

Running head: PRINCIPALS' ATTITUDES TOWARD INCLUSION

Pennsylvania Middle School Principals' Attitudes toward the Inclusion of Students with
Disabilities in the Regular Education Classroom

Alan Jay Hack
Wilkes University

A dissertation submitted to the
School of Education
at
Wilkes University
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

UMI Number: 3670314

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI 3670314

Published by ProQuest LLC (2015). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code



ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled:

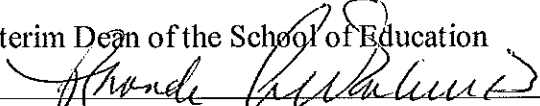
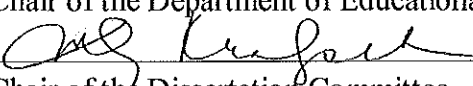
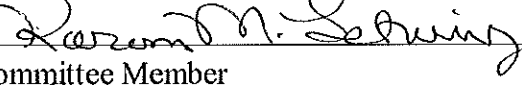
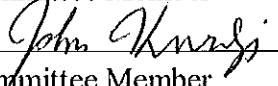
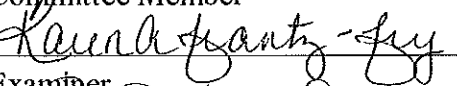
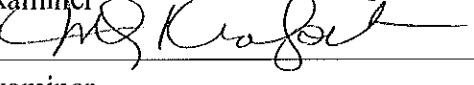
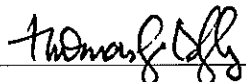
Pennsylvania Middle Schools Principals' Attitudes toward the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in the Regular Education Classroom

prepared by

Alan Jay Hack

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at Wilkes University.

Approved by:

Interim Dean