conclusions. Chapter 3 is an outline of the research design, selection of participants, data collection, and procedures that will be used to conduct the study in order to answer the research questions posed. In chapter 4 the data will be explained and analyzed. The final chapter, chapter 5, will present the findings of the study, discussion, the conclusion and implications of the findings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

When campus-based school administrators do not follow the mandates of special education law, policy, processes and procedures outlined in IDEA, consequences to students, parents and school districts can be great. To investigate their preparation needs, this chapter provides a review of the research literature concerning the special education knowledge and skills secondary campus-based administrators need to adequately serve students with disabilities (SWD).

To lay the groundwork, the specific knowledge and skills-based curriculum and performance-outcome requirements for licensure previously and currently in use by leadership preparation programs are presented. To accomplish this analysis and provide insight into gaps that may currently exist in such programs in terms of special education, the professional standards for leadership preparation for general and special education are contrasted. The ways in which each set of standards has changed over time are also examined. The theoretical framework of Critical Pedagogy is presented, followed by a discussion of how the various components of Critical Pedagogy can help to reveal inconsistencies and consequent inequities that currently exist in leadership preparation programs and provide potential solutions for overcoming oppressive practices and actions as applied to the area of special education and SWD. Finally, a review of research that highlights the roles and responsibilities of campus-based administrators pertinent to special education and SWD and identifies the difficulties secondary campus-based administrators reportedly experience relative to special education is provided.

Professional Standards for General and Special Education Leaders

In 2008, the Council of Chief School State Officers (CCSSO) joined other professional organizations to create and publish the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards for school leaders. The goal was to establish a national set of standards to ensure quality and consistency throughout school leadership programs. That same year, the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE), the administrative professional association for the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), published professional standards for administrators of special education (CEC, 2008). Three years later, the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) created a new set of standards (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, NPBEA, 2011). Most university-based leadership preparation programs adopt the ISLLC and/or ELCC professional standards to help guide them through the planning, development, implementation, assessment, and evaluation processes.

At present, the administrative behaviors articulated within the CEC standards to address diverse student populations articulated are not represented in either the ISLLC (CCSSO, 2008) or ELCC (NPBEA, 2011) standards (Bineham & Pazey, 2014). One could argue, however, that by integrating the CEC, ISLLC and ELCC standards (Appendix A) to inform leadership preparation programs, administrators would be more likely to receive adequate training that would enable them to provide the type of leadership that serves all students, with a direct or implicit expectation that *all students* includes those with special needs. In fact, Pazey, Cole, and Garcia (2012) have created an integrated framework for inclusive social justice leadership using the ELCC (2011) and

CEC (2008) standards based on the premise that the current standards for building-level leaders are further informed and strengthened when the knowledge and skill-level components of the CEC standards are incorporated.

Standard One

Standard One of the ISLLC Standards reads: “An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders” (CCSSO, 2008, p. 14). The corresponding ELCC standard expands the leader’s role to include

the collection and use of data to identify school goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and implement school plans to achieve school goals; promotion of continual and sustainable school improvement; and evaluation of school progress and revision of school plans supported by school-based stakeholders. (NPBEA, 2011, p. 7).

The language implies a requirement that the leader promotes the success of *every* student, including those with disabilities. While there is no mention of the unique needs of students, no students are excluded from this standard. If this standard described the knowledge and skills required to accomplish the success of every student, it could read the same as CEC’s standard One which characterizes the building leader as one who “communicates a personal inclusive vision and mission for meeting the needs of individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families” (p. 1).

Standard Two

Standard Two of the ISLLC standards stipulate, “An educational leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional development” (CCSSO, 2008, p. 14). The updated ELCC standard two reads similarly and adds:

...through collaboration, trust, and a personalized learning environment with high expectations for students; creating and evaluating a comprehensive, rigorous and coherent curricular and instructional school program; developing and supervising the instructional and leadership capacity of school staff; and promoting the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning within a school environment. (NPBEA, 2011, pp. 9-10)

Once again, these standards refer to every student.

CEC’s standard Two, Program Development and Knowledge, refers to the expectation that a well-trained administrator should possess adequate knowledge about special education programs and the processes and procedures necessary to oversee their implementation and monitor each program’s progress, ensuring that students receive the services required under IDEA (2004). Therefore, it is imperative that school leaders be knowledgeable about the programmatic requirements contained within IDEA, be able to evaluate the efficacy of evidence-based practices, and have the capacity and resources necessary to support those individuals responsible for providing the services required (Pazey & Cole, 2013).

Standard Three

The third ISLLC standard requires education leaders to promote “the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment” (CCSSO, 2008, p. 13). Once again, the ELCC standard is similar to the ISLLC standard yet includes more detail. To meet standard Three of the CEC (2008) standards, Research and Inquiry, the ISLLC and ELCC Standards should require school leaders to possess a working knowledge of “research-based administrative practices that support individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families” (CEC, 2008, p. 174). Additionally, standard three specifies the skills necessary for engaging in “data-based decision-making” when leading “educational programs and services that supports exceptional students” (p. 175), and developing “data-based educational expectations and evidence-based programs that account for the impact of diversity on individuals” (p. 175). All three standards adhere to NCLB (2002) calling for the use of data based decision-making processes to inform the administration and improvement of all areas of education.

Standard Four

Standard Four of the ISLLC standards reads: “An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources” (CCSSO, 2008, p. 15). ELCC’s standard four calls for leaders to draw upon “diverse cultural, social and intellectual resources within the community” in order to build and sustain “positive school relationships with families and caregivers” (NPBEA,

2011, p. 16). The fourth CEC (2008) standard references SWD as well as their families and assumes that language, culture, and socio-economic differences will be acknowledged and honored for both parties. The CEC Evaluation standard corresponds closely with the ISLLC and ELCC standards, requiring administrators to be knowledgeable about which “models, theories, and practices” (CEC, 2008, p. 175) that are the most effective for evaluating both school programs and personnel who serve individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families.

Standard Five

ISLLC’s fifth standard indicates an education leader ensures that every student achieves success “by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner” (CCSSO, 2008, p. 18). The ELCC fifth standard is more comprehensive and includes detail concerning the student’s “academic and social success” (NPBEA, 2011, p. 18). The CEC Professional Development and Ethical Practice fifth standard does not mesh easily with the ISLLC and ELCC standards. Although all three standards include ethics, each standard aligns with a different focus. CEC’s fifth standard refers to professional development and ethical practice whereas the ISLLC and ELCC standards place a greater emphasis on ethical administrative behavior and action that promotes the success of every learner.

Standard Six

The language contained within the sixth and final ISLLC standard states: “An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context” (CCSSO,

2008, p. 16). The ELCC standard reads similarly, advancing advocacy for “students, families, and caregivers; acting to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning in a school environment; and anticipating and assessing emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt school-based leadership strategies” (NPBEA, 2011, p. 21). Collaboration, standard six under CEC (2008), outlines the knowledge and skills required for building-level administrators as they encourage adults who are responsible for students with special needs to join together in their efforts. This standard is much more comprehensive, connecting students and their family to multiple stakeholders, both within the organization and extending beyond the school to the community.

Few of the ISLLC standards (2008) account for the need to involve the family in the educational process. On the other hand, every CEC standard underscores the importance of family inclusion and support. The updated ELCC standards (2011) do include the family and caregivers in the educational process. Yet, according to the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2005), parental involvement continues to challenge practitioners. Successful parent involvement calls for the active, ongoing participation of a parent or primary caregiver in the education of his or her child. Finally, the updated ELCC standards (2011) have added a seventh standard that requires administrator candidates to complete a field-based internship (NPBEA, 2011) while no such requirement is found in the CEC standards.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Pedagogy

Critical Pedagogy serves as a useful tool for analyzing the nature and overall fabric of schooling (McLaren, 2003) and can provide a theoretical platform against which the notion of disability can be deconstructed and repositioned, as SWD are often excluded, marginalized and excluded in schools (Liasidou, 2012). The objective of Critical Pedagogy is to “empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices” (McLaren, 2003, p. 186). Critical Pedagogy draws inspiration from Paulo Freire’s classic work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2000). Freire is the champion of liberation through education and offers an alternative vision for education that is aimed at helping people achieve conscientization and take action against oppressive elements of reality (Hyttén & Bettez, 2011).

According to Freire (2000), “The oppressor is solidary with the oppressed only when he stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice” (p. 50). Administrators’ lack of training causes them to see students with special needs as an abstract category. Without the appropriate training, they do not understand the needs of the teachers who work with SWD or the students themselves. It is not until school administrators recognize that these students have been “unjustly dealt with and deprived of their voice” (Freire, 2000, p. 50) that they will begin to recognize the importance of seeking training to understand students’ disabilities and the needs of the teachers who work with them.

Freire's (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* describes four stages individuals and/or groups must move through to overcome oppression. To transform oppression, the oppressed and oppressors must achieve cooperation, *unity*, *organization* and *cultural synthesis* (Freire, 2000).

To reach cooperation, the first stage in transformation involves *dialogue*. Transformation cannot occur without *dialogue* between the oppressed and the oppressors. *Dialogue* is defined as "essential communication" which "must underlie any cooperation" (Freire, 2000, p. 168). A mutual trust is the logical consequence between those engaging in the *dialogue*. The reciprocal understandings that emerge as a result of dialogue among educators and students has the promise of reducing the inequality experienced by SWD (Thousand, Diaz-Greenberg, Nevin, Dardelle-Elawar, Beckett & Reese, 1999). Without this *dialogue* or communication, there can be no true education. Only through cooperation and *dialogue* with SWD and their parents and those who work with students receiving special education and related services can school administrators begin to understand the oppression that exists and/or inherently occurs within the educational system.

The second stage in transformation is *unity* between the oppressed and oppressors, actualized through informed action or praxis (Freire, 2000). To achieve liberation, there must be a dedication of *unity* on the part of the leader(s) with the oppressed. To achieve *unity*, the oppressed must attain consciousness regarding his or her oppression. Cultural action must be taken for *unity* to be reached through a horizontal relationship with the other. Once school administrators recognize and understand the oppression that may be

taking place in the educational system, they can start taking action by infusing the needs of the special education population with the goals, objectives and actions of the school as a whole.

According to Freire (2000), *organization* is a natural development of *unity*. In the pursuit of *unity*, it is necessary to attempt to organize the people toward a common task of liberation. Organization means involving the oppressors with the oppressed. The leaders of the organization may be in authority; nevertheless, they do not have the right to arbitrarily impose their words, decisions, or actions on others. They must encourage license among the people. Organization is therefore an educational process through which leaders and people experience true authority and freedom. They then seek to establish organization in society by transforming the reality that mediates them.

After organization has been actualized, the final stage in transformation, *cultural synthesis*, can begin. In *cultural synthesis*, the actors come together to learn about other people and become integrated with the people (Freire, 2000). *Cultural synthesis* encourages investigation and creativity, which allows leaders and people to be reborn into new knowledge and action. *Cultural synthesis* does not deny the differences between the two groups but enriches both: it is based on the differences.

Critical Pedagogy and Professional Standards for Leadership Preparation

Excluding CEC (2008), the standards for educational leadership do not include a component specific to special education. The conclusion can be drawn then that administrator certification programs do not require a special education component. In effect, the lack of training in special education can be interpreted as an act of

discrimination emanating from bias and stereotypes due to limited information (Garcia, 1984).

A comparison of the three different leadership standards—using Critical Pedagogy as a framework for analysis—reveals a gradual yet limited progression toward the moral imperative (Burrello, Wayne-Sailor, & Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2012) to include more stakeholders in the education process. The original ISLLC (2008) standards are presented globally and refer repeatedly to the needs of “every student” (p. 14). The ELCC (2011) standards expand on the ISLLC standards and clarify the expectation that school leaders should include others in the leadership and decision-making processes that occur within schools. For example, the ELCC standards incorporate phrases such as “shared school vision” (p. 18) and the need to include all “stakeholders” (p. 18) when leading schools. Finally, language that specifies the need to include “students and their families” in the educational process is threaded throughout *all* of the CEC (2008) standards.

This gradual progression resonates with the theoretical framework of Critical Pedagogy. The first stage in Critical Pedagogy is to include all participants in *dialogue*. The first ISLLC (2008) standard alludes to including all students in that “an education leader promotes the success of every student” and facilitates a “vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders” (p. 14). This statement assumes that all students, including those with disabilities, are considered “stakeholders.” The first ELCC (2011) standard expands on this sentiment by specifically stating “every student” (p. 14) and acknowledging that school leaders should apply “knowledge that promotes the

success of every student by collaboratively facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a shared school vision” (p. 18).

Although the ISLLC (2008) and ELCC (2011) standards utilize language that stipulates the need to include all stakeholders in the education of all students, this is just the beginning stage of the process of transformation. Historically, the administration of special education has been “situated at the intersection of the disciplines of special education, general education, and educational administration” (Boscardin, Mainzer, & Kealy, 2011, p. 72). According to Passman (2008), as general and special education programs become more integrated, building principals and administrators of special education will need to possess similar skill sets. The specialized professional associations (CCSSO, NCPEA) that develop the standards for leadership preparation programs must invoke the knowledge and skill requirements set forth by the CEC (2008) standards into their own professional standards. Arguably, ISLLC and ELCC standards need to move beyond the term, stakeholder, and identify the parties involved.

The updated CEC (2008) standards highlight the need to engage in an open *dialogue* with everyone who plays a role in the education of all students, including those with individual differences. Education professionals from the three disciplines can no longer afford to silo themselves as separate entities. Individuals within and across disciplines must learn to engage in meaningful *dialogue*, initiated by and coordinated through the efforts of the school administrator. In doing so, they move toward the first stage of cooperation through *dialogue*. Beyond themselves, before school leaders can advance toward *unity*, the second movement toward transformation, they must first be

willing to embrace the value of open communication and *dialogue* with themselves. In doing so, they may then be able to move forward toward an understanding of how they might include those who have previously been absent from the conversation—SWD and their families—providing them presence and voice throughout every aspect of their educational experience—academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally.

Leadership Roles, Responsibilities, and Challenges Relative to Special Education

As the instructional leaders of the school, secondary campus-based leaders are responsible for developing a school culture that embraces high academic standards for all students (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003) and ensuring SWD can achieve to meet high standards (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2004). They must be able to work closely with teachers to develop teaching techniques and methods, establish a base of support for curricular decisions (Jenkins, 2009), and function as a resource for teachers and other service providers for SWD (Jenkins, 2009).

Since the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 to the present, campus-based administrators have encountered numerous challenges, concerns, and difficulties when serving students with special needs and overseeing special education programs at secondary schools, particularly relative to special education law and policy and the processes and procedures to which they must adhere. The most commonly known areas of concern for secondary campus-based administrators are as follows: (a) acquisition of information regarding special education to help alleviate their level of comfort when faced with situations requiring specific special education knowledge and skills, (b) knowledge and skills needed when working with

SWD, (c) understanding of special education policy and procedures, (d) improving knowledge of special education policy and procedures.

Acquisition of Knowledge

According to Doyle (2001), campus-based secondary school administrators often feel unprepared and/or overwhelmed by the expectations placed on them to provide an inclusive learning environment for students with special needs. Without a strong foundational knowledge of special education knowledge and skills, these administrators cannot adequately facilitate special education services in their buildings (DiPaola et al., 2004). Hillman (1988) found that secondary campus-based administrators typically acquired the information and/or training they needed from the National Association of School Principals, administrators in the district, the Massachusetts Association of Principals, or the school district's lawyer. In contrast, Robertson (1996) reported that secondary campus-based administrators preferred to gain information from workshops and in-service. Other researchers discovered they acquired their information from coursework, professional publications, conferences or collegial contacts (Foley & Lewis, 1999); or from within their system, district, or school (Wakeman, Browder, Flowers, & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2006). Beyond their leadership preparation programs, secondary campus-based administrators reportedly reach out to a variety of sources to acquire the knowledge and information they need to fulfill their leadership roles and responsibilities and stay current in special education policies and procedures and special education law.

Gaps in Knowledge and Skills Identified by Campus-Based Administrators

Based on the results of a study conducted by Robertson (1996), less than one half (44%) of secondary campus-based administrators indicated they felt comfortable regarding their knowledge about special education, with 35% indicating they felt somewhat or inadequately knowledgeable. In contrast, Foley and Lewis (1999) found that secondary campus-based administrators considered themselves to be of only average competence to serve as leaders of collaborative-based programming. Hillman (1988) found that 40% of secondary campus-based administrators believed that issues regarding special education “were very pressing.” It is important to note that one of the top areas campus-based administrators perceived they were the least prepared was in the administration of special programs (Petzko, 2008). Generally, campus-based administrators did not feel a level of comfort in terms of competency in leading special education teachers or working with students with special needs.

Collaboration and co-teaching. Campus-based administrators indicated a need for more staff development in how to strengthen and support collaborative teaching efforts in their schools. For example, Stevenson-Jacobson, Jacobson & Hilton (2006) reported that middle school principals felt district leadership personnel should help them in strengthening their knowledge and skills base regarding collaborative teaching strategies so they could provide appropriate guidance and support for both general and special education teachers. In a more recent study, understanding collaborative teaching was listed in the top five areas in which middle school and high school principals wanted more staff development (Pontius, 2010). According to Foley and Lewis (1999), it was

difficult for campus-based administrators to evaluate special education teachers. This finding lends support to Sledge and Pazey's (2013) argument that evaluating teachers within a co-teaching, inclusive classroom arrangement to determine the impact on student outcomes has provided challenges within the context of a value-added teacher evaluation model. Further, secondary campus-based administrators self-rated themselves lower in skills needed to evaluate collaborative teachers and in conflict negotiation (Foley & Lewis, 1999). Additionally, Foley and Lewis (1999) learned that campus-based administrators needed more training in collaboration with outside agencies in order to secure resources for SWD.

Discipline/behavior modification. One of the areas in which secondary campus-based administrators felt they needed more training was handling the behavior of students with special needs. Specifically, Woods (2004) found that campus-based administrators were not knowledgeable of the discipline provisions and updates contained within the 1997 amendments to IDEA. It is not surprising then that when Pontius (2010) surveyed middle and high school principals, they wanted more staff development in behavior modification strategies such as how to conduct or oversee functional behavioral assessments (FBAs) and develop a behavior intervention plan (BIP) for students displaying problem behaviors. Consistent to Pontius' findings, Wakeman et al. (2006) reported secondary campus-based administrators admitted they were limited in their understanding of FBAs. Hillman (1988) concluded that the discipline of students with special needs represented one of the top issues secondary campus-based administrators

described as “very pressing” placing a particular emphasis on due process, suspension and expulsion.

Special education law. Secondary campus-based administrators indicated they wanted more staff development concerning special education law, specifically due process procedures (Pontius, 2010). Middle school principals voiced the need to strengthen their skill level and knowledge base in the area of state and federal requirements and state and federal statutes concerning special education (Stevenson-Jacobson et al., 2006). Thus, Stevenson-Jacobson et al. recommended administrators’ pre-service and in-service training include state and federal requirements and statutes as they relate to special education law and policy. Understanding federal and state laws was another item that stood out as one of the top five areas in which secondary campus-based administrators wanted more staff development (Pontius, 2010). Pontius also recommended providing secondary campus-based administrators with training to improve knowledge of federal and state laws.

To help alleviate the existing gap in knowledge about special education law, Robertson (1996) stated current preparation courses should include basic legal principles. Additionally, Hillman (1988) stressed school law courses and in-service training should be generated within administrator preparation program. More specifically, Robertson (1996) stressed preparation programs should require a mandatory special education law course for both teachers and administrators. Woods (2004) recommended incorporating discipline procedures contained within IDEA (2004) as a major curriculum component for administrator preparation programs. Wakeman et al. (2006) proposed licensing

programs should include coursework that included specific information about special education law. Petzko (2008) suggested district induction programs increase emphasis on skills needed for the administration of special programs and student services and Robertson (1996) advocated for subsequent in-service training should focus on issues in special education. Hillman (1988) recommended secondary campus-based administrators be made aware of resources providing legal information about special education policy and procedures

Pre-referral evaluation and assessment. Additionally, secondary campus-based administrators did not have a full understanding of pre-referral and special education evaluation and assessment requirements necessary for determining whether a student qualifies for special education and related services. In Robertson's 1996 study, only 12% of secondary campus-based administrators surveyed were able to answer assessment questions pertaining to the multi-factored evaluation requirements to be completed and results to be considered as part of the process used to identify the absence or existence of a disability. Only 6% of the respondents answered questions correctly regarding evaluation processes and procedures to be followed for students in need of a bilingual assessment. Secondary campus-based administrators who participated in Wakeman et al.'s study (2006) ranked themselves lowest on items related to knowledge about student evaluation and assessment procedures in terms of meeting eligibility requirements for special education services.

Least restrictive environment placement. Once a student was determined to be eligible for special education and related services, secondary campus-based

administrators indicated difficulty in determining the most appropriate educational placement, or where the student would best be served. As reported by Robertson (1996), approximately 20% of principals answered questions correctly regarding special education policies governing the processes to be used for determining a student's LRE placement. In another study (Pontius, 2010), high school principals indicated they would like to receive additional staff development about inclusion and the continuum of services placement options for students receiving special education services.

Recommended Improvements for Professional Development and Leadership Preparation Programs

Throughout the research literature, secondary campus-based administrators articulated the need to receive additional and continuous staff development training in issues related to special education policy and procedures and special education law. They reportedly found it difficult to keep abreast of the most current special education requirements. Hillman (1988) recommended periodic legal updates for administrators. To stay up to date with current requirements, Robertson suggested administrators be required to take a refresher course in special education law and procedures. Foley and Lewis (1999) called for sustained professional development, whereas Woods (2004) proposed districts provide training in special education throughout the school year.

Based on the findings of a more recent study (Slatton, 2011), an overwhelming number of high school administrators (86.5%) indicated more special education training should be included in their administrative coursework. For these leadership preparation programs to remain current, several researchers recommended program directors conduct

periodic evaluations to determine whether improvements or changes might be necessary. To stay current, Woods (2004) proposed that universities survey graduates to gain information concerning the efficacy of their leadership preparation programs to help determine which courses to maintain and which courses to offer in the future. Wakeman et al. (2006) stressed the importance of licensing programs reevaluating their program requirements to include information about special education.

Recommendations for Future Research

Over the past 20 years, there appears to be little to no change regarding the reported lack of knowledge and skills that secondary campus-based administrators possess in terms of special education issues. More nationwide research is necessary. Questions concerning NCLB (2002) and the requirements for schools to meet specific benchmarks in terms of student outcomes will need to be incorporated, particularly in light of the current administration's emphasis on the success of a diverse student population.

Secondary campus-based administrators will need to be able to hone their understanding of how the disaggregated results of students who require special services can be used to positively affect and improve student outcomes. Regardless of whether the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (or NCLB) is reauthorized, the goal of the Department of Education's Recovery plan, known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (AARA), is to "to raise student achievement, drive reforms and produce better results for children and young people for the long-term health of our

nation” (p.1). Therefore, campus leaders must understand how to measure student achievement and track the success of reforms.

By exposing future and current administrators to the theoretical framework of Critical Pedagogy, which draws inspiration from Freire’s (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the potential for secondary campus-based administrators to lead and make decisions that oppress SWD may be lessened. The level of *dialogue* in which secondary campus-based administrators participate may lead to greater levels of cooperation. The achievement of any level of *unity*, *organization*, or *cultural synthesis* between school leaders, students with special needs, and the individuals who work with them may also be enhanced.

Discussion

This review of research sought to better understand the difficulties that secondary campus-based administrators experience relative to special education law and policy and the processes and procedures to which they must adhere when serving students with special needs. The lack of knowledge, skills and experience of secondary campus-based administrators concerning special education creates social inequality in the education of SWD.

Conclusion

Over 10 years ago, Monteith (1998) stressed that “principals must command an understanding of special education to implement procedural requirements effectively and provide appropriate educational services for disabled students in their schools” (p. 390). Nevertheless, principals may not have the requisite knowledge, skill, or experience to

provide this instructional leadership when addressing the instructional and programmatic needs of children with disabilities (Monteith, 1998). Many school administrators feel unprepared and overwhelmed by the expectations placed on them to provide an inclusive learning environment within their schools (Doyle, 2001). To prepare school leaders for the complexity of their positions, leadership preparation programs need to provide training in the area of students with special needs (Collins & White, 2002).

As part of the formal preparation of public school administrators, training in special education and special education law has been rated as important; nevertheless, such training is typically not included or minimally included in administrator preparation (Cusson, 2010). Unfortunately, most principal preparation programs have failed to address the need to expand the knowledge base for future administrators to include special education issues (Angelle & Bilton, 2009; Author, 2013). This lack of preparation has created a critical problem, as principals are ill prepared to handle issues related to special education programs and the students such programs must serve.

Unless future school leaders are armed with an understanding of special education and special education law, they will enter their profession with a weak platform on which to stand, deficient in their ability to recognize the potential “interconnecting relationship among ideology, power, and culture” (Leistyna, Woodrum, & Scherblom, 1996, p. 3) that may exist within their school. Sernak (2006) contends that school leaders must be able involve others in the dialogue necessary to “address the exteriorities of schooling” and deal with the “various beliefs and assumptions people have about one another and that affect the ways in which we school our children” (para. 18). Preparation programs that

incorporate a course in special education and special education law must move beyond the traditional orientation of a school law course. Unless the presentation of content incorporates a critical consciousness component, its intent is reduced to a compliance orientation of leadership preparation. As stated by Peters and Chimedza (2000),

...when disability laws are already in place, it is still necessary to continue to conscientize people as to the reasons why these laws are needed. Conversely, conscientization alone without legislation does not guarantee or enforce the desired disability rights. . . . conscientization for place, identity, and self-empowerment is an essential prerequisite to legislation and to changing the economic and political terrain. Mass organizing for civil rights can only take place after individual consciousness has changed (p. 268).

In regard to special education training, leadership preparation programs must embrace an equity consciousness (McKenzie, Skrla, & Scheurich, 2006) and social justice leadership orientation (Pazey & Cole, 2013) and search for ways to develop each candidate's individual consciousness toward the rights of SWD. Only then will they be able to resist and transform oppressive practices against certain student populations--such as those with disabilities--who have traditionally been marginalized and excluded in our schools (Liasidou, 2012).

Chapter 3: Methods

Purpose of the Study

This chapter presents an overview of the research design and methods used for this study. The purpose of this study was to investigate the knowledge held by secondary campus-based administrators pertaining to the instructional and programmatic needs of students with disabilities (SWD).

Rationale

Previous studies investigating the level of special education knowledge possessed by secondary campus-based administrators have been conducted in single school districts and/or regional areas within a particular state or have focused their analysis within a single state or conference. Thus, the paucity of comprehensive nationwide research on secondary campus-based administrators' special education knowledge and skills served as the impetus for conducting this study which was designed to gather information on a large scale from secondary campus-based administrators across the nation.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. How do secondary campus-based administrators gain knowledge concerning special education policy and procedures?
2. What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators reportedly possess or draw upon in regard to working with SWD?
3. What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators believe they need when working with SWD?

4. What specific preparation do secondary campus-based administrators believe would improve their understanding of special education policy and procedures?

Research Method, Design, and Analysis

To provide a better understanding of the research problem and to address the research questions--which required both quantitative and qualitative data--a mixed-methods research design was used. To capture secondary campus-based administrators' reported level of knowledge and skills regarding special education, an on-line survey created by the researcher was used. The researcher-developed questionnaires were formatted, delivered, and collected via email and Qualtrics[®], an online data-collection survey system licensed by The University of Texas at Austin for faculty and student research purposes. Demographic and descriptive data as well as data relevant to content specific to special education policy and procedures when working with SWD were collected. The survey explored secondary campus-based administrators' knowledge in regard to (a) how they reportedly acquired their knowledge of special education policy and procedures; (b) their identification of the types of knowledge and skills they possessed and drew upon or deemed necessary for working with SED; and (c) their beliefs about what would be most helpful in enabling them to be adequately prepared, informed, and knowledgeable about current special education policy and procedures.

As noted by Knupfer and McLlean (1996), surveys are commonly used to collect descriptive data. To obtain such data, the survey was developed to align with a non-experimental descriptive design created to investigate the specific knowledge and skills that secondary campus-based administrators possess, draw upon or use, and need when

working with SWD and their families, as they related to the research questions. Descriptive studies have typically yielded rich data that provide information on current practice and help advance future recommendations for research and practice (Knupfer & McLean, 1996).

Both open-ended and four-point, Likert-scale questions were included in the survey. The mixed-methods approach allowed the researcher to build on the separate strengths of both quantitative data and qualitative data (Clark & Creswell, 2010) collected via the online survey. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (as cited in Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Sutton, 2006) contend mixed-methods studies allow researchers to combine the “empirical” precision of quantitative research methodology with the “descriptive” precision of qualitative research methodology.

According to Collins et al. (2006), a mixed-methods approach can optimize the participant sample and is useful for the following purposes: (a) to obtain information about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of an intervention or program that may be applied to a particular individual and/or group of individuals; (b) to determine possible reasons for differences between and among individuals or groups, and (c) to determine whether participant reactions and or responses are comparable across varying interventions or approaches as applied to a particular individual and/or group of individuals. In some instances, the information obtained from the mixing of qualitative and quantitative data may be integrated and data sources will be compared with one another while, in other cases, the data may be used to provide “two different pictures that provide an overall composite assessment” (p. 214) of the phenomenon or problem.

Survey Development

The survey questions were derived from previous research findings concerning principal preparation programs and secondary campus-based administrators' reported knowledge (or lack of knowledge) related to special education, special education law, policy, and procedures (Foley and Lewis, 1999; Hillman, 1988; Petzko, 2008; Pontius, 2010; Robertson, 1996; Stevenson-Jacobson, et al., 2006; Wakeman, et al., 2006; Woods 2004). The content and language of a number of questions were informed by specific components identified as essential to leading secondary schools for SWD, contained within IDEA (2004).

A preliminary draft of the survey was disseminated to professionals knowledgeable about special education law, policy, and procedures, for review. Recommendations to add, delete, or revise the survey were incorporated, and a revised draft was distributed to the same professionals for final additional feedback. One professor suggested an incentive to complete the survey be incorporated. Two other professionals who used incentives in surveys were consulted, and they had good response results; therefore, an incentive to complete the survey was added. Participants who completed the survey were included in a random drawing for a \$100 Visa[®] gift card. To be eligible for the drawing, participants were asked to provide their email address at the end of the survey. The winner of the drawing was notified by email and asked for their mailing address. The gift card was sent via U.S. mail.

Survey Field Test

Prior to administering the survey to participants, the survey was field-tested. The field test was conducted via Qualtrics[®] software, an online research survey tool. Email addresses for the field test sample participants were acquired from friends and acquaintances of the researcher and a university professor. The survey was sent to 51 email addresses with instructions to provide specific feedback on the survey questions. Forty-four survey links were successfully delivered, and seven were returned undeliverable. Of the forty-four participants, seventeen completed the survey, and there were two partial completions.

Participants' feedback enabled the researcher to (a) determine the length of time necessary to complete the survey, and (b) identify and correct any questions or concerns related to the actual administration and data collection procedures of the survey. The majority of field test participants indicated the survey took from seven to 10 minutes to complete. Other participants commented the survey took between 10 and 15 minutes to complete; however, they were interrupted and did not complete the survey within one sitting. Two field test participants mentioned there was no "back" button to make changes to their responses. The researcher decided not to add a "back" button as the intent was to have participants complete the open-ended questions prior to the Likert-scale questions. The qualitative questions were presented independently from and prior to the Likert-scale question as the researcher she did not want the Likert-scale prompts to influence participants' responses to the open-ended questions. By eliminating the option of a

“back” button, the researcher was able to gain a more accurate account of the knowledge and skills administrators possessed regarding special education policy and procedures.

Final Survey

The study was conducted via Qualtrics[®] software that produced data drawn from participants’ responses to the researcher-developed survey. The survey contained 32 questions. The first part of the survey contained items designed to gather information concerning demographics and background. These items included requests for information such as: gender, ethnicity, current administrative position, and years of administrative experience, plus questions concerning education and the type of administrative certification program from which they obtained their leadership preparation training. Seven questions were based on a Likert scale. A four-point scale was used to eliminate neutral responses. Additionally there was one forced choice question, one multi-select question and four questions which gave participants the opportunity to provide qualitative information and/or additional information as they proceeded through the survey as well as at the end of the survey (see Appendix B).

Survey questions numbered 11 through 21 provided information to answer the first research question: How do secondary campus-based administrators gain knowledge concerning special education policy and procedures? Survey question 22 was designed to obtain qualitative data from the participants and provided information to answer the second research question: What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators reportedly possess or draw upon in regard to working with SWDs? Question number 23 was also qualitative in nature and provided information to answer

the third research question: What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators believe they need when working with SWD? Questions numbered 24 through 30, Likert-style questions, informed both the second and third research questions. Survey question 31, also qualitative, provided information to answer the fourth research question: What specific preparation do secondary campus-based administrators believe would improve their understanding of special education policy and procedures? The final survey question, number 32, gave the participants the opportunity to “provide any other comments, questions or concerns” they had regarding special education (see Appendix B).

Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous with no requests for personal or private information. Responses were analyzed and reported in aggregate form, eliminating any identification of participants or school campuses.

The questionnaire was administered to the sample population via e-mail delivery with a link to the survey in Qualtrics[®]. A *Consent to Participate in Internet Research* letter was included with each email invitation, which described the purpose of the study, a brief summary of the status and position of the individual who was conducting the research, and information on how to obtain more information regarding the research (see Appendix C). Participants were given a total of 10 weeks to complete the survey. The Qualtrics[®] program automatically removes the email addresses of those who have completed the survey from the email list. When participants responded they would not like to participate in the study, the researcher removed their email addresses so they would not receive additional email reminders. Each week, the participants who had not

responded or had not completed the survey received a reminder. The first seven weekly reminders were sent via the Qualtrics[®] program. The final two reminders were sent through the researcher's UT email account in groups of 40 to 50 email addresses. Each of the final two requests included a personal note from the researcher in addition to the *Consent to Participate in Internet Research* letter required by the University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board. Qualtrics[®] assigned an anonymous code to each response and calculated the total number of responses. The survey required approximately 10 minutes or less to complete.

Description of Sample

Participants

Selected participants were secondary campus-based administrators from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Secondary schools included schools identified in the literature as high schools and middle schools. Middle schools were considered to function as secondary schools in certain school districts in that they resemble secondary schools and differ from elementary schools in the way classes and teachers are organized (National Center for Educational Statistics, NCES, 2000). Additionally, secondary schools differ from elementary schools in that "they are usually organized in departments in order to provide teachers who have in-depth subject-specific training and certification and to allow students some choice among courses" (NCES, 2000, p. 1). Since the most common configuration of middle schools is grades six through eight, administrators serving grades six through 12 were included.

Selection criteria. The following selection criterion for this study is an adaption of the selection criteria from *Response to Intervention: Perspectives of General and Special Education Professionals* (Bineham, Shelby, Pazey, & Yates, 2014), used with permission from the authors.

Random selection of campuses. The website for the NCES (2000), was used to find the number of secondary schools within each state and Washington D.C. (<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/>). Search parameters were set to find schools serving students in grades six through 12. The NCES website provides a total number of schools meeting the search criteria within each state and assigns a number to each school within the selection. Using the numbers assigned to each school by NCES, random selection was completed by using the website <http://www.random.org/integers/>. Five percent (5%) of the schools serving grades six through 12 listed by the NCES website were selected. States with more than 500 secondary schools listed, 25 schools (5% of 500) were randomly selected. The random integers were matched to the numbers assigned by the NCES website in order to select secondary schools within each state and Washington D.C. This created a total of 999 selected secondary schools.

Random selection of participants. For each selected campus from the NCES website, the following information was gathered: (a) number of students, (c) school location (physical address), and (d) grade levels served by each school. Once the schools were selected, an internet search was conducted to find each individual school's website for a list of campus staff, or a separate list of administrative staff. Administrative personnel were numbered in the order that they appeared. The first name on the list was

numbered one, the second name on the list numbered two and so on. The participant was then randomly selected utilizing the random-generated integers website. In order to find the selected participant's email address, each individual school's website was searched to find a listing of staff emails. Email addresses were acquired from campus websites or district websites. In some cases, the state department of education had a listing of administrator email addresses. If, after all options were exhausted, the email address for the selected administrator was not available, the school was eliminated and the random-selection process was utilized to select another school and administrator.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data

Each survey question with Likert-scale responses was investigated to determine the most frequently selected response. A frequency distribution was provided by Qualtrics® to organize the data. Additionally, a cross tabulation was run to determine whether there were any patterns concerning participants responses in regard to both gender and ethnicity. There were no significant differences between either gender or ethnicity in regard to participants' responses.

Qualitative Data

A non-experimental, descriptive design was used to analyze the administrators' responses. To control for experimenter bias, the researcher used secondary coders, unrelated to the study, who verified the results of the qualitative texts. Using naturalistic inquiry without a predetermined focus or preordinate categories of analysis (Patton, 2002), qualitative comments were investigated to discover and identify emergent themes.

The researcher organized the comments of the qualitative questions into categories. Using naturalistic inquiry to address credibility of the emergent categories within the qualitative data, the first 20 comments from each of the four qualitative questions were sent to four professionals with a doctoral degree in Special Education as secondary coders. Each professional received 20 comments from a different qualitative question. Without guidance from the researcher, they also organized their assigned comments into categories. The researcher and the other professionals agreed on the emergent concepts with the researcher splitting some categories into more specific parts. For example, one coder provided a category of “in-services and conferences,” and the researcher split this into two distinct categories of “in-services” and “conferences.” Additionally the category of *special education law* emerged as a common theme within the data across all of the qualitative questions. After the categories were solidified, the researcher completed coding all the comments. Once the coding was completed, the coding sheet for each question was sent back to the same four professionals with doctoral degrees in Special Education. Coding constancy was checked through inter-coder agreement. The coded comments resulted in a 98% agreement between the researcher and the secondary coders. The qualitative comments were analyzed to determine whether any patterns emerged between gender and participants’ comments, and ethnicity and participants’ comments. No significant differences between gender or ethnicity were found to exist in regards to participants’ comments.

Potential Risks and Benefits

The potential risk to participants was no greater than everyday life. There was also no direct benefit to the participants. The benefit of this study stems from the data analysis and the ability to provide information concerning the need for special education training in administrator certification programs. An additional benefit from the study can be derived from the ability to use the results of the study to recommend changes to administrator certification programs.

Confidentiality of the Research Data

Qualtrics[®] uses a unique user name and password to establish an account and enter use of the website. As the investigator is the owner of the Qualtrics[®] account, all data collected by Qualtrics[®] is private, confidential and available only to the investigator. Qualtrics[®] self-certifies compliance with the U. S. and E. U. Safe Harbor Framework and the U. S. and Swiss Safe Harbor Framework as set forth by the U. S. Department of Commerce regarding the collection, use and retention of personal information. Qualtrics[®] has SAS 70 Certification and meets the rigorous privacy standards imposed on health care records by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA). Upon deletion of the account, all data are permanently deleted (Qualtrics Labs, Inc. 2012).

Role of the Researcher

Our actions in the world including actions that we take as inquirers cannot occur without reference to what we think about the world (Lincoln, & Guba, 1985). The motivation for this study stemmed from my own experience and observations. As a special education teacher and administrator within a large urban school district who has

primarily served students at the secondary level for 15 years, I have had numerous experiences assisting secondary campus-based administrators as they endeavored to oversee and administer programs for SWD. On several occasions, administrators with whom I worked made decisions regarding SWD that, albeit unintentionally, violated their IEPs. These encounters and the outcomes of these situations created stress for administrators, teachers, and SWD and their families. In each situation, I spent time trying to explain to administrators why it was important to consult students' IEPs and become familiar with their disabilities. As the situations persisted, I began to question whether administrators had the knowledge and skills to appropriately serve students with special needs.

After reading the limited amount of previous research on the topic of secondary campus-based administrators knowledge and skills in special education policy and procedures I decided it was an area of research that needed further investigation; thus, my dissertation topic was conceived. Recognition of my positionality must be acknowledged, so readers are aware of the assumptions that may have influenced why the topic of this research study was pursued, how the research was conducted, and how the subsequent data were analyzed and represented in the findings of the study (Lincoln, & Guba, 1985).

The training and background of the researcher can serve as a biasing intervention in studies involving quantitative and qualitative databases and the analysis of obtained data. In order to counteract my potential bias, I attempted to present the data and perform the analysis in a reflective and reflexive manner to retain the validity of the data. This is

referred to as "reflexive subjectivity" (Lather 2003, p. 206) where the researcher provides an explanation of how assumptions may be "affected by the logic of the data" (p. 206).

Chapter Summary

This study was conducted nationwide, through an internet survey delivered via email. The researcher-developed questionnaire was formatted, delivered, and collected using the Qualtrics® system. There were minimal potential risks to participants as they were able to opt out of participation at their own discretion. Data was analyzed using a frequency distribution. Open-ended questions and comments were investigated with the intent to find emergent themes within the comments.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate secondary campus-based administrators' knowledge and skills pertaining to the instructional and programmatic needs of students with disabilities (SWD). Four research questions guided the study:

1. How do secondary campus-based administrators gain knowledge concerning special education policy and procedures?
2. What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators reportedly possess or draw upon in regard to working with SWD?
3. What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators believe they need when working with SWD?
4. What specific preparation do secondary campus-based administrators believe would improve their understanding of special education policy and procedures?

A total of 999 surveys were distributed via email to secondary campus-based administrators across the country. The surveys included opportunities to capture qualitative and quantitative data. Respondents' quotes are included in order to further expand on and enrich the quantitative information.

Response Rate

The response rate was calculated (see Table 4.1). Sheehan (2001) reported a decreasing response rate in email surveys in 2000 to 24%. Jacob and Jacob (2012) reported a response rate of 18% for email surveys sent to school principals. This survey produced a 21% return rate, consistent with the declining return rate reported by Sheehan (2001) and greater than the response rate reported by Jacob and Jacob (2012). Using the

Sample Size Calculator (Macorr Research Solutions Online, 2014) and based on response size, there is a 90% confidence level that the number of respondents was representative of the surveyed population with a ± 5.7 confidence interval.

The Qualtrics[®] program indicated that 46 surveys were undelivered and “bounced.” Additionally, the researcher received information from surveys sent through the researcher’s UT email that 29 were not successfully delivered due to incorrect email addresses or returned via spam filters; thus, those surveys were considered undeliverable. Those email addresses were compared to the 46 which “bounced” through the Qualtrics[®] program verifying that no email address was on both lists. Twenty-three participants emailed the researcher indicating they wished to be removed from the participant list which were considered refusals. One hundred and seventy one surveys were returned.

Table 4.1

Survey Response Rate

Number of secondary principals selected	999
Number bounced through Qualtrics [®] program	-46
Number undeliverable through personal UT email program	-29
Total number surveys successfully emailed	924
Number surveys returned	171
Number refusals	23
Total responses	194
Response rate	0.21

Eight surveys were less than 50% complete and were eliminated. Four surveys were received from participants who indicated they served grades Kindergarten through

5; therefore, they did not meet the purpose of this study, which focused on gaining and understanding of the knowledge and skills of campus-based administrators who serve students in grades 6 through 12, hence, the *secondary* school leader designation. The number of usable surveys totaled 159 with a completion rate of 70% or higher. Nine administrators indicated they served grades K through 12, and 150 indicated they served grades 6 through 12+ or a combination of those grades.

Demographics and Background Information

The 159 surveys completed represented 44 states across the nation. None of the administrators from Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, New Mexico, Vermont, Washington D.C. and Wyoming chose to participate (see Appendix D). This study met the goal to obtain a nationwide representation of secondary campus-based administrators. Information from respondents representing 44 states within the United States—a majority of 86%—was captured. The secondary campus-based administrators who elected to participate, were drawn from across 44 states which is meaningful as the researcher’s intent for this study was to conduct a nationwide study to discover and identify the level of knowledge and skills secondary campus-based administrators possess, use or draw upon, and need when working with SWD. The first several questions of the survey covered demographics and provided information concerning the background of the participants.

Gender

There were 99 male participants (62%) and 60 female participants (38%) (see Table 4.2).

Ethnicity

Ninety-six percent of the participants were White (n=146), 4% were Black (n=7), 2% Hispanic (n=3), 1% Bi/multi racial (n=2), and 1% Asian/Pacific Islander (n=1) (see Table 4.2). Therefore the majority of administrators identified themselves as White (92%). This finding is consistent with the results of a survey conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2013) for the school year 2011-2012 whereby the majority of administrators (82%) identified themselves as White. Also consistent with the NCES study is that 7% of respondents identified as Black, compared to the NCES (2013) results whereby 10% identified as Black. The gender representation revealed the majority of administrators are male - 62% for this study and 56% for NCES. Based on the results of this study and the NCES results (2013), one might conclude that a large majority of secondary campus-based administrators are White males.

Table 4.2

Demographics and Background

		n	%
<i>Gender</i>	Male	99	62%
	Female	60	38%
<i>Ethnicity</i>	White	146	92%
	Black	7	4%
	Hispanic	3	2%
	Bi/multi racial	2	1%
	Asian		
	Pacific Islander	1	1%
<i>Administrative Position</i>	Principal	108	69%
	Assistant Principal	32	20%

Table 4.2 cont.		n	%
	Vice Principal	9	6%
<i>Years Administrative Experience</i>	4-10	68	43%
	11-18	46	29%
	More than 18 years	20	13%
<i>Size of School</i>	500-1500 students	82	52%
	1500-3000 students	11	7%
	Over 3000 students	0	0%
<i>Prior Experience*</i>	Special Education Teacher	24	15%
	Electives/Special Area Teacher	23	14%
	Never taught	0	
	Other (please specify)	11	7%
	Master of Education from a traditional university	125	79%
<i>Type of Certification Program</i>	Master of Education from an on-line university	7	4%
	Alternative Certificate Program	7	4%
	Other (please specify)	20	13%
	less than 25%	71	45%
<i>Percentage Special Education Responsibility</i>	26-51%	22	14%
	51-75%	29	18%
	above 75%	37	23%
	Unsure	0	0%
<i>Percentage Students Receiving Special Education Services</i>	1-10%	57	36%
	11-15%	54	34%
	15-20%	31	19%
	More than 20%	17	11%

* Equals more than 100% due to multi-select option.

Administrative Position

Participants were asked to provide their current administrative position. Sixty-nine percent (n=108) indicated they were the campus principal, 20% indicated they were assistant principal (n=32), 6% served as vice principals (n=9), 5% indicated other (n=8), and two participants did not answer the question. Participants selecting “other” indicated they were superintendents (n=4), acting principal (n=1), special education administrator (n=1), executive director (n=1), and technology coordinator (n=1) (see Table 4.2).

Years Experience

Participants provided information concerning the number of years of administrative experience they possessed. Fifteen percent selected one to three years administrative experience (n=24), 43% identified four to 10 years (n=48), 29% indicated 11 to 18 years (n=46) 13% reported more than 18 years (n=20) and one participant did not answer the question (see Table 4.2). Over half of the respondents had four to 10 years of administrative experience with 85% reporting experience beyond 4 years; thus, the number of new administrators (one to four years) in the participant sample is relatively small. The majority of secondary campus-based administrators in this study reported 4 to 10 years experience as compared to the NCES 2013 report that noted an average of 7.2 years for public school administrators. Eighty-five percent of participating secondary campus-based administrators have four or more years of experience, thus indicating the 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards informed the curriculum and expectations set forth within their leadership preparation programs and certification requirements. As noted in Chapter 2, few of the ISLLC

standards (2008) account for the need to involve the family in the educational process. The original ISLLC (2008) standards are presented globally and refer repeatedly to the needs of “every student” (p. 14), yet do not specify SWD. Additionally, being certified by outdated standards is compounded by the fact that an internship was not required, which could have provided important experience working with SWD and the ability to begin the process inherent in the Critical Pedagogy framework by creating an opportunity for *dialogue* to occur.

School Size

The majority (52%) of participants reported they served schools with 500-1,500 students (n=82). Forty-two percent indicated they served schools with less than 500 students (n=66) and 7% served schools with 1,500-3,000 students (n=11). None of the participants served schools with over 3,000 students (see Table 4.2). This is consistent with findings contained in the NCES report (http://www.nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_216.40.asp): in the 2011-2012 school year, the average student enrollment of secondary schools was 788 students.

Prior Teaching Responsibilities

Prior to assuming administrative positions, participants were asked to specify their previous experiences as teachers. As they were able to multi-select among listed positions; 182 selections were made. General education teacher was selected 124 times, special education teacher was selected 24 times, elective/special area teacher was selected 23 times and other was selected 11 times. The vast majority responded they had been general education teachers. Those who indicated “other” included counselor (n=5);

worked at a university (n=1); one educational specialist (n=1); secondary English, science, math teacher (n=1); career and technology teacher (n=1); special education director (n=1); and English department chair (n=1).

Administrative Preparation

Participants were asked to select a description of their administrative preparation. The largest percentage (79%) indicated they received their administrative preparation by obtaining a Master's of Education degree from a traditional university (n=125). Four percent indicated they received their Masters of Education from an online university (n=7). An additional 4% reported they participated in an alternative certification program (n=7) while 13% selected "other" (n=20) (see Table 4.2). Nineteen of the twenty who indicated "other" provided information concerning their preparation. Their exact comments are included in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Other Types of Administrative Preparation

Administrative Preparation

Doctorate in Ed Admin

ED.D. in EdLeadership

Master of School Admin

Ed. D. Secondary Ed.

Ph D

Ed.D. in educational leadership

Masters in Admin from a traditional university

Specialist Degree from a traditional university

Doctorate in Education from traditional university

On the job experience for 3 years as acting assistant principal

Classroom teacher/ assistant school leader

6th yr Educ Leadership

Ed. Specialist from a traditional university

Specialist in Ed Admin and Policy from traditional university

Doctorate

Masters & Specialist Degrees from a traditional university

Certificate of Advanced Education

Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies

Ed.D

Responsibility for Special Education

When asked to provide the percentage of responsibility they held in regard to the administration of special education programs, 45% of the respondents (n=71) reported 25% or less. On the other hand, 14% (n=22) indicated 26%-51% of their leadership responsibility pertained to the administration of special education programs, 18 percent (n=29) indicated 51%-75%, and 23% (n=37) indicated 75% or more (see Table 4.2).

Nearly half of the respondents indicated they are not responsible for the administration of special education programs.

Percentage of Students Receiving Special Education Services

Every participant (100%) reported they provided special education services for SWD on their campuses and were knowledgeable about the percentage of students who were receiving special education services on their campuses. Fifty-seven participants (36%) indicated that 1-10% of their student population received special education services, fifty-four (34%) of participants indicated 11-15% of their student population received special education services, thirty-one participants (19%) indicated 15-20% of their student population received special education services and seventeen (11%) of the administrators surveyed indicated that more than 20% of their student population received special education services (see Table 4.2).

Results to Research Question 1

The online survey contained 10 questions that asked participants to provide information useful for answering the first research question: How do secondary campus-based administrators gain knowledge concerning special education policy and procedures?

Participants were asked to describe the type of leadership training they had received relevant to special education and could choose multiple answers. The top three trainings selected were (a) in-service/staff development (PD), (b) coursework in administrative program, and (c) self-taught through research or readings. The majority of participants (75%, n=119) indicated they received their training through PD although

68% (n=108) reported they had also received training through coursework in their administrative certification program. Additionally, 53% (n=84) indicated their leadership training in special education was self-taught, acquired through their own research or readings. Fifteen percent (n=24) had completed coursework to receive a Special Education certificate or endorsement Only 2% (n=3) indicated that they had received no training (see Table 4.4); thus, the vast majority of participants had received some level of training in special education.

Table 4.4

Secondary Administrators Acquisition of Special Education Knowledge

Leadership Training	<i>n</i>	%
In-service/staff development	119	75%
Coursework taken in administrative certification program	108	68%
Self-taught through readings/research	84	53%
Coursework taken to receive Special Education certificate/endorsement	24	15%
None	3	2%

Participants were asked to estimate the average number of hours they attend PD in special education per year. The highest percentage, 69% (n=109), responded they attend zero to six hours of PD per year. Twenty percent (n=32) indicated 7-12 hours, 5% (n=8) participate in 13-18 hours, and 6% (n=10) of participants acquire nineteen or more hours of PD (see Table 4.5). Thus, the majority of participants (89%) typically receive no more than 12 hours of PD in special education per year.

Table 4.5

Hours of Professional Development in Special Education

Hours in-service/PD per year	<i>n</i>	%
0-6	109	69%
7-12	32	20%
13-18	8	5%
19+	10	6%

Note: PD = Professional Development

In terms of administrative internships, 72% (n=114) indicated an internship was part of their administrator certification program. Ninety-three of those indicated that the internship provided them with experiences related to special education and 88 responded that those experiences provided useful information concerning working with SWD. Therefore, a little over half of the respondents (88 out of the total 159 or 55%) reported their internship provided useful information when working with SWD.

Ninety-six percent (n=153) of the participants admitted they had taken a school law course. Of the 96%, nearly half of the participants (n=72, 48%) indicated the school law course spent approximately one week on Special Education Law. On the other hand, 34 or 22 % reported they spent one class day on the topic; 4 reported no time was spent on Special Education Law (see Table 4.6) and 41 or 27% answered “other.” The verbatim responses of the 41 participants who indicated “other” are included in Table 4.7.

Table 4.6

Hours of Training on Special Education Law

Time	<i>n</i>	%
None	4	3%
1 day	34	23%
1 week	72	48%
Other (please specify)	41	27%

Table 4.7

Hours of Training on Special Education Law: Other Comments

don't remember

integrated throughout

3 hour semester course

Don't remember

not sure

Part of every discussion

1/4 of the course work

2 months

Unit

Mostly Case law and some related to Spec Ed

don't remember

1 semester (in Masters and Ph D program)

Full semester

I am required to attend school law courses every year, and special ed. law is always a part of this required training.

Minimal...review of significant cases, but minimal instruction on special ed. law in general. The course was one night per week for a full semester.....if we spent two full class periods on special ed. law, that would be alot.

The special education course I took to get my leadership degree focused on special education law

I don't remember but it was covered

Two semesters

Semester

1 semester

Table 4.7 cont.

quite a bit

i don't recall

2-3 days or 6-9 hours

More Than One Week

More of an independent study class, and I focused on Special Education and Section 405 for several weeks.

quite a bit

One day workshop

separate class, SPED Law

Semester

when applicable

don't remember

semester long course

not sure

2 semesters

5 weeks

a semester 3 credit course

2weeks

2 3 hour courses - college masters level

2 - 3 weeks

On-line course. 2 units designated to Spec. Ed. Law

do not remember

When asked how they obtained information concerning special education policy and procedures, participants provided written responses (see Appendix E). One hundred fifty-eight participants, almost 100%, answered this question and provided a variety of responses. Several codes emerged from the data (see Appendix E). Selected comments are provided for each code as follows: (a) director/district office; (b) self study; (c) in-

service/professional development; (d) other professionals; (e) state agencies or state publications; (f) conferences; (g) lawyers or legal resources; (h) coursework/internship.

Eighty-nine (56%) of the participants indicated they obtained information from their district office or Director of Special Education, for example:

“Mostly from our District Special Education Coordinator.”

Sixty-one (37%) indicated they obtained information through their own efforts (e.g. reading, internet searches and general research), for instance:

“Stay current on reading and research.”

Thirty-nine (25%) commented they attend in-services or professional development, i.e.

“Education service center training and development, my own reading/research.”

Thirty-six (23%) noted they consult with other professionals, stating in one case:

“Professional conversations, professional organizations, research and readings, AEA [Area Education Agency] staff.”

Twenty-six (16%) receive information from state agencies or state publications:

“State Dept. of Ed. and school personnel including our Exec. Director of Special Ed.”

Fourteen (9%) indicated they acquired information at conferences, for example:

“Attending national conferences on special education law.”

Eleven (7%) participants responded they consult lawyers or other legal resources:

“Legal updates, and through my district as well.”

Four (3%) reported coursework or an internship as one wrote:

“Through internship, books, and coursework.”

Participants selected from a menu of multiple response items to indicate how they obtained information or stayed current concerning issues or laws pertaining to special education. Respondents were asked to choose from a list which included: (a) other school administrators in their district, (b) Regional Offices or State Department of Education, (c) conferences, (d) journals/magazines/newsletters, (e) school or district lawyer, (f) district in-service or, (g) other. Participants were also asked to specify which conferences they attend and which journals/magazines/newsletters they use such as national “NASSP,” “CEC” and state based organizations “MN association of school principals (MASSP) school law conference” and local law firms “Shipman and Goodwin Law firm,” (see Appendix F). Eighty percent (n=126) indicated they get information from other school administrators in their district and 70% (n=111) attend district in-service. Fifty-two percent (n=82) obtain information from their school or district lawyer, 42% (n=67) indicated regional offices or the state department of education, 36% (n=57) selected journals/magazines/newsletters, 31% (n=49) chose conferences, and 10% (n=16) selected “other.” Most of the administrators got their information from other administrators in their district or from in-service offerings.

Administrators were asked to provide their opinions regarding the type of professional development they believed would be most beneficial for secondary campus-based administrators concerning special education. The question limited the participant to be able to select only one type of professional development as the most beneficial. Twenty nine percent (n=46) selected evaluation, identification and eligibility for special education and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act; 19% (n=31) indicated

special education law; and 18% (n=28) felt professional development concerning discipline for SWD would be beneficial, with 13% (n=20) selecting the item, development of the individual education program (IEP). General knowledge of special education was selected by 9% (n=15); 9% (n=14) indicated least restrictive environment (LRE) and student placement; and 3% (n=5) selected “other” (see Table 4.8). Only four of the five participants who selected “other” provided suggestions:

“Best practices regarding transitioning students from special education back to general education classroom when they no longer qualify for specially designed instruction.”

“Require more special ed clock hours of field work through administrative internships.”

“ALL of the above”

“discipline and LRE.”

Table 4.8

Beneficial Professional Development

Type of professional development	<i>n</i>	%
Issues concerning evaluation, identification and eligibility for special education and related services or Section 504	46	29%
Special education law	31	19%
Student discipline for students with disabilities	28	18%
Processes and procedures regarding the development of a student’s individualized education program (IEP)	20	13%
General knowledge of special education	15	9%
Decisions concerning student placement and the least restrictive environment (LRE)	14	9%
Other	5	3%

Results to Research Questions 2 and 3

The second research question was: What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators reportedly possess or draw upon in regard to working with SWD? The third research question was: What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators believe they need when working with SWD?

Results to the Likert-style questions are combined into one section due to the fact that when participants indicated “good” to “very good” knowledge, this information informed research question 2, and when they responded “poor” to “fair” this information informed research question 3.

Research Questions 2 and 3

Participants were asked to provide information for research questions two and three. Survey questions were constructed following a Likert-style format. Participant responses of “very good” to “good” informed research question two: What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators reportedly possess or draw upon in regard to working with SWD? When participants selected “poor” to “fair” as their response, their answers, when tabulated, informed research question three: What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators believe they need when working with SWD?

The participants were asked to rate their knowledge and skills concerning: Special Education (SE) Law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004), LRE, discipline of SWD, and the IEP process. One hundred fifty-nine participants responded to the question. Over half of the participants rated themselves as having “good” or “very good” knowledge of all areas listed. One hundred sixteen (73%) indicated they possessed “good” to “very good” knowledge and skills concerning SE Law, with only 43 (27%) indicating “poor” to “fair” knowledge and skills concerning SE Law. One hundred twenty-one participants (76%) reported having “good” to “very good” knowledge and skills related to IDEA, while 38 (24%) reported “fair” to “poor”. One hundred twenty-six participants (79%) selected “good” to “very good” knowledge and skills concerning LRE, and 33 (21%) reported “poor” to “fair”. One hundred thirty-eight participants (87%) picked “good” to “very good” knowledge and skills regarding discipline of SWD, with only 21 (13%) selecting “fair”. One hundred twenty-five

participants (79%) reported “good” to “very good” knowledge and skills concerning the IEP process, and 34 (21%) reported “poor” to “fair” (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9

Knowledge and Skills

	Poor <i>n</i> (%)	Fair <i>n</i> (%)	Good <i>n</i> (%)	Very Good <i>n</i> (%)
Special Education Law	4 (3%)	39 (25%)	91 (57%)	25 (15%)
The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)	2 (1%)	36 (23%)	92 (58%)	29 (18%)
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	5 (3%)	28 (18%)	75 (47%)	51 (32%)
Discipline of students with disabilities	0 (0%)	21 (13%)	71 (45%)	67 (42%)
The IEP process	2 (1%)	32 (20%)	79 (49%)	46 (30%)

Note: % rounded to nearest whole number

The participants were asked to rate their knowledge and skills concerning the characteristics of each of the 13 disability categories in IDEA. One hundred fifty-eight participants responded to the question. Over half of the participants believed they had “good” to “very good” knowledge of the following categories: Autism, Emotional Disturbance, Intellectual Disability, Multiple Disability, Other Health Impairment, Specific Learning Disabilities and Speech Impairments. Specifically, 92 (58%) participants indicated chose the options, “good” or “very good” concerning their knowledge of Autism. One hundred thirteen (72%) selected “good” to “very good” options in terms of their knowledge of Emotional Disturbance; 125 (79%) for Intellectual

Disability; 89 (56%) for Multiple Disabilities; 89 (56%) for Other Health Impairment; 116 (73%) for Specific Learning Disabilities, and 88 (55%) for Speech Impairment. Over half of the participants indicated they had “poor” to “fair” knowledge of the remaining categories: Auditory Impairment, Deaf-Blindness, Non-categorical early childhood, Orthopedic Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Visual Impairment. Specifically, 95 (60%) of participants indicated “poor” to “fair” knowledge of Auditory impairment. One hundred thirteen (72%) chose the option, “poor” or “fair” knowledge for Deaf-blindness, 136 (86%) for Non-categorical early childhood, 106 (64%) for Orthopedic Impairment, 101 (64%) for Traumatic Brain Injury and 95 (60%) for Visual Impairment (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10

Knowledge of disability categories

Disability	Poor		Fair		Good		Very Good	
	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)
Auditory impairment	25	(16%)	70	(44%)	54	(34%)	9	(6%)
Autism	10	(6%)	56	(36%)	68	(43%)	24	(15%)
Deaf-blindness	45	(29%)	68	(43%)	35	(22%)	9	(6%)
Emotional disturbance	10	(6%)	35	(22%)	81	(51%)	32	(21%)
Intellectual disabilities	7	(4%)	26	(17%)	86	(54%)	39	(25%)
Multiple disabilities	9	(6%)	60	(38%)	71	(45%)	18	(11%)
Non-categorical early childhood	80	(51%)	56	(35%)	16	(10%)	6	(4%)
Orthopedic impairment	37	(23%)	69	(44%)	37	(23%)	15	(10%)
Other health impairment	15	(9%)	54	(34%)	72	(46%)	17	(11%)
Specific learning disability	6	(4%)	36	(23%)	81	(51%)	35	(22%)
Speech or language impairment	9	(6%)	61	(39%)	74	(47%)	14	(9%)
Traumatic brain injury	30	(19%)	71	(45%)	47	(30%)	10	(6%)
Visual impairment	24	(15%)	71	(45%)	53	(34%)	10	(6%)

Note: % rounded to nearest whole number

Participants were asked to rate their level of knowledge and skills concerning IDEA's (2004) requirements regarding student placement and the continuum of services options afforded SWD. One hundred fifty-eight participants responded. Eighty participants (51%) indicated they had "good" knowledge of IDEA's requirements

regarding student placement and the continuum of services, and 29 (18%) rated their knowledge level as “very good”. Eight participants (5%) rated their knowledge and skills concerning IDEA's requirements for student placement and the continuum of services options afforded for SWD as “poor” while 41 (26%) rated their knowledge as “fair.” Nearly one in three secondary campus-based administrators rated themselves as possessing “poor” to “fair” knowledge concerning IDEA’s requirements for student placement and the continuum of services afforded for SWD (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.11

IDEA’s requirements/continuum of services

Answer	<i>n</i>	%
Poor	8	5%
Fair	41	26%
Good	80	51%
Very Good	29	18%

Participants were also asked to rate their level of knowledge and skills concerning the role of the general education teacher regarding special education as mandated by law. One hundred fifty-three participants responded to the question. Seventy-nine participants (52%) selected “good” and 49 (32%) selected “very good” concerning their level of knowledge and skills pertinent to the role of the general education (GE) teacher regarding special education. Only one participant (1%) reported “poor” knowledge and skills concerning the role of the general education teacher regarding special education as mandated by law, and 24 (16%) reported their level of knowledge and skills as “fair” (see Table 4.12).

Table 4.12

Knowledge and skills concerning the role of the GE teacher

Answer	n	%
Poor	1	1%
Fair	24	16%
Good	79	52%
Very Good	49	32%

Participants were asked to rate their knowledge and skills concerning how the academic progress of SWD might impact the adequate yearly progress (AYP) rating their schools receives. One hundred fifty-nine participants responded. Seventy-six participants (48%) indicated “good” knowledge and skills concerning how academic progress of SWD may affect AYP with 55 (35%) participants selecting “very good” in terms of their knowledge and skills regarding how SWD might impact their AYP rating. A small number, 3 (2%), reported “poor” knowledge and skills concerning how the academic progress made by SWD might affect their school’s overall AYP rating, while and 25 (16%) indicated “fair” knowledge and skills (see Table 4.13).

Table 4.13

Knowledge and skills concerning AYP

Answer	n	%
Poor	3	2%
Fair	25	16%
Good	76	48%
Very Good	55	35%

Respondents rated their level of knowledge and skills concerning supports, accommodations and curriculum modifications for SWD. Of the 158 participants, 90 (57%) reported having “good” knowledge and skills concerning supports, accommodations and curriculum modifications for SWD, and 49 (31%) selected “very good”. Two (1%) participants answered “poor” knowledge and skills concerning supports, accommodations and curriculum modifications for SWD, yet 17 (11%) conveyed the belief they possessed a “fair” level of knowledge and skills about this topic (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.14

Supports, accommodations, modifications

Answer	n	%
Poor	2	1%
Fair	17	11%
Good	90	57%
Very Good	49	31%

Participants rated their level of knowledge and skills in making decisions about the types of assessments SWD should take and the participation requirements for statewide assessments as required by IDEA (2004). One hundred fifty-eight participants responded to this question yielding several categories. Eighty-one participants (51%) believed they possessed a “good” level of knowledge and skills concerning assessment requirements, and 45 gave themselves a “very good” rating. Five participants (3%) reported having “poor” knowledge and skills concerning decisions pertaining to the types

of assessments SWD must take and the participation requirements regarding statewide assessments, and 29 (18%) rated their knowledge and skills in this area as “fair” (see Table 4.15).

Table 4.15

Knowledge and skill concerning assessments

Answer	<i>n</i>	%
Poor	5	3%
Fair	29	18%
Good	81	51%
Very Good	43	27%

Qualitative Responses to Research Question 2

Respondents were asked to specify what knowledge they draw upon or skills they possess for working with SWD. One hundred thirty-eight participants (87%) provided a variety of answers (see Appendix G). Several codes emerged from the data. Selected comments are provided for each code as follows: (a) knowledge and experience; (b) other staff or professionals; (c); previous training (d) knowledge of student; (e) family member; (f) refer to IEP/BIP; (g) other resources; (h) knowledge of the law; (i) empathy and patience; (j) consult the family of the student.

Ninety-nine respondents (72%) indicated they draw upon their own knowledge and experience as teachers or counselors;

Teacher comments:

“My classroom experiences”

“My experience as an LEA and a co-teach teacher of 7 years”

“As a mother of 4 and grandmother of 8, having 43 years experience in education, and knowing my special education students, I am able to make decisions in the best interest of the child.”

“I draw on my years of experience in the classroom with a collaborative teacher and as a parent.”

“Experience as a Special Education teacher has helped me with discipline and providing teachers support with respect to differentiation of instruction”

“I served as the Curriculum Coordinator for SpEd and director of SpEd in a neighboring school district prior to going to the College of Charleston to teach in the Dept of spEd”

“I was a special education teacher”

“I am a special education teacher with 15 years experience.”

“I have a masters in special ed.”

“My own experiences with SPED students and teachers as well as serving as SPED Administrator.”

“I draw upon my former knowledge as a special education teacher and as a special education coordinator”

Counselor experience:

“School Counseling experience and Head of Teachers Assisting Teachers experience; clinical evaluation of children experience”

“I have a counseling degree that helps me listen actively to both the student and parent concerns”

“I have found that skills acquired from my counseling background have been very helpful in my current dealings with students with disabilities.”

“Admin education and Counseling degree”

“Counseling background”

Twenty-seven (20% of the responses) indicated they ask other staff or professionals:

“I consult with SPED case managers and my special ed coordinator in all special ed related issues,”

“Relying on people who are expertise in the area of special education to guide me.”

Seventeen (12%) wrote they draw from previous training:

“Extensive training in dealing with students with specific disabilities,”

“Basically on the job training peppered with brief inservice training and the state SPED conference (attended one time).”

Ten (7%) reported they use knowledge of the student:

“Following IEP and individual knowledge of each student,”

“Patience and understanding students individual needs.”

Nine (7%) responded they either have a family member with a disability or a family member who works with SWD:

“I have a special needs daughter”

“classroom experience; parent of daughter with IEP; read research/articles; attend trainings”

“I utilize the knowledge of my wife (a 15 year special ed. teacher)”

“Experience and professional conversations...especially with my wife, who is a certified special education teacher.”

“my wife is a sped teacher...”

“personal experience with my own autistic son 11 year old son”

“Personal knowledge (2 children who went through school w/ IEP's)”

Nine (7%) said they refer to the individual IEP or Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP):

“I rely on my staff and reading the IEP,”

“BIP's.”

Nine (7%) claimed they use other resources to gain information:

“Experience in a variety of situations involving special education students has given me a strong knowledge base, but I also know I have the resources available when questions come up,”

Seven (5%) reported they utilize their knowledge of the law:

“I have a law degree,”

“Know the law as it pertains to specific situations.”

Four (2%) indicated empathy and patience;

“Listening and empathy,”

“Patience and understanding students individual needs.”

Only three (2%) comments referred to consulting the family of the student:

“[L]isten actively to both the student and parent concerns,”

“Collaborative decisions based on the case worker, the families, general education staff, and the special services department.”

Qualitative Responses to Research Question 3

The third research question was: What knowledge and skills to secondary, campus-based administrators believe they need when working with SWD? Respondents were asked what knowledge or skills they believe are needed when working with SWD. One hundred forty-two participants (89%) answered this question (see Appendix H). Several codes emerged from the data. Selected comments are provided for each code as follows: (a) knowledge of law and policy; (b) effective teaching practices/support; (c) patience, empathy or understanding; (d) knowledge of disabilities, placement and identification; (e) knowledge of the student and family; (f) knowledge of the IEP process; (g) knowledge of discipline procedures; (h) working with teachers; (i) overall knowledge of special education; (j) good support system; (k) other comments.

Forty-three participants, 30% of participants answering this question, listed knowledge of law and policy as needed when working with SWD:

“Knowledge of SPED law, LRE, and identification of disabilities so we can address the best placement for services,”

“Staying in total compliance with the law and providing services.”

Thirty-three, 23% of the answers, indicated knowledge of effective teaching techniques or support:

“reading intervention, knowledge of various interventions, strategies for differentiation of instruction,”

“better understanding of effective teaching practices.”

Twenty-eight (20%) of the participants/ comments listed patience, empathy and understanding:

“Patience and understanding,”

“A lot of patience and understanding.”

Twenty-seven (19%) noted knowledge of disabilities, placement, and identification:

“Knowledge of SPED law, LRE, and identification of disabilities so we can address the best placement for services,”

“Knowledge of the student and the student's disability.”

Twenty (14%) referenced knowledge of the specific student and family:

“knowledge about the individual student,”

“I need to know their interests and family background.”

Seventeen (12%) targeted knowledge of the IEP and IEP process:

“Understanding the IEP process and making student based decisions,”

“Goal writing, progress monitoring, better IEP writing.”

Ten (7%) stated knowledge of discipline procedures:

“Disciplining special needs students can be challenging. Sometimes I don't know whether giving them a similar consequence to the average student is appropriate or not,”

“Reading and implementing an IEP/ 504, Knowledge of SpEd law as it pertains to discipline.”

Eight (6%) mentioned knowledge of working with teachers:

“...advise on how to better train teachers on best practice strategies with disabilities,”

“Developing accommodations and working with resistant teachers.”

Three (2%) pointed out overall knowledge of SE is needed:

“Full range,”

“[M]ore of it.”

Two (1%) stated the need for a good support system:

“I need a network of people I can trust to give quality advice,”

“I make sure if I am not sure on an issue, a program, an IEP goal, I ask whom ever I need to be sure.”

Five (4%) provided other comments that did not fit into the prior categories. For example,

“Counseling,” and

“Personal skills to relate and interact effectively.”

Results to Research Question 4

The fourth research question was: What specific preparation do secondary campus-based administrators believe would improve their understanding of special education policy and procedures? The question was designed to elicit qualitative data from participants through written responses. One hundred twenty-three participants (77%) answered this question and provided a variety of responses (see Appendix I). Several codes emerged from the data. Selected comments are provided for each code as follows: (a) professional development or training; (b) special education law; (c) interventions, accommodations and service delivery; (d) hands on training and

collaboration; (e) RTI and identification; (f) working with teachers; (g) none; (h) other comments. Fifty-two, 42% of the responses, called for ongoing professional development or training to improve their understanding of special education policy and procedures illustrated in these comments:

“Annual updates with any new changes brought to district leadership team monthly,”

“Continued updates as policies and procedures change.”

An additional thirty-one (25%) specifically stated training in special education law would be beneficial:

“Staying up to date with any changes in law, case law, and research based interventions,”

“Continued updates for the constantly moving targets set by legislators in regards to special ed.”

Fifteen (12%) participants believed additional information concerning interventions, accommodations and service delivery would improve their understanding, for example:

“I would like more models of highly-effective service delivery models at the high school level,”

“Additional training to better provide teachers support in differentiating instruction.”

Seven (6%) stated hands-on training and collaboration would help:

“Ongoing collaboration with trusted colleagues. At this point, I feel that I need more ‘on the job’ information, which is why I suggest collaborative efforts with other administrators,”

“More time for collaboration with the experts.”

Five (4%) indicated Response to Intervention (RTI) or the process used to determine whether a student is eligible for special education and related services. Some simply stated “RTI” while one commented, “Process for determining disability eligibility.”

Two (2%) indicated they would like more information related to working with teachers.

Comments made included:

“Training on how to build capacity of my general education teaching staff in inclusionary practices and adaptations,”

“I'd like current information as it relates to schools, classrooms, and both sp. ed. and general education teachers.”

Seven (6%) stated “none” and 12 (10%) provided various other comments that did not apply to the emergent codes such as:

“More specific articles that can update all of us as administrators on the newest policies and procedures” and

“I don't know where to start.”

Other Information

The final survey question gave participants the opportunity to provide additional comments or concerns related to special education. Participants contributed a wealth of personal input (see Appendix J). Several codes emerged from the data. Selected

comments are provided for each code as follows: (a) none; (b) respect differences; (c) certification programs/course-work; (d) discipline; (e) assessment; (f) inexperience; (g) other comments.

Seventeen participants simply replied “none.” Three underscored the need to respect differences as expressed by one respondent;

“From experience in early childhood, elementary, middle and now high school, I believe we must understand and respect differences that ALL students have, and help each student to find their passion and skills where they can excel and be successful.”

Three others commented concerning certification programs or coursework, as stated by one:

“Very important to take admin preparation courses related to working with students with disabilities. Very important part of my job and fortunately my preparation in college along with experience as an administrator prepared me pretty well for helping students with disabilities achieve success.”

Three more made comments concerning discipline. For example, one teacher recommended,

“Special edu students with extreme discipline and disruptive behaviors should have a spe[c] ed school with deliberate interventions.”

Two comments concerned assessment relevant to how to administer accountability-based tests to students with disabilities, as stated by one:

“I have questions as to how PARCC will be administered to special education students, if there is an alternative assessment for students with disabilities.”

Two others expressed their own inexperience concerning special education:

“This is one area that I know I need more information on...”

Twelve additional comments did not align with a specific theme and were either questions or general statements. One respondent decried the need for a person on campus with expertise in special education:

“It's hard to be an expert on everything. The model we have adopted is to have a full-time sped administrator, who is the expert for all of us.”

Others remarked on positive gains regarding special education and their attitudes toward students with disabilities:

“Since starting as a Special Education teacher in the early 1990's, I have seen many positive changes in educating students with disabilities. Greater attention and resources for students in particular.”

“In our school, students with disabilities are a very valuable and appreciated commodity.”

Several indicated a need for training in the field of special education:

“I believe that teachers and support staff need to be better prepared at the university level. Student teaching for one semester is inadequate; require longer internships with more hands on experiences with excellent mentors”

“Administrative programs need to do a better job of making the connection to the state assessments, as well as, curriculum for these students.”

Many participants provided input concerning discipline of SWD, behavioral supports, and difficulties they encounter when disciplining student with disabilities.

“My main concern is how difficult it is to explain to teachers why special education students receive fewer days suspension than regular education students for discipline offenses such as fighting or disrespect”

“[S]ome laws and/or policies permit students with disabilities to remain in an environment that is NOT conducive; too many students are misdiagnosed because parents want the academic support, but do not adhere to the behavioral supports”

“Special edu students with extreme discipline and disruptive behaviors should have a spe[c] ed school with deliberate interventions”

Some participants expressed their frustrations openly and frankly concerning special education:

“I honestly don't feel like it is appropriate for me to have the level of responsibility that I have for special education in my school. To have a person who was a PE teacher turned administrator, suddenly be the go to person for special education in a school, seems like a liability. I have done my due diligence in learning what I need to know, but this is not my area of expertise. There should be a special education department person in my building. I frequently [attend] LEA meetings which takes [me] away from my duties as the assistant principal.”

“I get frustrated because the challenges coming to schools has less to do with what is best for the kids and more to do with what happened in some court room. We waste [so] much time and money on those things that the kids lose out. Too much politics

and too many positions created for people to do unnecessary jobs. Time to leave the lawyers out of education.”

“Little is being addressed (in south Carolina) with respect to curriculum and assessments that are aligned for Students with Special Needs in the arena of TMD, LD, ED self cont). [T]his creates an unfair and highly consequential impact for schools who have large special ed populations like my school (10 self cont classes, 10 resource teachers and 4 transition specialists). The ripple effect of this is that principals shy away from SpEd classes and do not want them in their buildings. The State Dept of Educ needs to step up to the plate and work ON BEHALF of the students and the schools not take on the bureaucratic role of "policing.” Likewise, institutions of higher learning and advanced degree programs need to have people who have and are currently working in the schools teach future administrators about the realities of SpEd”

Summary

This study was conducted to investigate the secondary, campus-based administrators’ knowledge pertaining to the instructional and programmatic needs of SWD. Four research questions guided the study:

1. How do secondary campus-based administrators gain knowledge concerning special education policy and procedures?
2. What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators reportedly possess or draw upon in regard to working with SWD?
3. What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators

believe they need when working with SWD?

4. What specific preparation do secondary campus-based administrators believe would improve their understanding of special education policy and procedures?

A total of one hundred seventy-one surveys were returned from campus-based administrators. Eight surveys, less than 50% complete, were eliminated. Four respondents did not meet criteria for inclusion in the study; thus, their surveys were also eliminated. A total of 159 surveys were included in the study, all of which were 70% or more complete. Nine administrators reported they served grades K-12, and 150 indicated they served grades 6-12+ or a combination of those grades.

The majority of participants were White males: 62% were male and 92% were White. Sixty-nine percent were school principals with the next most selected position designated as assistant principal at 20%. Most of the administrators had between 4 and 10 years experience (43%). Additionally, over half of the respondents' reported enrollments ranging from a population of 500 to 1500 students. The majority of administrators had previously served as general education teachers (124), and most (79%) received their Master's of Education from a traditional university. Every respondent (100%) reported their student enrollment included some percentage of students receiving special education and related services with the majority reporting between 1% and 15%.

In terms of research question one that asked secondary campus-based administrators how they gain knowledge concerning special education policy and procedures, the majority (75%) of the administrators reportedly gain their knowledge through in-service or professional development. Additionally, results revealed that 69%

spend six hours or less in professional development concerning special education policy and procedures. Seventy-five percent of the administrators spent one week or less studying special education law in their administrator preparation program, and 69% did not take any law course specific to special education. When participants were asked to describe the type of professional development they believed would be the most beneficial, results were spread among all the provided answer options. The largest percentage (29%) of responses identified issues concerning (a) evaluation, (b) identification and eligibility for special education and related services, or (c) Section 504.

Research questions two and three asked secondary campus-based administrators to identify (a) the knowledge and skills they reportedly possess or draw upon to work with SWD and (b) the knowledge and skills they believed they need when working with SWD. Ninety-nine participants reported they draw on prior experience to access their knowledge and skills when working with SWD. The area they rated as needing the most training was special education law and policy: a stated need that is inconsistent with the 73% of respondents who reported they possessed “good” to “very good” knowledge of special education law, IDEA (2004), LRE, discipline of SWD, and the IEP process. Seventy-nine percent of the administrators indicated “good” to “very good” knowledge of intellectual disabilities, and 86% reported “poor” to “fair” knowledge of non-categorical early childhood. Sixty-nine percent responded they possessed “good” to “very good” knowledge and skills concerning IDEA's requirements regarding student placement and the continuum of services options afforded for SWD. Eighty-four percent of participants rated their level of knowledge and skills concerning the role of the general education

teacher and special education as mandated by law as “good” to “very good”. Eighty-three percent reported “good” to “very good” knowledge and skills concerning how academic progress made by SWD might affect their school’s overall rating for achieving adequate yearly progress (AYP). Eighty-eight percent indicated “good” to “very good” knowledge and skills concerning supports, accommodations and curriculum modifications for SWD. Seventy-eight percent reported “good” to “very good” knowledge and skills concerning decisions pertaining to the types of assessments SWD take and the participation requirements regarding statewide assessments.

Research question four was designed to obtain qualitative data from the participants as they provided written responses when asked, as secondary campus-based administrators, to specify what they believed would improve their understanding of special education policy and procedures. Some answers appeared to be in conflict with their responses to some of multiple-choice survey questions. Eighty-three of the participants indicated that additional and ongoing professional development would improve their understanding of special education policy and procedures, with 31 respondents specifically stating law or special education law and specific information that outlines special education policy and procedures.

In summary, when the participating secondary campus-based administrators were given multiple-choice questions, they frequently rated themselves as having “good” to “very good” knowledge and skills related to special education. On the other hand, their qualitative responses contradicted their survey responses in a number of critical areas.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study was conducted to investigate the level of knowledge and skills secondary campus-based administrators' possess pertaining to the instructional and programmatic needs of students with disabilities (SWD). Secondary campus-based administrators across the country were asked to answer questions relevant to the purpose of this study via an electronic survey delivered by email. Data culled from a total of 159 participants' completed surveys informed the reported results. Out of a total of 50 states plus the District of Columbia, 44 states were represented in the responding sample. The research questions were:

1. How do secondary campus-based administrators gain knowledge concerning special education policy and procedures?
2. What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators reportedly possess or draw upon in regard to working with SWD?
3. What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators believe they need when working with SWD?
4. What specific preparation do secondary campus-based administrators believe would improve their understanding of special education policy and procedures?

The theoretical framework of Critical Pedagogy by Paulo Freire (2000) informs the results of this study. The tenets of Critical Pedagogy constitute a set of tools that can be used to combat discriminatory and oppressive actions—whether intentional or unintentional—made effectual when campus-based administrators lack adequate knowledge and skills (i.e., training) in special education and special education law that

may or may not have been provided by their educational leadership preparation program(s). The phases of Critical Pedagogy begin with, meaningful *dialogue* within the community, and move to *unity* within and between groups. Members within and across groups become *organized*. Only after the other phases have been actualized can *cultural synthesis* be obtained.

Research Question 1

How do secondary campus-based administrators gain knowledge concerning special education policy and procedures?

In-Service and Staff Development

The results indicate a majority of participants gain information from in-service/staff development, attending six or fewer hours of in-service/staff development concerning special education per year. According to Robertson (1996), administrators prefer to gain information concerning special education policy and procedures from workshops and in-service. Administrators report a need for ongoing professional development that targets their roles as school leaders in special education (Zaretsky, Moreau, & Faricloth, 2008). The second phase of Critical Pedagogy requires a dedication to *unity*. *Unity* can only be achieved through praxis or informed action. It is difficult to gain information and achieve *unity* with so few hours of training per year concerning SWD. Survey results indicate most respondents (29%) selected evaluation, identification and eligibility for special education and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act as the topics in which they believed professional development would be the most beneficial. Secondary campus-based administrators participating in Wakeman et al.'s study (2006)

ranked themselves lowest on items related to knowledge about student evaluation and assessment procedures in terms of meeting eligibility requirements for special education services. The fact that administrators expressed a need to understand the process to determine whether a student would be eligible for special education and related services and other issues related to identifying a SWD reveals that participants need further training relevant to *dialogue*, the first stage in Critical Pedagogy. Connecting the tenets of *dialogue* with the process used to determine eligibility and/or potential interventions for students that might preclude certain students from being referred to special education, and reduce over-identification. Further, secondary campus-based administrators who engage in *dialogue* may be predisposed to communicate more closely with each student and their families as well as with individuals who work with each student in general and special education programs. When this occurs, they will be better able to understand the full array of needs for each student in their school.

Pre-Service Preparation

Internship

The data show that a little over half (55%) of the participants indicated that their internship, involving direct contact with students who have special needs and their families, provided useful information when working with SWD. This experience may have begun the process of *dialogue*, which is essential and underlies cooperation between groups. *Dialogue* is only the first phase of Critical Pedagogy. However, this opportunity--obtained through participation in an administrative internship--applied to a little over half of the participants. Therefore, moving to *unity*, the second stage, where groups

achieve a horizontal relationship, and on to the third stage, where groups become organized toward a common task of liberation, and ultimately *cultural synthesis*, would not be achieved.

School Law Course

Although 96% of the participants had taken a school law course, only 31% reported they had taken a course specifically focused on special education law. This is consistent with Burton (2008) who found that nearly half of administrators in her study did not take any courses in special education as part of their administrator preparation program. Transforming education beginning with *dialogue* with SWD, their parents and families, and the individuals who serve them is extremely difficult when only a small amount of administrators have received training specific to special education law and the application of special education policy and procedures. The end result of Critical Pedagogy, *cultural synthesis*, encourages investigation and creativity, which allows leaders and people to be reborn into new knowledge and action. Understanding how special education law is actualized can foster this investigation, creativity, and action.

Inconsistencies in Responses

Some inconsistencies occurred across administrators' responses. When asked to select from a menu of options pertaining to how they gained information about special education policy and procedures applicable to working with SWD, the majority of administrators (119) selected in-service/staff development; yet, when asked to provide written responses about how they gained information, only 39 participants included in-service/staff development. Written responses revealed a majority of participants obtained

information from other professionals. The second most mentioned avenue they used was self-taught through reading, internet and general research. This finding is somewhat troublesome as the internet may not be a reliable or updated source of information; plus, there is no guarantee the information they are accessing is research-based. Additionally, when given the opportunity to provide suggestions for additional training, the responses did not include working with the students and families. Working with SWD and their families is an essential component for facilitating movement through the phases of Critical Pedagogy. In order to achieve *cultural synthesis* there must be a dedication of *unity*, the second phase of Critical Pedagogy, on the part of the leader(s) working with SWD. Moreover, for true *unity* to be achieved, families of SWD would also need to be included.

Research Question 2

What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators reportedly possess or draw upon in regard to working with SWD?

Many participants' (99) written responses indicated they draw upon their own personal knowledge and experience such as:

“I have a special needs daughter”

“classroom experience; parent of daughter with IEP; read research/articles; attend trainings”

“I utilize the knowledge of my wife (a 15 year special ed. teacher)”

A total of 11 comments made by participants specified personal experience as a teacher or special education teacher. For example,

“I draw on my years of experience in the classroom with a collaborative teacher and as a parent.”

“Experience as a Special Education teacher has helped me with discipline and providing teachers support with respect to differentiation of instruction”

“I was a special education teacher”

“as an undergraduate I took as many courses in Special Education as I could. I also was involved in pre-school inclusion as a regular education teacher.”

An additional five responses, addressed school counseling experience or training such as:

“I have found that skills acquired from my counseling background have been very helpful in my current dealings with students with disabilities.”

“Admin education and Counseling degree”

“Counseling background”

Yet, participants also indicated that belief that more training and information concerning special education policy and procedures was warranted. Those making such comments appear to have already engaged in *dialogue* and may be unified with SWD based on their personal and professional experiences in their former educational positions as well as the fact that some actually have family members who have been identified as having a disability. Nevertheless, to achieve *cultural synthesis*, their knowledge and experience must be fully incorporated into their daily activities: not just with their specific family member. They must be unified within and across groups. In order for the groups to become fully synthesized, a thorough understanding of and skill in applying special education policy and procedures needs to become an essential part of the campus-based

administrator's daily practice—moving beyond the notion of what one must deliberately and consciously think about—so that his/her actions naturally evolve and become an integrated part of the school's culture.

Family and Student

The data revealed that just three of 138 respondents' (2%) written responses included a discussion related to the family of the student as an important resource and source of knowledge, a finding that warrants concern in light of the need to involve the family/parents as a critical participant in the development of a student's IEP:

“...listen actively to both the student and parent concerns”

“Collaborative decisions based on the case worker, the families, general education staff, and the special services department”

“Years of working with students, parents, and teachers”

Only an additional 10 (7%) referenced the individual student needs:

“Following IEP and individual knowledge of each student”

“I think you understand that going into each year, the schools goal should be that every child can be successful, and treat each child with that purpose in mind”

“I try to see the value in all kids - look for the good in them”

“Experiences that I have had related to special education. I ask my self - does this help level the playing field for this student?”

“what is good for special need students is good for all students”

When looking at these results from the perspective of Critical Pedagogy, the lack of family and student involvement is concerning. For SWD to reach *cultural synthesis*,

secondary campus-based administrators must search for ways to include the students and their families in all aspects of developing the individual student's IEP. Not only is it important to value the family when working with SWD, it is required in the IEP process. "Parents are key members of the IEP team. They know their child very well and can talk about their child's strengths and needs as well as their ideas for enhancing their child's education" (U.S. Department of Education, 2000, p. 7). The family's knowledge is vital to beginning meaningful *dialogue*. Additionally the U.S. Department of Education (2000) states that "the parents ideas for enhancing their child's education" (p. 8) must also be addressed in an IEP meeting. Besides being an integral participant in the initial *dialogue*, family members must also be incorporated as major players in the realm of achieving *unity* so other individuals involved in the education of SWD recognize and acknowledge the rights to which SWD are entitled. When and only when such *unity* is realized can the *organization* of thought and action be made manifest, thus leading toward the potential realization of *cultural synthesis*. Unfortunately, family members run the danger of not being part of the process when only a small number of secondary campus-based administrators possess knowledge of special education policy and procedures. Even if they have such knowledge, they must be willing to draw upon their knowledge and skills and put into practice the imperative valuing the family as integral to their practice when working with SWD.

Special Education (SE) Law

Ironically, the data derived from the quantitative-oriented questions indicate participants reportedly have "good" to "very good" knowledge concerning special

education law, yet their qualitative responses to the same question revealed only nine (7%) participants reportedly draw upon their acquired knowledge of the law. Some of their comments included:

“My general knowledge of special education law”

“Previous experiences and special ed law”

“The law concerning special education students”

“I have a law degree”

“legal counsel”

Perhaps they have good knowledge of certain areas of special education law, but require additional training in other areas. To successfully move through each of the stages of Critical Pedagogy, secondary campus-based administrators must have a working knowledge of special education law as a foundation to begin the process. Legal issues often trouble administrators (Wagner & Katsiyannis, 2010). Understanding special education law and how and why it is important can help secondary campus-based administrators better understand this diverse population in terms of (a) how to fully incorporate SWD within the school population and (b) why it is important for them to be an integrated part of the school culture. Further, a solid knowledge base in special education law can potentially support each phase of Critical Pedagogy--*dialogue, unity, organization*, and finally lead to *cultural synthesis*.

Requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The majority of participants selected options on the quantitative-oriented questions that aligned with their belief that they possessed “good” to “very good”

knowledge of IDEA (2004), the principles underlying the appropriate placement of the SWD in varying aspects of their educational and extracurricular school experience known as the least restrictive environment (LRE), discipline procedures to be followed when working with SWD, and the multiple requirements and processes surrounding the development of a student's individualized education program (IEP). The qualitative data provided by participants disclosed that only nine (7%) secondary campus-based administrators refer to the student's IEP and/or behavior intervention plan (BIP) when working with SWD. The comments include:

“Refer to IEP”

“I rely on my staff and reading the IEP”

“BIP's”

“... relying on the IEP and direct support from the individual case manager”

“IEP conferences and discipline processes”

A SWD individualized education plan (IEP) gives important insight as to their strengths and needs. The development of the IEP for SWD is an area which administrators feel least prepared (Mchatton, Boyer, Shaunesy, & Terry, 2010). Understanding what a SWD is good at or what s/he lacks can be beneficial to an administrator understanding how to begin the *dialogue* process. It can also be vital to the *unity* process. Understanding how a student learns or best communicates can assist an administrator when bringing groups together in *unity*. Also, throughout the process of bringing the groups together, knowing SWD strengths and needs can assist in the process of *organization*. Students can have different duties in the community based on their

abilities and they will become part of the organized group thus leading to *cultural synthesis*. Based on this finding though, the programmatic aspects of special education do not appear to be at the forefront of administrators' minds when specific decisions must be made on behalf of the best interest of SWD. As a result, *cultural synthesis* would be difficult to achieve.

Disability Categories

The survey data revealed that secondary campus-based administrators consider themselves knowledgeable seven of the 13 disability categories: Autism, Emotional Disturbance, Intellectual Disability, Multiple Disability, Other Health Impairment, Specific Learning Disabilities, and Speech Impairments. This list represents approximately one-half of the defined disabilities. Students with the remaining diagnoses may benefit from the secondary campus-based administrators' knowledge but in order to have global knowledge of SWDs and open *dialogue* with each and every student and his/her parents and families that accounts for the possibility that a student may or may not be diagnosed with any one of the 13 disability categories, these administrators must improve their knowledge of all disability categories. Knowledge of the specific disabilities, similar to knowledge of students IEPs, provides insight as to students' abilities. This knowledge provides valuable information when organizing the groups and providing each student a meaningful position in the community when working toward *cultural synthesis*.

Other Staff/Professionals

Qualitatively, several (27) participants indicated they draw upon other staff for support when working with SWD. Their comments included:

“Collaborative decisions based on the case worker, the families, general education staff, and the special services department.”

“I consult with SPED case managers and my special ed coordinator in all special ed related issues”

“a good working relationship with district and school special education personnel”

“I also have a special education administrator that works within my building. I can always ask her for assistance as well.”

“expertise of others who have the Sp. Ed background”

These qualitative comments show that administrators are working, some working effectively, with other professionals, a characteristic that is continually important. According to Lashley (2007) administrators rely on colleagues who may have more experience in special education. When administrators work with other professionals, they are fostering *unity* within their own group. The more they are in constant *dialogue* with others concerning SWD, the better their working relationships become thus providing better outcomes for the students. The more unified the group, the better they will be at becoming *organized* as a group and in the larger community making *cultural synthesis* a likely outcome.

Research Question 3

What knowledge and skills do secondary campus-based administrators believe they need when working with SWD?

SE Law and Policy

When responding to Likert style questions, 25% selected the option, “poor to fair,” in regard to their knowledge and skills related to IDEA (2004), and almost 30% indicated “poor to fair” knowledge and skills concerning special education law. When secondary campus-based administrators were given the opportunity to provide written responses concerning what they believe is needed when working with SWD, the most frequent need they identified was knowledge of special education law and policy. Qualitatively they commented:

“It would be helpful to learn or be kept up to date on changes in laws regarding these students. If a resource were made available (worded in common sense language) for administrators, it would be very helpful.”

“Knowledge of SPED law, LRE, and identification of disabilities so we can address the best placement for services.”

“What is legal work with these kids and how to protect them during their school years”

Knowledge of special education law and policy provide the foundation for understanding how to serve SWDs. Knowledge of Special Education law continues to be a critical component in the preparation of administrators (Crockett, Becker, & Quinn, 2009; Pazey & Cole, 2013). Without using “already acquired knowledge as a process to

unveil new knowledge they will never be able to participate rigorously in a dialogue as a process of learning and knowing” (Friere, 2000, p. 19). If certification programs require a course regarding special education law, administrators will more than likely be able to build on that knowledge. With this base knowledge, secondary campus-based administrators could have the groundwork to participate in meaningful dialogue in order to move toward *cultural synthesis* with SWDs.

Teaching Techniques/Supports

Notably, written responses of secondary campus-based administrators listed effective teaching techniques or supports as the next most frequently discussed area of need. Their comments included:

“reading intervention, knowledge of various interventions, strategies for differentiation of instruction,”

“better understanding of effective teaching practices”

“Better understanding of resources, strategies, and options”

“Continued review of appropriate teaching strategies and supports”

“What accommodations are appropriate for Emotional & behavioral disabilities”

“Better differentiation techniques that do not lower the level of the curriculum but make it more accessible”

“I need to know what their disability is and what accommodations that they have”

“Know their disability, their accommodations, and differentiate instruction”

“Knowledge of disability and appropriate steps to handle said disability.”

“Alternate forms of behavior modification (other than discipline), advise on how to better train teachers on best practice strategies with disabilities”

At the secondary level, an administrators’ knowledge of effective teaching techniques and supports greatly informs practice and the subsequent academic outcomes of a student with a disability when deciding on the best course of action to take; hence, to include in a student’s IEP. School leaders are often unable to identify the relevant instructional priorities (Zaretsky et al, 2008). They must be able to work closely with teachers to develop teaching techniques and methods, establish a base of support for curricular decisions (Jenkins, 2009), and function as a resource for teachers and other service providers for SWD (Jenkins, 2009). Understanding the best way to teach SWD will assist in understanding the best way to communicate on different levels and therefore, provide support when opening a *dialogue*. The more knowledge an administrator can obtain concerning techniques and supports for SWD, the more complete understanding they will have when serving them and helping them find their place within the school community--once *unity* has been established and the process of *organization* begins.

Patience, Empathy, Understanding

Participants also stated they felt patience, empathy and understanding are also needed when working with SWD.

“An understanding of what the situation truly is and what we are trying to accomplish.”

“Patience, ability to show I care, willingness to research special issues, listening...”

“Patience and understanding”

According to Friere (2000), every word contains reflection and action. When administrators use the words “patience” or “understanding” to describe working with SWD, the administrators signify the need to take some action. Otherwise, their word(s) without action are empty and meaningless (Friere, 2000). The need for understanding and patience could indicate secondary campus-based administrators do not have enough personal experience with SWDs. If administrators follow the process outlined by Critical Pedagogy beginning with *dialogue* they might be more capable of understanding these students and how to serve them. When they participate in meaningful *dialogue* rather than simply having patience with the SWD, they will be demonstrating a willingness to take action in order to gain greater insight into the needs of SWD. Once they gain this insight, they can begin moving toward the cultural action of *unity*.

Requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504

Based on qualitative remarks written by participants concerning what they need to know when working with SWD, 20% of the administrators indicated the need to know more about identification of disabilities, knowledge of disabilities, and how placement decisions are made when working with SWD as illustrated here:

“LRE, and identification of disabilities so we can address the best placement for services.”

“Understanding the various disabilities in order to know most appropriate interactions with students”

“Better understanding of how students qualify, what a high quality IEP looks like”

“Better understand of eligibility, placement and LRE”

“I need to better know how to identify students at the high school level”

“Steps to avoid over-identification”

“504's are becoming more and more common”

One administrator’s request for more training, stating, “Behavior Management, Parameters for implementation of IEP's, specific knowledge of PMD, TMD, EMD, LD, ED, Autism, OI, VI, HI placement criteria and accommodations” sounds as if s/he had very little training concerning the different disability categories. On another note, Autism, which continues to be an area of much discussion, was specifically mentioned: “We have an autism unit, so anything that will help us grow and stretch this population.” One comment in particular could be used as a mission statement for administrators: “Understanding of the various disabilities to help students accept who they are and challenge them to move to the next possible level.” This statement encompasses the process of Critical Pedagogy, helping “students accept who they are” requires *dialogue* and *unity*. Challenging “them to move to the next level” requires *organization*, or a plan as to how to move to that level. Once they achieve that “next level” they have reached cultural synthesis.

IEP/BIP process

When responding to quantitative oriented questions, 21% of the administrators indicated the need for additional training in regard to making placement decisions based on the principles of the LRE and the requisite procedures and steps to be followed regarding the development of a student's IEP.

“Better understanding of how students qualify, what a high quality IEP looks like”

“Goal writing, progress monitoring, better IEP writing”

“Understanding the IEP process and making student based decisions”

“coaching case managers/teachers on how to write IEP goals/plans that are aligned to common core standards”

“Reading and implementing an IEP/ 504, Knowledge of SpEd law as it pertains to discipline”

The IEP process falls naturally into the cultural action of *organization*. SWD individual goals guide and organize their educational journey. The IEP should be completed only after there has been *dialogue* with the SWD and/or his parents in order to better understand their concerns and aspirations. *Unity* is achieved when goals are created to align with their input and SWD are assisted in accomplishing those goals. The IEP itself is the guideline for the *organization* of the groups working with SWD.

Discipline

On the other hand, 13% indicated they needed to acquire additional knowledge related to the discipline of SWD. Some of the written comments were:

“Disciplining special needs students can be challenging. Sometimes I don't know whether giving them a similar consequence to the average student is appropriate or not”

“How to de-escalate students when they are in a state that is not conducive for learning.”

“Educating parents of students with disabilities. Often, parents feel that their child can be excused from disciplinary action because of the child's disability.”

“More legal, creative options with student discipline and with providing support to general education teachers working with students with disabilities.”

“I could use some training with restraint techniques, although I have not needed to restraint a young person for several years.”

“how Spec Ed students react in stressful situations, how they need some time to calm down before they are able to process and respond”

“With my responsibilities more help with disciplinary concerns, student support”

“Discipline and the ambiguous connections made between student behavior and whether it is a manifestation of their disability. In my experience, most disruptive behaviors by students with disabilities is NOT a manifestation of their disability. However, this often times becomes a point of contention with advocate groups who have no idea of what is required to operate a school safely and with order.”

When an administrator has a working knowledge of the BIPs of SWD, they may be able to play a larger role in helping to guide them as they attempt to navigate the challenges they face within their classroom and school-based activities. Wagner and Katsiyannis

(2010) found that understanding the processes and procedures to be used to discipline SWD was an issue that frequently concerned administrators. Perhaps if they have better working knowledge of how and why behavior plans are written, they will not characterize decisions made in the manifestation determination hearing process as “ambiguous connections.” Additionally, if administrators engage in meaningful *dialogue*, they can then move toward becoming *unified* concerning with the student and those who are responsible for assisting him/her with his/her behavioral goals. Becoming unified with the SWD could lessen the need for administrators to use techniques to “de-escalate” students in certain situations because knowledge gained during the *dialogue* process could be confirmed with the student through *unity*. A student’s behavioral plan provides the *organization* as to how his/her behavioral challenges and subsequent responses to specific behaviors are operationalized, allowing the student the advantage of becoming an integral part of the community, or *culturally synthesized*.

Knowledge of Student/Family

Only 20 participants (14%) mentioned the importance of gaining knowledge of the student and/or student’s family. Several of their comments are provided:

“I need to know their interests and family background.”

“Understanding of the various disabilities to help students accept who they are and challenge them to move to the next possible level”

“I think the most important thing is to build relationships with all students so they know you value who they are and are there to help”

“Knowledge about the different disabilities, discipline, instructional strategies, parent conferences”

“the most important thing is to build relationships with all students so they know you value who they are and are there to help”

“Understanding of their challenges and the role of the school in helping them meet their goals”

“understanding of young people and the acceptance that teens make mistakes”

These comments are provocative but the low percentage of participants indicating knowledge of students and their families suggests that secondary campus-based administrators do not consider having knowledge of SWDs and their families as a critical area of need in their efforts to ensure SWD receive the most appropriate specialized instruction and related services within their schools. This lack of knowledge points to a lack of *dialogue* and *unity* with the family. Achieving *cultural synthesis* is impossible without knowledge of SWDs and their families, which is essential for including them in the community. *Cultural synthesis* can be obtained through academic events, extracurricular activities, and vocational programs: not simply through attending class, but also participating in educational and recreational activities that take place outside the classroom. Gaining knowledge about the family can provide additional insight as to what types of activities they do together and what the SWD may be interested in participating in educationally.

Knowledge of Specific Disabilities

Over half of the participants classified their knowledge of the following low-incidence disability categories as “poor to fair”: Auditory Impairment, Deaf-Blindness, Non-categorical Early Childhood, Orthopedic Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury and Visual Impairment. The National Center for Education Statistics (2013b) reports that in 2010-2011, approximately 13% of students in public schools qualified for special education services with the majority of schools (59%) reporting a total population of 500-3000 students. The likelihood of having students with one or more of these low-incidence disabilities within the school’s student population is great; thus, the lack of knowledge concerning these disabilities may hamper a secondary campus-based administrator’s ability to provide SWD with a FAPE as required by law when trying to serve them in an educational setting and include them in the school community. Several participants commented that better knowledge of specific disabilities and how to accommodate those disabilities would be helpful as described here:

“Knowledge about the different disabilities, discipline, instructional strategies, parent conferences”

“specific knowledge of particular disabilities and what strategies are most beneficial”

“Knowledge of disability and appropriate steps to handle said disability”

“Know their disability, their accommodations, and differentiate instruction”

“I need to know what their disability is and what accommodations that they have”

“Understanding the various disabilities in order to know most appropriate interactions with students”

“understanding the impact of their disability and how it affects their behavior and academic success”

“Understanding of their challenges and the role of the school in helping them meet their goals.”

Again, as discussed previously, possessing a strong understanding of specific disabilities and the accompanying characteristics may help to open up a *dialogue* and provide an opportunity for *unity* between the administrator(s) and SWD to allow *organization* of educational resources and supports within each group.

Working with Teachers

One of the categories which emerged from the qualitative comments was “working with teachers.” Participants highlighted the need for training in the area of guiding and leading teachers when working with SWD. Those comments included:

“How to help/guide regular education staff gain greater familiarity and understanding on how they can work with students with disabilities”

“coaching case managers/teachers on how to write IEP goals/plans that are aligned to common core standards”

“Practices in promoting co-teaching models”

“Developing accommodations and working with resistant teachers”

“advise on how to better train teachers on best practice strategies with disabilities”

These comments indicate the need for additional training not only as part of the required

curriculum and field experience/internship components for administrator certification. The same expectation should apply to individuals enrolled in teacher certification programs. School leaders must communicate a clear commitment to the rights of SWD and ensure faculty and staff fully comply with the requirements of special education law and special education processes and procedures (Zaretsky et al, 2008). The second phase of cultural action, *unity*, must occur not only across but also within groups. If one of the groups is not unified, it may not be possible for the group to achieve unity with another group. Secondary campus-based administrators must possess and demonstrate proficiency with working with both general education and special education teachers so together, they can become unified. As stated by Freire (2000), “Leaders must dedicate themselves to an untiring effort for unity” (p. 175)--which applies to the secondary campus-based administrators in this study--within and among all groups in their schools.

Approximately 20-30% of participants attributed their knowledge of varying areas of special education as “poor to fair”. In order to move through each of the stages articulated within the Critical Pedagogy framework, the secondary campus-based administrators who participated in this study would require more training in the fore-mentioned areas of special education, special education law, and special education policy and procedures. When they acquire additional knowledge in each of these areas, their attempts to engage in meaningful *dialogue* with SWD and their parents/families will be more likely to occur. Results gleaned from participants asking them to specify topics relevant to special education in which they believed they needed additional training suggests that without such knowledge, secondary campus-based administrators may be in

danger of engaging in acts of oppression. For example, by depriving SWD and their parents/families a voice at the table when making decisions about a student's IEP, secondary campus-based administrators are, in reality, subscribing to marginalization, exclusion, or, worst-case scenario, victimization. In addition to acquiring knowledge of special education, secondary campus-based administrators would be well-advised to become familiar with the Critical Pedagogy framework and the stages that lead toward transformative practice. In doing so, they may be more likely to “empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices” (McLaren, 2003, p. 186), starting the transformation process and, ultimately, reach *cultural synthesis* with SWD.

Research Question 4

What specific preparation do secondary campus-based administrators believe would improve their understanding of special education policy and procedures?

Within the qualitative comments related to this research question, secondary campus-based administrators articulated what they believed would improve their understanding of special education policy and procedures which included (a) ongoing professional development/training; (b) understanding the law; (c) training in interventions/accommodations/service delivery; (d) coursework; (e) hands-on/collaboration; (f) better understanding of RTI/identification procedures; (g) working with teachers; and (h) other comments.

Professional Development/Special Education Law

Out of a total of 153 responses, the top two areas of need were ongoing professional development (52 responses) and training in special education law (31

responses). Despite earlier responses from a majority of secondary campus-based administrators who signified they possessed “good” to “very good” knowledge and skills concerning special education law; when given the opportunity to provide additional comments, many of them admitted that additional training in special education law would be beneficial as listed here:

“Continued updates as policies and procedures change”

“Staying up to date with any changes in law, case law, and research based interventions”

“Continued updates for the constantly moving targets set by legislators in regards to special ed”

“Changes to IDEA and 504 to keep current”

“More time with the laws and more time in the identification, testing, and placement process in my internship.”

“updates as case law comes available &/or law changes”

“IDEA”

“law and accommodations as well as out of district placement”

“law centered training”

“Legal Requirements”

“special education law”

“More understanding of the Section 504 process”

This finding supports the cultural action of Critical Pedagogy. To maintain *dialogue* “requires an ever-present curiosity about the object of dialogue” (Friere, 2000, p. 18). If

secondary campus-based administrators participate in continual and ongoing professional development they will be more likely to maintain this curiosity. Because special education policy and procedures are continually being updated or altered, these administrators will continually be faced with the need to learn about policies and procedures relevant to meeting the needs SWD and their families. The more they learn, the more questions they may generate. Through engaging in meaningful *dialogue*, they may be better able to facilitate others in advancing the educational progress of SWD. Through professional development training, they will be more likely to sustain an “ever-present curiosity” about SWD and their families that fosters *unity* between groups. As administrators *dialogue* with others to satisfy their curiosity and move forward in their quest to acquire knowledge that can benefit outcomes for SWD, their administrative practice targeted toward SWD may become more *organized*, thus achieving *cultural synthesis*.

Interventions/Accommodations/Service Delivery

The majority of participants rated their knowledge of supports, accommodations and curriculum modifications as “good” to “very good”; yet, they noted they believed they would benefit from additional training in this area. Fifteen participants’ written responses suggested training in interventions, accommodations, and service delivery would be helpful, specifically

“models of highly-effective service delivery models at the high school level”

“Universal Design for Learning”

“Additional training to better provide teachers support in differentiating instruction.”

“Learning about new and perhaps better accommodations available for students with disabilities”

“Reasonable accommodations in the reg ed classroom”

“Meeting the needs of students with Emotional Impairments”

“Current full-inclusion teaching strategies”

Administrators having the appropriate training in interventions, accommodations and service delivery could assist them when working with SWD. As they move through the cultural action of Critical Pedagogy they will need this information to organize both general and special education teachers and support personnel (i.e., paraprofessionals, counselors, instructional and behavioral experts, and so forth). By seamlessly integrating various interventions, accommodations and service delivery options into the school culture rather than differentiating between various service providers and segmenting their contributions into separate activities, more options that benefit *every* student could be made available.

Coursework

Participants recognize the need for additional and specific coursework in special education. Administrators who were exposed to special education law through pre-service coursework were more comfortable when working with SWD which corresponds with the claims of Angelle and Bilton (2009). Many remarked that preparation programs should offer comprehensive coursework in special education such as,

“I feel like I need to take an entire course in this area...not just one or two classes of a course dedicated to this area”

“More time allocated for SPED training at the pre-service general education teacher level as well as prior to becoming an administrator”

“Classes in special education”

Coursework in special education would provide the knowledge base necessary for administrators to initiate meaningful *dialogue* with others on their campuses. This knowledge would also be essential to establish *unity* between groups and facilitating an *organizing* effort between and among various groups as they strive to achieve *cultural synthesis*. The more knowledge these administrators obtain, the easier it will be for them to become effective leaders on their campuses.

Hands on Training/Collaboration

Only seven participants suggested hands-on training and collaboration as topics for additional training.

“Ongoing collaboration with trusted colleagues. At this point, I feel that I need more "on the job" information, which is why I suggest collaborative efforts with other administrators.”

“observations of effective classrooms, interviews with teachers who have had great success with interventions”

“Specific walk through of the procedures in writing an IEP Plan.”

Participants’ suggestions align with the framework of Critical Pedagogy. Hands-on training in collaboration could be helpful for both secondary campus-based

administrators and others assigned to work directly with SWD. Zaretsky, Moreau, & Faricloth (2008) recommended that professional development should include opportunities to experience, via dialogue with other administrators, successful programming for the inclusion of students with a variety of disabilities. A strong mentoring program could provide just the type of “collaborative efforts” administrators are asking for in order to provide ongoing support. According to the dialogical action of Critical Pedagogy, *dialogue* cannot occur “without any prior apprenticeship with the object of knowledge and without any epistemological curiosity” (Friere, 2000, p. 19). Such direct contact through an internship would enable secondary campus-based administrator to be exposed to multiple opportunities designed to solidify their knowledge through practical application of what they have learned via coursework in special education and special education, thus providing them with the knowledge they need for *dialogue* to begin.

RTI/Identification

Some administrators would like more information concerning RTI and the identification of SWD and how it relates to identification, placement and the LRE. In Robertson’s 1996 study, few secondary campus-based administrators surveyed successfully answered that assessment data should be included as part of the process to identify the absence or existence of a disability. It is imperative for administrators to understand the procedural aspects for referral, identification, and/or eligibility determination for special education and related services. Training that differentiates between procedures to be used for each of the disability categories would improve their

overall knowledge of why different policies and procedures apply. Generally speaking, the need to incorporate training on specific evidence-based instructional strategies and interventions as well as requirements to ensure non-discriminatory evaluation and assessment procedures are followed relative to determining whether a student is, in fact, has a disability is imperative. Having a better understanding of special education policy and procedures could improve *dialogue* among administrators, teachers and support staff, and SWD and their families. Additionally, such training, could facilitate conversations that evolve as a result of ongoing data obtained from progress monitoring and/or other conversations whereby those involved in the education of every student can move toward *unity*, regardless of whether the student has a disability or needs more intensive instructional/behavioral interventions. Finally, the more knowledge administrators gain concerning why a student has been identified with a disability, the better they will be able to ensure the necessary resources are made available and SWD and their families can meaningfully participate in all facets of the student's educational program.

Working with Teachers

Working with both general and special education teachers was an additional area of training participants felt would improve their understanding of special education policy and procedures. The comments aligned with this question were:

“Training on how to build capacity of my general education teaching staff in inclusionary practices and adaptations”

“I'd like current information as it relates to schools, classrooms, and both sp. ed. and general education teachers.”

One participant remarked that special education staff were difficult to work with: “SpEd staff for administrators that does not address them [administrators] as ‘outsiders’ but as part of the team that supports ALL students.” As discussed previously, the second phase of cultural action, *unity*, must occur both across and within groups. Only after *unity* within the group is obtained can the cultural action of *organization* begin.

Other Comments

Some administrators added comments that did not fit into the above categories, yet they included different and valid concerns as written here:

“How to efficiently complete Special Ed paperwork and reporting requirements”

“More thorough explanation of state assessments with regards to special education students”

“More specific articles that can update all of us as administrators on the newest policies and procedures”

“Evaluation of special ed program, curriculum, and staff”

“It's hard to be an expert on everything. The model we have adopted is to have a full-time sped administrator, who is the expert for all of us.”

“Sometimes I am unsure of my role. I don't want to be a micro-manager to ensure compliance, and I'm not strong enough in knowledge to even know for sure what compliance is, so understanding my role as admin in special education processes would be beneficial.”

Again, these comments reveal that secondary campus-based administrators struggle with the wide array of special education policy and procedures they must follow according to

the law. In their estimation, additional/updated information would enable them to feel more proficient in their duties as administrators. Fifteen years ago, Foley and Lewis (1999) highlighted the difficulty faced by campus-based administrators when tasked with evaluating special education teachers. At least one administrator discussed the difficulty s/he encountered when evaluating special education programs and staff, presumably because the typical evaluation methods and protocols used to evaluate special education personnel do not account or account for the differential duties of special education teachers and staff (Sledge & Pazey, 2013). Additional training that addresses each of their expressed concerns could assist secondary campus-based administrators in beginning a *dialogue* and becoming unified with special education personnel so they, too, can be seamlessly integrated into the school culture.

Additional Comments

At the end of the online survey, participants were afforded the opportunity to provide additional comments they felt appropriate or wanted to include. Comments made at the end of the survey accentuated an important reality: although participants believed they possessed adequate knowledge of special education policy and procedures, much work has yet to be done. One secondary campus-based administrator lamented his/her lack of prior experience in special education and the unintended consequences that might occur as a result:

“I honestly don't feel like it is appropriate for me to have the level of responsibility that I have for special education in my school. To have a person who was a PE teacher turned administrator, suddenly be the go to person for

special education in a school, seems like a liability. I have done my due diligence in learning what I need to know, but this is not my area of expertise. There should be a special education department person in my building. I frequently LEA meetings which takes away from my duties as the assistant principal.”

Another wrote about the frustration encountered when trying to justify the differences involved in student discipline due to provisional protections contained within IDEA (2004):

“My main concern is how difficult it is to explain to teachers why special education students receive fewer days suspension than regular education students for discipline offenses such as fighting or disrespect”

In a more negative tone, a different administrator expressed his/her frustration over the time and cost caused by litigious activity which, in his/her estimation, took away from what s/he perceived to be the primary focus: “the kids”:

“I get frustrated because the challenges coming to schools has less to do with what is best for the kids and more to do with what happened in some court room. We waste some much time and money on those things that the kids lose out. Too much politics and too many positions created for people to do unnecessary jobs. Time to leave the lawyers out of education.”

A different administrator pointed out his/her objection to the protections for SWD relevant to the LRE and what s/he perceived to be due to parental pressure for their child to be identified as eligible to receive the benefit of special education and related services:

“[S]ome laws and/or policies permit students with disabilities to remain in an environment that is NOT conducive; too many students are misdiagnosed because parents want the academic support, but do not adhere to the behavioral supports”

The clear frustration expressed by these secondary campus-based administrators seemed to accentuate the need for additional coursework, clinical experience, and follow-up training and professional development in special education. Special education responsibilities should not be seen as taking away from “duties as the assistant principal.” Special education is not separate from other duties on a campus. Additional training could support the fact that special education is included in the duties required of secondary campus-based administrators. Additionally, the participant’s comment stating that students are “misdiagnosed” could be interpreted that s/he does not trust or understand the identification process used by the diagnostician and, ultimately, the IEP team. While they may have taken this opportunity to vent, one could surmise the cause of their grievances might stem from a lack of understanding for *why* special education policies and procedures are in place. Inevitably, school leaders continue to face a plethora of issues and challenges in their efforts for educational equity and academic excellence for all children (Zaretsky et al, 2008).

In addition to expressing frustrations pertaining to the effects that certain aspects of special education had on their own administrative practice, some administrators referred to difficulties they encountered when working with teachers, particularly in terms of helping them to understand special education policy and procedures. If these administrators are exposed to more information concerning special education policy and

procedures with additional guidance and support as they endeavor to incorporate their acquired knowledge and skills to the tenets of Critical Pedagogy, perhaps these frustrations could be alleviated. If all parties involved in the education of SWD agree to engage in meaningful *dialogue*, they may be more likely to achieve *unity* within and between groups, become *organized* in their efforts to work on behalf of SWD and their families, and—eventually--achieve *cultural synthesis*. When groups can successfully move through the stages of Critical Pedagogy, then praxis can occur and an understanding among all groups could then be achieved.

Implications for Policy

A comparison of the ISLLC (2008) and ELCC (2011) professional standards disclosed an oversight in recognizing the importance of arming secondary campus-based administrations with the requisite knowledge and skills for assisting them in working with diverse student populations--such as SWD and their families. Nevertheless, a gradual, limited progression highlighting the moral imperative to include more stakeholders—such as SWD and their families--in the education process appears to be making headway. Efforts to update the ISLLC standards have recently been underway with a targeted date for their release in October 2014 (Superville, 2014). An essential consideration of individuals involved in the revision process should be aligned with the goal to create professional standards to meet the needs of *all* students. According to Passman (2008,) training and development of leadership for both special education administrators and building principals require them to possess a common set of skills. If such a feat were to occur, perhaps the need for separate professional standards that

distinctly address the administration of special education for SWD and their families might not exist. To update the professional standards used to develop and inform leadership preparation programs for educators who eventually serve as secondary campus-based administrators, using Critical Pedagogy as a point of reference would be helpful. Emphasizing not only the need to include students and their families in the *dialogue* concerning their education, plus language to encourage *unity* and *organization* among these and all students and educators could serve as a pivotal starting point.

Participants in this study provided specific suggestions concerning areas of need and training they categorized as imperative to their ability to enter the field of educational administration as first-year administrators—recommendations that transcend the knowledge and skills referenced within the current ISLLC (2008) and ELCC (2011) standards. Perhaps more importantly, the nuanced advice extracted from a nationally representative sample of secondary campus-based administrators whose experiential base ranges from between one to over 18 years yields a powerful set of data-based recommendations and arguments for leadership preparation programs to infuse their curriculum and coursework with topics specifically designed to prepare administrators to work with SWD and their families.

Beyond the need to reconsider the present course being followed by most leadership preparation programs, secondary campus-based administrators articulated the ongoing need for professional development and mentoring in areas relevant to special education, special education law, and special education policy and procedures. The

majority of participants indicated they normally attend zero to six hours of professional development addressing special education concerns per year.

In terms of certification and certification renewal requirements, state education agencies should require administrators to attend a minimum number of professional development hours and training in special education per year to maintain their administrative certification. This could help secondary campus-based administrators stay up-to-date on the most recent policy changes in special education. In addition, a plethora of secondary campus-based administrators targeted their need for initial and ongoing training and updated information specific to special education law. In fact, knowledge of special education law was a theme that emerged across all research questions. There were references to the importance of special education law within the results of *every* qualitative question. In fact, when looking at responses across the qualitative questions, there were a total of 92 comments concerning the importance of knowledge of special education law. Several participants bemoaned the lack of coverage on special education topics in their school law courses while others implied or stated they had little to no training in *any* of their classes pertinent to special education law/policies and procedures. This lack of training could explain why nearly half of the respondents indicated the belief that they are not responsible for the administration of special education programs.

According to the findings of a survey completed by 109 school principals from each of four different quadrants of the United States and Texas (Irons & Broyles, 2004), only 40% believed they were responsible for special education issues on their campuses. Although many administrators may not *feel* they are not responsible for the

administration of special education programs, according to the *National Association of Secondary School Principals Ethics for School Leaders* (2013), leaders are expected to promote the success of every student (para. 2). Thus, state certification programs would be well advised to mandate all of their administrator candidates complete a separate course dedicated to special education law/policies and procedures. Without question, such a requirement would provide a solid foundation for administrators prior to their entry into campus-based leadership position.

Leadership preparation programs should work with districts to offer mentoring supports and services and assist district officials by helping them develop requisite professional development with updates on critical issues and/or changes in special education policy. Such partnerships and commitments could greatly improve secondary campus-based administrators' understanding of the requirements of school and special education law and the most current trends in service delivery for SWD. Such topics could also facilitate secondary campus-based administrators' understanding of the larger community of SWD and their families, thus encouraging meaningful dialogue and understanding of the struggles SWD and their families encounter as they progress through the varying stages of the education system and the myriad of challenges they face within the educational process and throughout their secondary educational career.

Leadership preparation programs could also integrate training in the tenets of Critical Pedagogy into their certification programs. This training could assist both elementary and secondary campus-based administrators regarding how and where to start the process when attempting to support students who have been excluded and

marginalized on their campuses. When administrators have the foundational skills concerning how to integrate different populations into the school culture, all students will benefit.

Study Limitations

Despite the utility of conducting a mixed methods study (Clark & Creswell, 2010; Collins et al, 2006) via survey-collection methods (Knupfer & McLlean, 1996), several challenges occurred that contributed to the limitations of this study. The method used to distribute the survey and collect participants' responses was facilitated electronically via email. Due to potential problems with email delivery and district filters, the survey may not have been delivered to all selected participants. Study participants were self-selected; consequently, the results may not reflect the views of those who chose not to participate in the study. The qualitative data could have been enhanced with participant interviews and focus groups; however, the researcher did not have direct access to the study population and could not participate in member checking or conduct follow-up interviews with participants for clarification purposes. Thus, the ability to triangulate the data was not possible.

Additionally, the secondary campus-based administrators listed on the websites from which email addresses were derived may not have been the most current and accurate information available. Although the majority of states were represented in the survey, some states listed a greater number of participants than other states; thus, the responses provided by participants in certain states may not represent the responses of the larger population of secondary campus-based administrators within the state.

Future Research

This study used a non-experimental descriptive research design with an intent to investigate the specific knowledge and skills that secondary campus-based administrators reportedly possess, draw upon or use, and need when working with SWD and their families. Findings from this study create a foundation for future research. Information presented from this study is useful for informing (a) university-level or alternative-licensure-based leadership preparation programs, (b) district personnel, (c) state-level agencies, and (d) national organizations and professional development organizations. The importance of considering the needs of SWD and their families when creating certification and licensure standards and professional development programs cannot be overestimated.

Researching professional development offerings concerning special education could be an interesting topic for further investigation, particularly in terms of discovering whether similar offerings or patterns emerge in terms of specific professional development topics offered, either nationwide or regionally. Knowing where and how individuals who provide the professional development training obtain their information and whether the information they obtain and share is research-based would also be helpful.

A comparison study, repeating the work done by Cusson in 2010, *Empirically based components related to SWD in tier 1 research institution's educational administration preparation programs*, The comparison might reveal whether principal preparation programs have updated and/or adjusted their coursework and curriculum requirements

concerning special education tier 1 research institutions. Principal preparation programs located at tier 2 institutions could be examined.

Using the framework of Critical Pedagogy, findings from a study investigating whether administrators' attitudes change (and in what ways they change) as well as how the knowledge and skills they gain assist them as they interact directly with SWD when attempting to transform their education could be useful.

Conclusions

Based on the overall findings of this study, one can conclude that in order to adequately provide the types of services and supports needed by SWD, secondary campus-based administrators would benefit from leadership preparation programs and follow-up mentoring and professional development training that covers a multitude of topics in special education. Training obtained prior to and during their internship experience as part of their leadership preparation program, a strong mentoring and support system provided by university-based and/or district-level personnel, and professional workshops and conferences could open doors and induce discourse between all stakeholders in the educational community: teachers, administrators, students and their families.

There is a limited amount of research regarding secondary campus-based administrators' knowledge and skill concerning special education policy and procedures. This study sought to investigate the secondary campus-based administrators' knowledge and skills pertaining to the instructional and programmatic needs of SWD (SWD). Over 10 years ago, Monteith (1998) emphasized that "principals must command an

understanding of special education to implement procedural requirements effectively and provide appropriate educational services for disabled students in their schools” (p. 390). Findings from this study demonstrate that secondary campus-based administrators continue to require additional and ongoing training in special education policies and procedures.

Findings also show that leadership preparation programs for future secondary campus-based administrators are not necessarily including the needs of SWD as a unique student population they will be expected to serve within their schools. When engaging in discussions about student diversity and social justice leadership, few have incorporated students with disabilities into their conversations or curricular frameworks for future leaders (Brown, 2004; Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; Marshall, 2004) nor have they provided future administrators with knowledge about special education policy and procedures (Pazey & Cole, 2013). Nevertheless, one cannot ignore that each student has unique talents, abilities, and needs. Thus, administrators must be knowledgeable of the uniqueness of each individual student and, for students identified as having a disability, must understand how their disabilities might affect their learning.

Investigating the preparation of secondary campus-based administrators through the lens of Critical Pedagogy, the oppression evidenced by social inequality experienced by SWD and the teachers who work with them can be transformed as the objective of Critical Pedagogy is to “empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices” (McLaren, 2003, p. 186). Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) could be used to guide administrators through the process of transformation. Training to

help secondary campus-based administrators understand the stages of Critical Pedagogy and how to apply that knowledge to their administrator practice—particularly when working with students with disabilities and their families--would be beneficial when administrators strive to integrate SWD into the school community. Applying Critical Pedagogy to the findings of this study, this transformation process should be investigated in greater detail in future studies.

According to Freire (2000), for oppression to be transformed, there must be cooperation between the oppressed and oppressors. This conditional outcome is made manifest through *dialogue*. The results of this study indicate a breakdown in this communication or *dialogue* process has occurred. Secondary campus-based administrators lack the foundational knowledge to engage in *dialogue* concerning special education as evidenced by their desire for additional and ongoing staff development regarding special education in general and, specifically, training in special education law. As evidenced by participants' expressed desire for more hands-on experiences and training in collaboration techniques, there does appear to be an attempt at *dialogue*. Secondary campus-based administrators seek information concerning special education from the National Association of School Principals, other administrators, school lawyers, workshops, in-services, coursework, publications, conferences, collegial contacts or within their school systems (Foley & Lewis, 1999; Hillman, 1988; Robertson, 1996; Wakeman et al., 2006). However, the results of this study indicate that *dialogue* does not necessarily include SWD or the teachers who serve them. Special education training for

secondary campus-based administrators that addresses the needs of SWD and the teachers who work with them can provide the foundation for this *dialogue* to begin.

The next stage in transformation according to Freire (2000) is *unity*. After the *dialogue* begins, there needs to be a dedication of *unity* within the groups and between the leaders and the oppressed, in this case, between the secondary campus-based administrators and the SWD and the people who work with them. The groups achieve *unity* through praxis, or informed action, about the oppression. Secondary campus-based administrators need more information in order to take action concerning special education, in general, as well as information related to IDEA 1997 and 2004 discipline provisions, behavior intervention plans, and functional behavioral assessments (Hillman, 1988; Pontius, 2010; Wakeman et al., 2006; Woods, 2004). Additionally, secondary administrators require more information concerning special education law, evaluation, and placement of SWD (Pontius, 2010; Robertson, 1996; Stevenson-Jacobson et al., 2006; Wakeman et al. 2006) in order to facilitate *unity* within and between various groups and stakeholders. There does not appear to be a description within the literature regarding systemic efforts to bring the components of the system into *unity* relative to serving SWD.

A review of the literature indicates that praxis may occur for secondary campus-based administrators through training. After the two groups achieve *unity*, *organization* is the next logical development (Freire, 2000). The two groups (administrators and SWDs) must be organized so they can pursue the common task of liberation. Further, secondary campus-based administrators must organize with SWD and general and special education

teachers to create a common goal for them to achieve. To become organized and move toward the common task of liberation, secondary campus-based administrators were found to believe more preparation is needed in the areas of collaborative teaching, special education law, staff development, and evaluation of preparation programs (Foley & Lewis, 1999; Hillman, 1988; Petzko, 2008; Pontius, 2010; Robertson, 1996; Stevenson-Jacobson et al., 2006; Wakeman et al., 2006; Woods, 2004). Additionally, there should be license among all stakeholders to participate in the process. The literature does not appear to address the issue of a common commitment to SWD.

Finally, after there has been *dialogue*, *unity* and *organization*, then *cultural synthesis* may occur (Freire, 2000). In *cultural synthesis*, stakeholders come together to learn about the other group and then become integrated (Freire, 2000). The differences between the two groups are not compromised. Instead, both groups work in conjunction and both groups are enriched. In the case of educating SWD, the differences of SWD can be explored to enrich those without disabilities. When this occurs, the educational progress and outcomes of all students and professional practices of general and special education teachers and secondary campus-based administrators are improved. Synthesizing the two groups provides more options for SWD to fully participate in every opportunity available on school campuses, with the assistance of not only the teachers who work with them, but also everyone who has a direct involvement in the school community. The literature appears void of descriptions of this type of synthesis of school groups for the purpose of adequately addressing the needs of SWD.

Introducing administrators to the theory of Critical Pedagogy can provide them with a framework to draw from when working with SWD and their families. Students who receive special education services need to be involved in a meaningful way when decisions concerning their education are considered and made. The process of Critical Pedagogy can be used to guide secondary campus-based administrators through the process of transforming SWDs' education and their futures. Finally, utilizing Critical Pedagogy can teach secondary campus-based administrators how to include students and work toward *cultural synthesis*--not only with SWD--but with all student and adult populations in their schools.

Appendices

Appendix A: Professional Leadership Standards

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Advanced Knowledge and Skill Set for Administrators of Special Education	Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards	Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards
<p align="center">STANDARD 1 LEADERSHIP AND POLICY</p> <p>KNOWLEDGE SA1K1: Models, theories, and philosophies that provide the foundation for the administration of programs and services for individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families. SA1K2: Historical and social significance of the laws, regulations, and policies as they apply to the administration of programs and the provision of services for individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families. SA1K3: Local, state, and national fiscal policies and funding mechanisms in education, social, and health agencies as they apply to the provision of services for individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families.</p> <p>SKILLS SA1S1: Interprets and applies current laws,</p>	<p align="center">STANDARD 1</p> <p>An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.</p>	<p align="center">STANDARD 1</p> <p>A building-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by collaboratively facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a shared school vision of learning through the collection and use of data to identify school goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and implement school plans to achieve school goals; promotion of continual and sustainable school improvement; and evaluation of school progress and revision of school plans supported by school-based stakeholders.</p> <p>ELCC STANDARD ELEMENTS: ELCC 1.1: Candidates understand and can collaboratively develop, articulate, implement, and steward a shared vision of learning for a school. ELCC 1.2: Candidates understand and can collect and use data to identify school goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and implement plans to achieve school goals.</p>

<p>regulations, and policies as they apply to the administration of services to individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families.</p> <p>SA1S2: Applies leadership, organization, and systems change theory to the provision of services for individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families.</p> <p>SA1S3: Develops a budget in accordance with local, state, and national laws in education, social, and health agencies for the provision of services for individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families.</p> <p>SA1S4: Engages in recruitment, hiring, and retention practices that comply with local, state, and national laws as they apply to personnel serving individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families.</p> <p>SA1S5: Communicates a personal inclusive vision and mission for meeting the needs of individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families.</p>		<p>ELCC 1.3: Candidates understand and can promote continual and sustainable school improvement.</p> <p>ELCC 1.4: Candidates understand and can evaluate school progress and revise school plans supported by school stakeholders.</p>
<p>STANDARD 2: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND</p>	<p>STANDARD 2:</p>	<p>STANDARD 2:</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">ORGANIZATION</p> <p>KNOWLEDGE</p> <p>SA2K1: Programs and services within the general curriculum to achieve positive school outcomes for individuals with exceptional learning needs.</p> <p>SA2K2: Programs and strategies that promote positive school engagement for individuals with exceptional learning needs.</p> <p>SA2K3: Instruction and services needed to support access to the general curriculum for individuals with exceptional learning needs.</p> <p>SA2K4: Administrative plans that supports the use of instructional and assistive technologies.</p> <p>SKILLS</p> <p>SA2S1: Develops and implements a flexible continuum of services based on effective practices for individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families.</p> <p>SA2S2: Develops and implements programs and services that contribute to the prevention of unnecessary referrals.</p>	<p>An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.</p>	<p>A building-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning through collaboration, trust, and a personalized learning environment with high expectations for students; creating and evaluating a comprehensive, rigorous and coherent curricular and instructional school program; developing and supervising the instructional and leadership capacity of school staff; and promoting the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning within a school environment.</p> <p>ELCC STANDARD ELEMENTS:</p> <p>ELCC 2.1: Candidates understand and can sustain a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning through collaboration, trust, and a personalized learning environment with high expectations for students.</p> <p>ELCC 2.2: Candidates understand and can create and evaluate a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular and instructional school program.</p> <p>ELCC 2.3: Candidates understand and can develop and supervise the instructional and leadership capacity of school staff.</p> <p>ELCC 2.4: Candidates understand and can</p>
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		promote the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning in a school environment.
<p style="text-align: center;">STANDARD 3: RESEARCH AND INQUIRY</p> <p>KNOWLEDGE SA3K1 Research-based administrative practices that supports individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families.</p> <p>SKILLS SA3S1 Engages in data-based decision-making for the administration of educational programs and services that supports exceptional students and their families. SA3S2 Develops data-based educational expectations and evidence-based programs that account for the impact of diversity on individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">STANDARD 3:</p> <p>An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">STANDARD 3:</p> <p>A building-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by ensuring the management of the school organization, operation, and resources through monitoring and evaluating the school management and operational systems; efficiently using human, fiscal, and technological resources in a school environment; promoting and protecting the welfare and safety of school students and staff; developing school capacity for distributed leadership; and ensuring that teacher and organizational time is focused to support high-quality instruction and student learning.</p> <p>ELCC STANDARD ELEMENTS: ELCC 3.1: Candidates understand and can monitor and evaluate school management and operational systems. ELCC 3.2: Candidates understand and can efficiently use human, fiscal, and technological resources to manage school operations. ELCC 3.3: Candidates understand and can promote school-based policies and</p>

		<p>procedures that protect the welfare and safety of students and staff within the school.</p> <p>ELCC 3.4: Candidates understand and can develop school capacity for distributed leadership.</p> <p>ELCC 3.5: Candidates understand and can ensure teacher and organizational time focuses on supporting high-quality school instruction and student learning.</p>
<p>STANDARD 4: EVALUATION</p> <p>KNOWLEDGE SA4K1 Models, theories, and practices used to evaluate educational programs and personnel serving individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families.</p> <p>SKILLS SA4S1 Advocates for and implements procedures for the participation of individuals with exceptional learning needs in accountability systems. SA4S2 Develops and implements ongoing evaluations of education programs and personnel. SA4S3 Provides ongoing supervision of personnel working with individuals with exceptional learning needs and</p>	<p>STANDARD 4:</p> <p>An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.</p>	<p>STANDARD 4:</p> <p>A building-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources on behalf of the school by collecting and analyzing information pertinent to improvement of the school's educational environment; promoting an understanding, appreciation, and use of the diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources within the school community; building and sustaining positive school relationships with families and caregivers; and cultivating productive school relationships with community partners.</p> <p>ELCC STANDARD ELEMENTS:</p>

<p>their families.</p> <p>SA4S4 Designs and implements evaluation procedures that improve instructional content and practices</p>		<p>ELCC 4.1: Candidates understand and can collaborate with faculty and community members by collecting and analyzing information pertinent to the improvement of the school’s educational environment.</p> <p>ELCC 4.2: Candidates understand and can mobilize community resources by promoting an understanding, appreciation, and use of diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources within the school community.</p> <p>ELCC 4.3: Candidates understand and can respond to community interests and needs by building and sustaining positive school relationships with families and caregivers.</p> <p>ELCC 4.4: Candidates understand and can respond to community interests and needs by building and sustaining productive school relationships with community partners.</p>
<p>STANDARD 5: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ETHICAL PRACTICE</p> <p>KNOWLEDGE</p> <p>SA5K1 Ethical theories and practices as they apply to the administration of programs and services with individuals with exceptional learning needs and</p>	<p>STANDARD 5:</p> <p>An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.</p>	<p>STANDARD 5</p> <p>A building-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner to ensure a school system of accountability for every student’s academic and social success by modeling school principles of self-awareness, reflective</p>

<p>their families SA5K2 Adult learning theories and models as they apply to professional development and supervision. SA5K3 Professional development theories and practices that improve instruction and instructional content for students with exceptional learning needs. SA5K4 Impact of diversity on educational programming expectations for individuals with exceptional learning needs.</p> <p>SKILLS</p> <p>SA5S1 Communicates and demonstrates a high standard of ethical administrative practices when working with staff serving individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families. SA5S2 Develops and implements professional development activities and programs that improve instructional practices and lead to improved outcomes for students with exceptional learning needs and their families. SA5S3 Joins and participates in local, state and national professional administrative organizations to guide administrative practices when working with individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families.</p>		<p>practice, transparency, and ethical behavior as related to their roles within the school; safeguarding the values of democracy, equity, and diversity within the school; evaluating the potential moral and legal consequences of decision making in the school; and promoting social justice within the school to ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling.</p> <p>ELCC STANDARD ELEMENTS:</p> <p>ELCC 5.1: Candidates understand and can act with integrity and fairness to ensure a school system of accountability for every student’s academic and social success.</p> <p>ELCC 5.2: Candidates understand and can model principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior as related to their roles within the school.</p> <p>ELCC 5.3: Candidates understand and can safeguard the values of democracy, equity, and diversity within the school.</p> <p>ELCC 5.4: Candidates understand and can evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision making in the school.</p> <p>ELCC 5.5: Candidates understand and can promote social justice within the school to ensure that individual student needs</p>
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		inform all aspects of schooling.
<p style="text-align: center;">STANDARD 6: COLLABORATION</p> <p>KNOWLEDGE SA6K1 Collaborative theories and practices that support the administration of programs and services for with individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families. SA6K2 Administrative theories and models that facilitate communication among all stakeholders. SA6K3 Importance and relevance of advocacy at the local, state, and national level for individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families.</p> <p>SKILLS SA6S1 Utilizes collaborative approaches for involving all stakeholders in educational planning, implementation, and evaluation. SA6S2 Strengthens the role of parent and advocacy organizations as they support individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families. SA6S3 Develops and implements intra- and interagency agreements that create programs with shared responsibility</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">STANDARD 6:</p> <p>An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">STANDARD 6:</p> <p>A building-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context through advocating for school students, families, and caregivers; acting to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning in a school environment; and anticipating and assessing emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt school-based leadership strategies.</p> <p>ELCC STANDARD ELEMENTS: ELCC 6.1: Candidates understand and can advocate for school students, families, and caregivers. ELCC 6.2: Candidates understand and can act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning in a school environment. ELCC 6.3: Candidates understand and can anticipate and assess emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt school-based leadership strategies.</p>

<p>for individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families. SA6S4 Facilitates transition plans for individuals with exceptional learning needs across the educational continuum and other programs from birth through adulthood. SA6S5 Implements collaborative administrative procedures and strategies to facilitate communication among all stakeholders. SA6S6 Engages in leadership practices that support shared decision-making. SA6S7 Demonstrates the skills necessary to provide ongoing communication, education, and support for families of individuals with exceptional learning needs. SA6S8 Consults and collaborates in administrative and instructional decisions at the school and district levels.</p>		
		<p style="text-align: center;">STANDARD 7</p> <p>ELCC Standard 7.0: A building-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student through a substantial and sustained educational leadership internship experience that has school-based field experiences and clinical internship practice within a school setting and is monitored by a qualified, on-site mentor.</p>

		<p>ELCC STANDARD ELEMENTS:</p> <p>ELCC 7.1: Substantial Field and Clinical Internship Experience: The program provides significant field experiences and clinical internship practice for candidates within a school environment to synthesize and apply the content knowledge and develop professional skills identified in the other Educational Leadership Building-Level Program Standards through authentic, school-based leadership experiences.</p> <p>ELCC 7.2: Sustained Internship Experience: Candidates are provided a six-month, concentrated (9–12 hours per week) internship that includes field experiences within a school-based environment.</p> <p>ELCC 7.3: Qualified On-Site Mentor: An on-site school mentor who has demonstrated experience as an educational leader within a school and is selected collaboratively by the intern and program faculty with training by the supervising institution.</p>
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Appendix B: Survey

Q1 Gender

- Male
- Female

Q2 Ethnicity

- White
- Black
- Asian/Pacific Islander/Native American
- Hispanic
- Bi/multi racial (please specify) _____

Q3 Current administrative position.

- Principal
- Vice Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Other (please specify) _____

Q4 Number of years administrative experience:

- 1-3
- 4-10
- 11-18
- More than 18 years

Q5 Grades serving (select all that apply):

- 6th
- 7th
- 8th
- 9th
- 10th
- 11th
- 12th
- Other (please specify) _____

Q6 Size of school currently serving:

- less than 500 students
- 500-1500 students
- 1500-3000 students
- Over 3000 students

Q7 What is the approximate percentage of students receiving special education services on your campus?

- unsure
- 1-10%
- 11-15%
- 15-20%
- More than 20%

Q8 What percentage of responsibility do you have in the administration of special education programs in your school?

- less than 25%
- 26-51%
- 51-75%
- above 75%

Q9 Prior to becoming an administrator, how would you describe your primary teaching duties:

- General Education Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- Elective/Special Area Teacher
- Never taught
- Other (please specify) _____

Q10 Which best describes your administrative preparation program?

- Master of Education from a traditional university
- Master of Education from an on-line university
- Alternative Certificate Program
- Other (please specify) _____

Q11 How would you describe the type of leadership training you have received concerning issues related to special education? (select all that apply)

- None
- In-service/staff development
- Self-taught through readings/research
- Coursework taken in administrative certification program
- Coursework taken to receive Special Education certificate/endorsement

Q12 Approximately how many hours of in-service/professional development training in special education do you participate in per year?

- 0-6
- 7-12
- 13-18
- 19+

Q13 Did your administrator certification program require an internship?

- Yes (please enter length of internship) _____
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Have you ever taken a school law course?

Q14 During your internship did you have any experiences relating to special education?

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Have you ever taken a school law course?

Q15 Did these experiences provide useful information when working with students with disabilities?

- Yes
- No

Q16 Have you ever taken a school law course?

- Yes
- No

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Have you ever taken a special educati...

Q17 How much (if any) time was dedicated to special education law?

- None
- 1 day
- 1 week
- Other (please specify) _____

Q18 Have you ever taken a special education law course?

- Yes
- No

Q19 How do you obtain information concerning special education policy and procedures?

Q20 In your current position, how do you obtain information or stay current concerning issues or laws pertaining to special education? (select all that apply)

- Other school administrators in your district
- Regional Offices of the State Department of Education
- Conferences (please specify) _____
- Journals/magazines, newsletters (please specify) _____
- School/district lawyer
- District in-service
- Other (please specify) _____

Q21 What professional development do you feel would be most beneficial for campus-based administrators concerning special education?

- General knowledge of special education
- Student discipline for students with disabilities
- Special education law
- Decisions concerning student placement and the least restrictive environment (LRE)
- Issues concerning evaluation, identification and eligibility for special education and related services or Section 504
- Processes and procedures regarding the development of a student's individualized education program (IEP)
- Other _____

Q22 What knowledge do you draw upon or skills you possess in regard to working with students with disabilities?

Q23 What knowledge or skills do you feel you need when working with students with disabilities?

Q24 How do you rate your knowledge and skills related to the following:

	Poor (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Very Good (4)
Special Education Law (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discipline of students with disabilities (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The IEP process (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q25 How do you rate your level of knowledge and skills concerning the nature and characteristics of the following disabilities?

	Poor (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Very Good (4)
Auditory impairment (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Autism (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deaf-blindness (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emotional disturbance (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intellectual disabilities (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Multiple disabilities (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Non-categorical early childhood (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Orthopedic impairment (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other health impairment (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Specific learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

disability (10)				
Speech or language impairment (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traumatic brain injury (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visual impairment (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q26 How do you rate your level of knowledge and skills concerning IDEA's requirements regarding student placement and the continuum of services options afforded for students with disabilities?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good

Q27 How do you rate your level of knowledge and skills concerning the role of the general education teacher regarding special education as mandated by law?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good

Q28 How do you rate your level of knowledge and skills concerning how the academic progress made by students with disabilities may affect the overall rating your school receives in regard to adequate yearly progress (AYP)?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good

Q29 How do you rate your level of knowledge and skills concerning supports, accommodations and curriculum modifications for students with disabilities?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good

Q30 How do you rate your level of knowledge and skills concerning decisions pertaining to the types of assessments students with disabilities take and the participation requirements regarding statewide assessments?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good

Q31 What specific preparation or training do you feel would improve your understanding of special education policy and procedures?

Q32 Please provide any other comments questions or concerns you have regarding special education

Appendix C: Consent to Participate in Internet Research

Identification of Investigator and Purpose of Study

You are invited to participate in a research study, entitled “Campus-based Administrator Knowledge and Skills Essential for Students with Special Needs.” The study is being conducted by Susan Cadle Bineham, Department of Special Education, The University of Texas at Austin, scbineham@utexas.edu.

The purpose of this research study is to gain information concerning secondary campus-based administrators knowledge of Special Education policy and procedures. Your participation in the study will contribute to a better understanding of secondary campus-based knowledge and skills concerning Special Education Policy and Procedure. You are free to contact the investigator at the above email address to discuss the study.

If you agree to participate:

- The survey will take approximately 10 minutes of your time.
- You will not be compensated.

Risks/Benefits/Confidentiality of Data

The potential risk to participants is no greater than everyday life. There will be no costs for participating, nor will you benefit from participating. Your name and email address will not be kept during the data collection phase. A limited number of research team members will have access to the data during data collection. The data will be stored on a password protected personal computer. Any identifying information, such as participants name or email address, will be stripped from the final dataset.

Participation or Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question and you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas in anyway. If you do not want to participate either simply stop participating or close the browser window.

If you do not want to receive any more reminders, you may email me at scbineham@utexas.edu.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the study or need to update your email address contact the researcher Susan Cadle Bineham at scbineham@utexas.edu. This study has been processed by the Office of Research Support and the study number is 2013-03-0039.

Questions about your rights as a research participant.

If you have any questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Office of Research Support by phone at (512) 471-8871 or mail at orsc@ut.cc.utexas.edu.

If you agree to participate, click on the following link [[HTTP://LINK TO STUDY URL](#)]

Thank you.

Please print a copy of this document for your records.

Appendix D: States Represented

STATE	Number Surveys Received	State represented
Alabama	3	yes
Alaska	1	yes
Arizona	7	yes
Arkansas	1	yes
California	2	yes
Colorado	3	yes
Connecticut	2	yes
Delaware	0	no
District of Columbia	0	no
Florida	1	yes
Georgia	4	yes
Hawaii	0	no
Idaho	5	yes
Illinois	7	yes
Indiana	4	yes
Iowa	3	yes
Kansas	12	yes
Kentucky	2	yes
Louisiana	3	yes
Maine	0	no
Maryland	4	yes
Massachusetts	7	yes
Michigan	5	yes
Minnesota	6	yes
Mississippi	1	yes
Missouri	7	yes
Montana	4	yes
Nebraska	3	yes
Nevada	3	yes
New Hampshire	3	yes
New Jersey	1	yes
New Mexico	0	no
New York	3	yes
North Carolina	5	yes
North Dakota	1	yes

Ohio	4	yes	
Oklahoma	2	yes	
Oregon	1	yes	
Pennsylvania	5	yes	
Rhode Island	1	yes	
South Carolina	3	yes	
South Dakota	1	yes	
Tennessee	6	yes	
Texas	6	yes	
Utah	2	yes	
Vermont	0	no	
Virginia	3	yes	
Washington	3		yes
West Virginia	4		yes
Wisconsin	5		yes
Wyoming	0		no
Total number surveys	159		
Number of states represented			44

Appendix E: Survey Question 19

How do you obtain information concerning special education policy and procedures?	State	Self	Conf.	Other Profs.	Director / District Office	Insvc/ PD	Legal	Course work/ Intnship
online or ask special education administrators in the area		X		X				
district office					X			
Mostly from our District Special Education Coordinator					X			
Local inservice						X		
Through professional development opportunities with school attorneys.						X	X	
Conferences			X					
contacting my district rep					X			
Attending national conferences on special education law.			X					
From our Special Education Cooperative and its directors.					X			
I am in constant contact with the Director and Deputy Director of Special Education.					X			
district special education director					X			
Stay current on reading and research		X						
Education service center training and development, my own reading/research		X				X		
Memos/meetings/in-service training from the district Special Education Supervisor		X	X			X		

Inservice, from journals and I attend Law conferences yearly.		X	X					
Conference Seminars			X					
District provides updates					X			
I go to the Special Education Coordinator					X			
State Associations, other administrators, SPED Co-op leaders	X				X	X		
Quarterly meetings with special education director and yearly ed. law refreshers					X	X		
Course materials								X
I receive weekly emails from outside sources and local intermediate units.		X		X				
Conferences, school law seminars, newsletters, in-district staff development, speaking with our SpEd director		X	X		X	X		
Professional development/professional periodicals/parish newsletter from special education		X				X		
Through district personnel and our special education department head				X	X			
District special education department					X			
Professional reading, district inservice training, and colleagues.		X		X		X		
Read policy, ask colleague		X		X				
magazines. etc.		X						

I work with our Special Education Coop and attend updates for our state education department as well as updates from our Principals association that relate directly to all legislation affecting schools.				X	X	X		
professional conversations, professional organizations, research and readings, AEA staff	X			X				
From Special Services Director					X			
Through special education director in the district					X			
Through policies and procedural updates sent from our Special Education Executive Director					X			
Updates from district and state professional development and personal reading	X				X	X		
research; PD; administrator training yearly	X					X		
I check our district's policy manual, and I speak with our Director of Special Services if I am uncertain about something.	X				X			
The District updates us					X			
Special Education Facilitator/District Director					X			
My own research/readings and through the current director of pupil services director. My district does support professional development opportunities, and I requested to go to a few workshops given my need.	X				X	X		
direct teaching								X
District Central Office					X			
Other administrators, special education teachers, books, online	X			X				
District and regional training						X		
From the Sped r					X			

Quarterly updates from our Special Education Director					X			
Legal updates, and through my district as well					X		X	
special education process handbook and direct communication with the state department	X	X		X				
Professional development, and support from colleagues throughout the state and division.				X		X		
Call our district special education office					X			
From our Director of Special Education					X			
Inservice, readings, and updates from our special education director		X			X	X		
Inservice and reading publications		X				X		
Consultation with Director of Special Services					X			
Legal updates from law firm and e-mails from district special education staff.					X		X	
Pupil Services Director					X			
Internet, special Ed coop		X			X			
I read		X						
staff development and training, collaboration, colleague discussions				X		X		
Through our District ESE Department Coordinator					X			
Updates from TEA and the Region center as well as the SPED director	X				X			

Special education department meetings, State School board seminars, email/list serve bulletins, district level administration team meetings with district Special Education Director presentation.	X	X		X	X	X		
Research and/or meet with District level Special Education Coordinator		X			X			
From our Local CESA's. From my District Administrator, from my school psychologist, from my guidance counselor				X	X			
Periodic, yearly professional development provided by our district						X		
Consulting with the County Special Education Director					X			
Our Special Education Staff and District office				X	X			
Call SpEd admin or read it myself.		X			X			
State Policies, Professional magazines, conferences	X	X	X					
director of special education					X			
State Dept. of Ed. and school personnel including our Exec. Director of Special Ed.	X			X	X			
District resources, research on my own, IEP meetings that I attend, state and national conferences		X	X	X	X			
training from our county special education office						X		
Special Educ. Coop/ Internet/ Newspaper/ Magazines		X			X			
We have a Special Needs Coordinator in our district					X			

through research and consultation with special education colleagues	X			X				
Talk with our special education director					X			
Asking our Special Education Coordinator or Asst. Coordinator/ calling district offices to inquire				X	X			
Through my Special Education Director and research.		X			X			
Communication with SPED director, State input, workshops	X				X	X		
LEA SpEd Coordinator/ District SpEd Coordinator					X	X		
State Dept of Special Education	X							
From district special education coordinators					X			
School psych, special ed director, Literature concerning new laws and regs		X		X	X			
District PD, Journals, Essays, Online News Articles		X				X		
Colleagues, online research, state regulations	X	X			X			
I consult with our Special Education director and/or our school's attorney.						X	X	
Department of Education, Area Education Agency, School Administrators of Iowa	X			X				
Meetings with central office staff - SPED Director					X			
I go to our Special Education support teacher, our school system attorneys and I consult our system policies, guidelines and procedures.		X		X			X	

Speak with the high school team chair, sped director, colleagues, and look it up myself.		X		X	X			
inservices/conferences			X			X		
Colleagues and the Law Offices of Harbin & Hartley				X			X	
Information from State Department of Education and from the County Special Education Director	X				X			
Through professional development at school and attending workshops/conferences			X			X		
I prescribe to "Legal Notes for Education"		X						
Special Ed lead teacher				X				
Self study. Professional journals		X						
Listserv		X						
Ask the director of our Special Education Department					X			
email, memos, trainings, discussions		X				X		
Staff Training, Pear information and State, & IU trainings	X			X		X		
My teachers, Director of Special Ed., Reading the literature and info from the state dept.	X	X		X	X			
I rely on my district to inform me and/or the SPED staff in my building				X	X			
Communicate with director of Special Education, Board Policy, Educational Law, articles in educational magazines		X			X			
AEA			X					

IPA is a great resource as well as the SPED co-operative		X			X			
Article 7, IDEIA, Area special education administrator, Indiana SE director organization	X				X		X	
NH rules for education for students with disabilities	X							
In addition to being the Principal I am also the special education teacher		X						
through our Superintendent, ISD Director, State Department, Professional Development	X			X	X			
Office of Public Instruction, ongoing reading, word of mouth	X	X		X				
from the special education director					X			
special education teacher should be aware of these				X				
personal research, seminars, district professional development, working with special education attorney for district etc.		X		X		X		
get a binder from coordinator each year with the state/local policy and procedure revisions					X			
Indiana Department of Education	X							
Director of Special Education					X			
state and district policy	X				X			
District director					X			
District special ed administrator, online, monthly publication subscription, educational periodicals, workshops, conferences.		X				X		
From the director.					X			
Through district office and district attorney					X		X	

Readings		X						
From the state special education department	X							
By contacting Director of Special Education					X			
DESE and MA General Laws	X							
internet updates; Central Admin. notices, inservice training as necessary		X			X	X		
Conferences and information sent from Special Education Supervisor			X		X			
reading professional literature		X						
Call the lawyer							X	
Work in close contact with SPED Department Chairperson and system coordinators.				X	X			
I belong to Autism support groups as I am have a 11 year old Autistic son		X						
Contact the Central Office Supervisor for Special Ed					X			
District orientation and attendance at special education & support staff meetings					X	X		
Consult with others board of education director or coach	X			X	X			
Study and inservice		X				X		
School Psych or local SPED Coop				X	X			
Online or through my SPED Director		X			X			
District SPED Director, IDEA and Massachusetts Department of Ed	X				X			
contact special education office or department chairperson				X				
Reading on my own		X						

We have district policy handbooks; my special ed staff; district personnel				X	X			
Communication from our special education staff in central office, personal development reading and research		X			X	X		
IEP meetings and 1 on 1 meetings with SPED director		X			X			
Sped director, inservice training, legal annual updates from law firm presentation					X	X	X	
in administrator meetings with our Special Education Director and updates through our district office					X			
district or administrator publications		X			X			
From our central office staff					X			
Course work and seminars						X		X
My school district's lawyer briefs all administration on special education law updates. I also attend at least one concurrent session yearly at the SC School Administrators Annual meeting.	X						X	
Consult Special Ed. School Dept. Chair, Central Office Special Ed. Supervisor, State Dept. website, on-line research	X	X			X	X		
Through internship, books, and coursework		X						X
Through experience in my role as a principal for over 20 years.		X						
Reading Books, attending conferences,		X						

I ask the special education director when an issue arises.		X	X					
newsletters and conferences		X	X					
Workshop						X		
TOTAL	26	61	14	36	89	39	11	4

Appendix F: Survey Question 20

Conferences (please specify)	Journals/magazines, newsletters (please specify)	Other (please specify)
Law Conferences by ASBA	Ed. Leadership	Confer with our SpEd Director
MN Association of Secodary School Principals (MASSP) school law conf	School Administrator	County SPED cooperative
school law	Ed Week, Ed Leadership	Special Ed Director and other schools in Coop
NASSP	High School, LRP Publications	Ask questions to special education teachers in building
OASSA	PACER	District Special Services Coordinator
CEC, Autism Groups	ASCD Smart Briefs	Special Ed coop
IASP annual conference	EL, Principal Leadership	my wife is a director of Special Ed. She tells me everything I need to know
WVDE	Principals of Leadership, Middleweb Newsletter	Professional Learning Network
RtI	Various	Illinois Principals Association
MSSAA Summer Institute	ASCD, AMLE	ICASE
Mickes Goldman and Sachs legal firm presentation	CEC Journals, Autism Newsletters	school district director
SCASA	SmartBrief	Sspecial Ed. Coordinator
MASSP	NSBA legal clips	School Psych and SPED twacher
CLAS	EdWeek	District admin training
AWSP/WASA	Legal Notes for Education	child psychologist
MASSP meetings	ASCD	
Law workshop at Lehigh University	PDK, dept. of ed. newsletters	
ISBE (Illinois State Board) webinar just last week	School House New (IASP) Education Weekly,	
NAASA	high school	
School Law for 504	ASCD	

School discipline seminars	Ascd
SpED conference	education week, principal leadership, district administration
Sped. law yearly	NASSP Journal
State SPED conference	ASCD
ASCD	Nassp
OASSA	
Through Shipman and Goodwin Law firm	
PACTEC & PACTA	
Indiana Association of School Principals annual conference	
State Conference	
Special Education Leadership Conference	
Special Education and the Law	
LPR	

Appendix G: Survey Question 22

What knowledge do you draw upon or skills you possess in regard to working with students with disabilities?	Knowledge Experience	Personal/ family member	IEP/ BIP	Staff/ other prof.	Family of student	Training	Empathy Patience	Other Rsrces	stdnt center	law
I have a special needs daughter		X								
prior work experience	X									
Years of working with students, parents, and teachers					X					
Refer to IEP			X							
Past experiences with students with disabilities and assistance from special education staff.	X									
Experience	X									
My classroom experiences	X									
Collaborative decisions based on the case worker, the families, general education staff, and the special services department.				X	X					

Past experiences.	X									
As a teacher of 11 years, I always had special education students in my classes. I was also the adaptive PE teacher in my building, so my experience with varying disabilities is extensive.	X									
classroom experience; parent of daughter with IEP; read research/articles; attend trainings	X	X				X		X		
School Counseling experience and Head of Teachers Assisting Teachers experience; clinical evaluation of children experience	X									
General knowledge of rules and procedures; several year's experience dealing with special education issues	X									

I have been in this position for a while so I rely on my experience and my past trainings.	X					X				
My principal				X						
Past experiences and knowledge	X									
I utilize the knowledge of my wife (a 15 year special ed. teacher)		X								
I consult with SPED case managers and my special ed coordinator in all special ed related issues				X						
My knowledge comes from learning I obtained through experience, from SPecial Education Directors/Staff, and Special Education Director certification program.	X			X		X				
My experience as an LEA and a co-teach teacher of 7 years.	X									
Past experiences, empathy	X						X			

a good working relationship with district and school special education personnel				X						
prior experiences, special education department reps	X			X						
Listening and empathy							X			
Knowledge of	X									
Experience	X									
Experience in a variety of situations involving special education students has given me a strong knowledge base, but I also know I have the resources available when questions come up.	X							X		
experience, other professionals	X			X						
Experience	X									
Relying on people who are expertise in the area of special education to guide me				X						
Prior experience	X									

As a mother of 4 and grandmother of 8, having 43 years experience in education, and knowing my special education students, I am able to make decisions in the best interest of the child.	X	X								
Personal knowledge (2 children who went through school w/ IEP's), 42 years experience in education (34 in administration), network with fellow educators	X	X		X						
I have a counseling degree that helps me listen actively to both the student and parent concerns					X	X			X	

I have found that skills acquired from my counseling background have been very helpful in my current dealings with students with disabilities.							X				
Experience	X										
Experience	X										
Experience	X										
Past experience or ask special education director	X			X							
Hands on experience working with these students in a classroom	X										

Just like all students, you need to know the child as an individual and what their strengths and challenges are. I also have a special education administrator that works within my building. I can always ask her for assistance as well.				X					X	
my special education coursework, 7 years as a special education teacher, and 3 years as a special education Asst. Director	X					X				
I rely on my staff and reading the IEP			X	X						
Hands on experiences with working directly with students with severe and profound needs in the building of which I'm a principal.	X									

My general knowledge of special education law combined with my knowledge and skills in working with students	X									X
Prior experience	X									
General understanding of developmental readiness insofar as the application and disposition of discipline	X									
Experiences that I have had related to special education. I ask myself - does this help level the playing field for this student?	X								X	
BIP's			X							
I draw on my years of experience in the classroom with a collaborative teacher and as a parent.	X	X								
Experience and District resources	X							X		

focus on the academic achievement of students with disabilities and align their curriculum									X	
Years of experience working with these students in the classroom and as an administrator. Patience and understanding students individual needs, relying on the IEP and direct support from the individual case manager.	X		X				X		X	
I draw upon my experiences as a teacher and my experiences as an administrator.	X									
I always work with a team of staff who are trained and use every resource I need to make sure I am in compliance with law.				X				X		

Experience as a Special Education teacher has helped me with discipline and providing teachers support with respect to differentiation of instruction	X									
Previous experience	X									
My previous Special education experience	X									
Personal and experience.	X									
20 years of experience in dealing with a variety of issues.	X									
Experience working w/ other students, past coaching experience	X									
I served as the Curriculum Coordinator for SpEd and director of SpEd in a neighboring school district prior to going to the College of Charleston to teach in the Dept of spEd	X									

some teaching experience in mainstream classrooms	X									
Past experiences/ Teacher-Admin Discussions/ Training	X			X		X				
Previous teaching experience and planning	X									
Past experience	X									
Previous experience, expertise of others who have the Sp. Ed background	X			X						
Trough experience and research	X							X		
Experiential knowledge and procedural knowledge gained from 17 years in education	X									
Knowledge acquired during 5 years of HS administration	X									
26 + years in the field as special ed teacher and administrator	X									

Education training; administrative experience with processes such as IEP conferences and discipline processes; Sped. department administrative supervisor	X		X	X		X				
Previous experiences and special ed law	X									X
Previous experiences, professionals in the building	X			X						
Basically on the job training peppered with brief inservice training and the state SPED conference (attended one time)	X					X				
I use the knowledge I have acquired over the years in my experiences as a special educator, school counselor, special education director, and principal.	X									

I am good at building relationships and differentiating instruction	X									
I try to see the value in all kids - look for the good in them - have high expectations for them/staff									X	
I have worked with Special Education and Section 504 for the last 7 years, and I have attended several classes and conferences on RTI, Special Education and Section 504.	X					X				
I taught special education for 7 years.	X									
I have learned about students with disabilities from my experiences through the years. Experience is the best teacher!	X									

Experience and professional conversations...especially with my wife, who is a certified special education teacher.	X	X		X						
Team of administrators, special education coordinators and conferences.	X			X						
I think you understand that going into each year, the schools goal should be that every child can be successful, and treat each child with that purpose in mind.									X	
Experience	X									
School and training						X				
All students can learn									X	
The law concerning special education students, my experiences in the classroom with special education students and their accommodations.	X									X

my wife is a sped teacher, we have a full-time sped administrator who takes care of 90% or more of all sped requirements		X		X						
staff special pops person				X						
past and present practice	X									
Experience, Indiana Special Education Code, Other adminsitrators, special education teachers/directors	X			X						
IEP meetings and mtg with AEA			X	X						
Extensive training in dealing with students with specific disabilities.						X				
knowledge as a general educator	X									

My training and experience as special education teacher and particularly director have been vital to my job.	X									
I was a special education teacher	X									
I am a special education teacher with 15 years experience.	X									
Differentiation								X		
what is good for special need students is good for all students									X	
experience and research	X									
11 years of teaching reg education	X									
professional experience, support of district student support director, working with special education teachers etc.	X			X						
I have a masters in special ed.	X									
Know the law as it pertains to specific situations										X

Following IEP and individual knowledge of each student			X						X	
I have a law degree										X
Compassion							X			
Dealing with them in the past.	X									
Education Law Graduate Class						X				
Past experiences and calling legal counsel from teaching	X									X
IEPs			X							
Special Ed Law updates, personal life experience	X							X		
try to use common sense	X									
Conflict cycle								X		
My own experiences with SPED students and teachers as well as serving as SPED Administrator.	X									
personal experience with my own autistic son 11 year old son		X								
IEP Team			X							

Experience as a teacher and other special education professionals	X			X						
Teaching career	X									
Admin education and Counseling degree	X					X				
Experience	X									
sociology, child development, school law, district policies	X							X		X
I draw upon my former knowledge as a special education teacher and as a special education coordinator	X			X						
I ask a lot of questions, and I work slowly in order to not screw up before I get answers.	X									
I have been doing this job long enough to have a broad perspective on various disabilities and their relation to schools and programs of study.	X									

as an undergraduate I took as many courses in Special Education as I could. I also was involved in pre-school inclusion as a regular education teacher.	X					X				
Masters Programa and hands on experience.	X					X				
Counseling background						X				
Advisement from the school psychologist, on the job experience	X			X						
Experience	X									
My knowledge of teaching and learning	X									
Lost of years of having them as students in my schools.	X									
asking questions	X									
all my knowledge	X									
Total	99	9	9	27	3	17	4	9	10	7

Appendix H: Survey Question 23

What knowledge or skills do you feel you need when working with students with disabilities?	empathy patience undrstnd	law/ plcy	disc	working with teachers	Stdnt fmly	I E P	support/ effective teaching practices	disability/ placement/ identification	Over -all	good spprt system	other
Patience	X										
None											X
An understanding of what the situation truly is and what we are trying to accomplish.	X										X
Compassion and conservatism	X										
Patience	X										
Patience	X										

Knowledge of SPED law, LRE, and identificatiton of disabilities so we can address the best placement for services.		X						X			
More knowledge in developmental skills for students working at early grade school levels.							X				
Disciplining special needs students can be challenging. Sometimes I don't know whether giving them a similar consequence to the average student is appropriate or not.			X								

coaching case managers/teachers on how to write IEP goals/plans that are aligned to common core standards				X		X					
High needs students - names and special considerations when addressing issues; knowledge of law in addressing issues		X			X						
Communication skills, knowledge about the individual student, law		X			X						
Compassion, sense of fairness,	X	X									

What is legal work with these kids and how to protect them during their school years. How to help them feel safe for the future.		X									
IEP information and SP ED law		X				X					
Understanding the IEP process and making student based decisions						X					
A better understanding of the different kinds of needs							X				
I need a network of people I can trust to give quality advice										X	
Knowledge of the student and the student's disability					X			X			

How to help/guide regular education staff gain greater familiarity and understanding on how they can work with students with disabilities.				X							
Patience, empathy, resiliency, communication skills	X										
A broad understanding of young people and the acceptance that teens make mistakes				X							
Staying in total compliance with the law and providing services		X									
updates on special law		X									

discipline situations and ideas for modifications/ac comodations			X								
To be understanding and empathetic.	X										
Knowledge about policy. Care about all students		X		X							
SPED law, regulation		X									
Understanding of their challenges and the role of the school in helping them meet their goals.						X					
more knowledge of special education law		X									
Staying updated on the ever shifting litigious environment		X									
Need to know updated and new laws		X									

Experience working with EC law and EC students and parents		X			X						
Patience, ability to show I care, willingness to research special issues, listening...	X										
Alternative portfolios						X					
I need continueing education and refresher courses. I would like to have current professional development regarding recent landmark rulings related to sp. ed. law and 504's.		X									

Understanding of the various disabilities to help students accept who they are and challenge them to move to the next possible level					X			X			
Law		X									
To become more familiar with specific needs, SDI, and related services in a child's IEP.						X	X	X			
Legal		X									
Current Law updates		X									
I think the most important thing is to build relationships with all students so they know you value who they are and are there to help them be					X						

successful.											
Goal writing, progress monitoring, better IEP writing						X					
I need to know what their disability is and what works best with that child. I need to know their interests and family background.					X			X			
how to read their IEP						X					
Better understand of eligibility, placement and LRE								X			
How to de-escalate students when they are in a state that is not conducive for learning.							X				

Personal skills to relate and interact effectively																					X	
Patience	X																					
Practices in promoting co-teaching models.				X																		
Patients	X																					
Patience, good communication	X																					
reading intervention, knowledge of various interventions, strategies for differentiation of instruction, PATIENCE and ENDURANCE	X									X												
Special Education law		X																				
better understanding of effective teaching practices																						X

Knowledge and understanding of the IEP and development of the team approach for carrying out the IEP.						X					
Educating parents of students with disabilities. Often, parents feel that their child can be excused from disciplinary action because of the child's disability.					X						
I make sure if I am not sure on an issue, a program, an IEP goal, I ask whom ever I need to be sure. Document, Document, Document										X	

Nothing in particular in my position. General knowledge level of legal issues and modifications is required		X					X				
Patience and understanding	X										
Better understanding of resources, strategies, and options							X				
Understanding of processing for some of the students.					X						
You need to figure what makes each student function best. They are all different.					X						
Not certain											X

Behavior Management, Parameters for implementation of IEP's, specific knowledge of PMD, TMD, EMD, LD, ED, Autism, OI, VI, HI placement criteria and accomodations						X	X	X			
better understanding of how to deal with parents					X						
Patience/ Facts/ Needs	X						X				
Continued review of appropriate teaching strategies and supports							X				
Laws		X									
understanding the impact of their disability and how it affects their					X			X			

behavior and academic success											
Knowledge of Special Education Law and IEP procedures. Compassion and understanding	X	X				X					
General knowledge of the variety of conditons that may qualify students for inclusion, specific knowledge of individual students					X		X				
Reading and implementing an IEP/ 504, Knowledge of SpEd law as it pertains to discipline		X	X			X					

Understanding the various disabilities, student/parent rights, sp. ed. law, differentiating instruction & assessment, LRE		X					X	X			
Understanding the various disabilities in order to know most appropriate interactions with students								X			
Common Sense, Special ed law understanding, IEP knowledge		X				X					
More information about the diversity of identification								X			
Better understanding of how students qualify, what a high quality IEP looks like						X		X			

<p>I need to continuously educate myself on best practices when working with students with complex needs. Sometimes we don't know exactly what we'll need to know, so I believe the most important skill is to become RESOURCEFUL - to develop a network of support and resources to call on when/as needed.</p>						X				
<p>Learning style, outside of school supports, information related to the disability and strategies for helping the</p>						X	X			

student											
Perhaps more patience	X										
More legal, creative options with student discipline and with providing support to general education teachers working with students with disabilities.		X	X	X			X				
The law and regulations. What accommodations are appropriate. Emotional & behavioral disabilities.		X					X				
flexible and open-minded	X										

It would be helpful to learn or be kept up to date on changes in laws regarding these students. If a resource were made available (worded in common sense language) for administrators, it would be very helpful.		X									
I could use some training with restraint techniques, although I have not needed to restrain a young person for several years.			X								
Suggestons for programing and wrap around services that are avaiable.							X				
A lot of patience and understanding	X										

Empathy	X										
Current changes in law and learning to work with ASD populations		X					X				
Better differentiation techniques that do not lower the level of the curriculum but make it more accessible							X				
Every schools has their own process. I'm at a new school and am learning this process. As an adminstrator I need to better know how to identify students at the high school level and test.									X		
understanding and patience	X										

staying current on laws and regs		X									
patience and understanding	X										
I need to know what their disability is and what accomodations that they have						X		X			
Solid knowledge of Special Education Law, School Policy, Effective interventions		X					X				
Patience, understanding, empathy	X										
time to work with teachers			X								
special education law, procedures, & discipline		X	X								
We always need to stay current and informed...so continuous									X		

knowledge											
Know their disability, their accommodations, and differentiate instruction						X	X	X			
How they perceive the world and learning					X						
prior knowledge of the student and their background					X						
Patience	X										
understanding of IEP's, support services, equity, and scheduling						X	X				
Know the law		X									
Know the law as it pertains to students with disabilities		X									

Understanding their specific disability								X			
general education law and discipline procedures		X	X								
meeting individual needs					X						
We have an autism unit, so anything that will help us grow and stretch this population.								X			
More about the changing laws.		X									
Knowledge of disability and appropriate steps to handle said disability.							X	X			
Students' rights		X									
specific knowledge of particular disabilities and what strategies are most beneficial							X	X			

more information about special ed law		X									
Specific disabilities								X			
More in-depth knowledge of intricacies of law.		X									
how Spec Ed students react in stressful situations, how they need some time to calm down before they are able to process and respond					X						
Student Accommodations							X				
With my responsibilities more help with disciplinary concerns, student support			X								
Iep development						X					

Legal knowledge and patients to work through things	X	X									
Developing accommodations and working with resistant teachers				X			X				
SPED Laws		X									
learning disabilities types, educational background of student, home-life of student, interventions and strategies for dealing with them					X		X	X			
Knowledge about the different disabilities, discipline, instructional strategies, parent conferences			X		X		X	X			

Patience, paying attention to details, tolerance, and genuine care	X										
An understanding of the educational needs and appropriate courses that go along with each disability so that informed decisions can be made to benefit students.							X	X			
patience/empathy and a strong understanding of IEP procedures.	X					X					
sped process and local qualification requirements for sped		X						X			

What their ruling is and what needs they have. I work very closely with our sped dept on these students								X			
Full range									X		
Counseling											X
Alternate forms of behavior modification (other than discipline), advise on how to better train teachers on best practice strategies with disabilities				X			X				
Steps to avoid over-identification							X				
Differentiation							X				

Patience	X										
Patience	X										
law & best practice strategies		X									
more of it									X		
TOTAL	28	43	10	8	20	17	33	27	3	2	5

Appendix I: Survey Question 31

What specific preparation or training do you feel would improve your understanding of special education policy and procedures?	none	RTI / identification	On-going PD / training	Course -work	interventions/ accommodations / service delivery	Law	working with teachers	hands on/ collaboration	Othr
RTI		X							
None	X								
How to efficiently complete Special Ed paperwork and reporting requirements									X
Updates on school law						X			
Professional Development opportunities in the area of Special Education.			X						
Continued professional development in special education						X			

laws, conferences are terrific, but the funding to attend has diminished.									
Specific SPED Cooperative training on their procedures.			X						
I feel like I need to take an entire course in this area...not just one or two classes of a course dedicated to this area.				X					
would like more models of highly-effective service delivery models at the high school level					X				
Annual updates with any new changes brought to district leadership team monthly			X						
More thorough explanation of state assessments with regards to special education students									X

Perhaps mandatory classes in the curriculum				X					
Continued updates as policies and procedures change			X						
General review			X						
Staying up to date with any changes in law, case law, and research based interventions			X		X	X			
Training on how to build capacity of my general education teaching staff in inclusionary practices and adaptations							X		
Continued inservice to refresh knowledge of policy			X						
special ed law						X			
changes in law						X			
Bi-Annual updates seminars			X						
Continued updates for the constantly moving targets set						X			

by legislators in regards to special ed policy.									
special education law seminars/class			X	X					
Staying updated on current trends/best practices/law			X		X	X			
More professional inservice			X						
Any procedures that are mandated by state law vs local board policy						X			
Constantly studying current trends and research related to special education policy and procedures.			X						
Alternative Portfolio's for CDC-A students									X
Things continually change. I'd like current information as it relates to schools, classrooms, and both sp. ed. and general education teachers.			X		X		X		

More specific articles that can update all of us as administrators on the newest policies and procedures									X
Ongoing collaboration with trusted colleagues. At this point, I feel that i need more "on the job" information, which is why I suggest collaborative efforts with other administrators.						X		X	
Legal education/seminars/training			X			X			
Just updates			X						
Maybe once a year during one of our district leadership meetings, that occur 4-6 times per year, some time could be devoted to current "hot topics" in special education.			X						

Evaluation of special ed program, curriculum, and staff									X
Staff dev			X						
New requirements under PARCC						X			
continuous updates on changes in special education laws.						X			
Better understanding of intake, placement and LRE		X							
In-services			X						
More understanding of the Section 504 process						X			
Universal Design for Learning					X				
A review of process as it relates to student growth					X				
RtI		X							
School visit with a professional, possibly ongoing								X	
continual updates, observations of effective classrooms, interviews with teachers who have								X	

had great success with interventions									
Specific walk through of the procedures in writing an IEP Plan.								X	
training on co-teaching			X						
Having trainings on policies and procedures twice a year.			X						
Policy and procedure changes so regularly in Special Ed that I believe the key is to have an more than adequate staff that stays on the up and up and keeps me informed as to what I need to know and what we need to have in place.									X
Additional training to better provide teachers support in differentiating instruction.			X		X				
In service			X						

Unsure	X								
Changes to IDEA and 504 to keep current.						X			
I probably need to take additional coursework or attend a special education workshop.			X	X					
in-service			X						
Learning about new and perhaps better accommodations available for students with disabilities					X				
School Law with an imbedded focus on SpEd legal issues/parameters; Reasonable accommodations in the reg ed classroom; Field Experience within the admin internship; ongoing updates from District SpEd staff for administrators that does not address			X		X	X		X	

them as "outsiders" but as part of the team that supports ALL students									
I don't know where to start									X
Continual Annual Updates			X						
District professional development for all staff			X						
Classes in special education				X					
Coursework, District Inservices and Workshops			X	X					
Perhaps updating on any changes or challenges to the existing law						X			
Specialized coursework in law, IEP process, discipline, etc.				X					
any new research in the field									X

Understanding specific needs of students in order to make education and placement decisions									X
Individual impairments									X
More information			X						
More time allocated for SPED training at the pre-service general education teacher level as well as prior to becoming an administrator				X					
ongoing professional development regarding laws						X			
More time for collaboration with the experts								X	
College classes - have worked with excellent school psychologists				X					
case study analyses, site-based training on implementing IEP's			X					X	

Refresher courses in sped law should be offered by the state every year.						X			
Any workshop where administrators are provided information but also given the opportunity to discuss current issues.			X						
Unsure	X								
Yearly update training			X						
Continual updates regarding special ed law.						X			
legal updates						X			
ASD issues are my current focus									X
More time with the laws and more time in the identification, testing, and placement process in my internship. I simply attended ARDs which I already had		X				X			

knowledge of as a classroom teacher.									
It's hard to be an expert on everything. The model we have adopted is to have a full-time sped administrator, who is the expert for all of us.									X
Updates			X						
yearly updates and training on the different disabilities			X						
More PD allowing for questions			X						
Yearly updates to new law						X			
Summer programs so I can devote time to understanding without taking away from day to day school activities			X						
Just updates as case law comes available &/or law changes						X			
I believing maintaining my			X						

Special Education certification will continuously improve my understanding of special education policy and procedures--because I have to earn hours of professional development that directly connect to special education policy and procedures.									
IDEA						X			
General special education law classes would benefit all						X			
professional development in the area of law and accommodations as well as out of district placement					X	X			
updates from the state dept. on changes						X			
None at this time	X								

Process for determining disability eligibility		X							
Continuing professional development			X						
Meeting the needs of students with Emotional Impairments					X				
None	X								
Teaching students with specific disabilities.					X				
Training provided at the state/local level			X						
Mandated PD regarding any changes to existing laws, policies, procedures			X			X			
more professional development			X						
AGain, more law centered training.						X			
a summer training or institute that would be like a "bootcamp" with a different topic each day/week such			X			X			

as Legal Requirements, what to look for in your IEP, etc.									
Monthly updates and changes			X						
I think a class in special education law would be very helpful				X					
Iep development					X				
Extra course				X					
Placement procedures					X				
professional development			X						
Training should be done every year in each district because the rules change constantly			X						

Sometimes I am unsure of my role. I don't want to be a micro-manager to ensure compliance, and I'm not strong enough in knowledge to even know for sure what compliance is, so understanding my role as admin in special education processes would be beneficial.									X
Continued in-service regarding updates to the process and procedures related to special education, especially from an LEA perspective.			X						
504 and IEP training			X						
a training that includes discussion and question/answers			X						
Continued district training as needed			X						
Not sure	X								

Workshops every 1 - 3 years on special education law updates						X			
Current full-inclusion teaching strategies					X				
Not sure	X								
professional development on special ed law and policies and procedures			X			X			
courses offered and pd offerings			X	X					
Yearly			X						
TOTAL	7	5	52	12	15	31	2	7	13

Appendix J: Other Comments

Please provide any other comments, questions or concerns you have regarding special education.	none	assessment	respecting difference	cert. program /course-work	discipline	in-experience	other
None	X						
None	X						
None	X						
I have questions as to how PARCC will be administered to special education students, if there is an alternative assessment for students with disabilities.		X					
I honestly don't feel like it is appropriate for me to have the level of responsibility that I have for special education in my school. To have a person who was a PE teacher turned administrator, suddenly be the go to person for special education in a school, seems like a liability. I have done my due diligence in learning what I need to know, but this is not my area of expertise. There should be a special education department person in my building. I frequently LEA meetings which						X	

takes away from my duties as the assistant principal.							
From experience in early childhood, elementary, middle and now high school, I believe we must understand and respect differences that ALL students have, and help each student to find their passion and skills where they can excel and be successful. There is something for everyone!			X				
My main concern is how difficult it is to explain to teachers why special education students receive fewer days suspension than regular education students for discipline offenses such as fighting or disrespect							X
Everyone of has some need in some way. there is not a perfect body or mind around. Some imperfections can be corrected with glasses or even braces. Others take a little more work or help. I feel the only difference between my Gifted kids and my Sped kids is time.			X				

I am a special education administrator in a building serving 100% special ed students							X
None	X						
N/A	X						
I get frustrated because the challenges coming to schools has less to do with what is best for the kids and more to do with what happened in some court room. We waste some much time and money on those things that the kids lose out. Too much politics and too many positions created for people to do unnecessary jobs. Time to leave the lawyers out of education.							X
None	X						
This is one area that I know I need more information on. Fortunately, I work with a very helpful pupil services director and am learning from him every day.						X	
None	X						
none at this time	X						
Why is attendance a factor in determining eligibility for an IEP? A disability is a disability whether the student shows up or							X

not.							
It is a difficult field that needs constant evaluation and interpretation. It is all about education and teaching.							X
None	X						
None	X						
Special Ed is a very time consuming task that needs to be done correctly and fairly. A principal, as I am, job is to make sure he or she has staff in place that are confident in what needs to be in place and a staff willing to go the extra mile so to speak to make sure students with special needs receive the education they deserve. A principal by no means, with all the work they have on their plate, can do it alone. You need a trustworthy, hardworking staff to achieve this.							
Since starting as a Special Education teacher in the early 1990's, I have seen many positive changes in educating students with disabilities.							X

Greater attention and resources for students in particular.							
None really	X						
Little is being addressed (in south Carolina) with respect to curriculum and assessments that are aligned for Students with Special Needs in the arena of TMD, LD, ED self cont). this creates an unfair and highly consequential impact for schools who have large special ed populations like my school (10 self cont classes, 10 resource teachers and 4 transition specialists). The ripple effect of this is that principals shy away from SpEd classes and do not want them in their buildings. The State Dept of Educ needs to step up to the plate and work ON BEHALF of the students and the schools not take on the bureaucratic role of "policing." Likewise, institutions of higher learning and advanced degree programs need to have people who have and are currently		X					

working in the schools teach future administrators about the realities of SpEd							
It's a tough subject							X
I believe that teachers and support staff need to be better prepared at the university level. Student teaching for one semester is inadequate; require longer internships with more hands on experiences with excellent mentors				X			
N/A	X						
It is under funded in our state - our needs are greater than our resources							X
I have no real concerns at this time.	X						
None	X						
I feel lucky to have already been a special education teacher prior to my administrative position.							X
NA	X						
None	X						
In our school, students with disabilities are a very valuable and appreciated commodity.			X				
Very important to take admin				X			

preparation courses related to working with students with disabilities. Very important part of my job and fortunately my preparation in college along with experience as an administrator prepared me pretty well for helping students with disabilities achieve success.							
504's are becoming more and more common.							X
None	X						
would be helpful.							X
some laws and/or policies permit students with disabilities to remain in an environment that is NOT conducive; too many students are misdiagnosed because parents want the academic support, but do not adhere to the behavioral supports					X		
Administrative programs need to do a better job of making the connection to the state assessments, as well as, curriculum for these students.				X			
Make sure your students actually read the IEP's for the students. Every accomodation should never be checked. I see this too							X

often.							
Special edu students with extreme discipline and disruptive behaviors should have a spelled school with deliberate interventions					X		
Discipline and the ambiguous connections made between student behavior and whether it is a manifestation of their disability. In my experience, most disruptive behaviors by students with disabilities is NOT a manifestation of their disability. However, this often times becomes a point of contention with advocate groups who have no idea of what is required to operate a school safely and with order.					X		
TOTAL	17	2	3	3	3	2	12

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Vita

Susan Cadle Bineham grew up in San Antonio, Texas. Her father was a graduate of The University of Texas at Austin. Not long after the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed in 1975, a girl with a disability enrolled in her third grade class. They became friends and Susan learned her first lessons in the difficulties and triumphs children with disabilities experience. After graduating high school she obtained a bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Texas at San Antonio and began working at an adolescent treatment center working with children who had emotional and behavioral difficulties. She then earned a master's degree in Theology and was hired to serve as the Assistant Director of Children's Ministries at a local church. While working for the church she helped to create a Sunday school class for children with disabilities so families could attend church. Through this experience she realized her calling was to work with children with disabilities. She then earned her teaching certificate and began working in the same school district she attended as a student, as a special education teacher. She has been teaching students with disabilities for 17 years, serving as a Special Education Department Chair for two years. Susan also assisted in opening a new high school in the district, serving as the Special Education Campus Coordinator for six years. While working as the campus coordinator, she pursued a master's degree in education to obtain her principal certification. As a result of her special education teaching, administrative experience and her journey through the principalship program, she decided to continue her education to earn a doctoral degree in Special Education with a concentration in Special Education Administration at the University of Texas at Austin. She guest lectures for local teacher certification programs, addressing IDEA, Intellectual Disabilities, Discipline, 504, and Special Education programs.

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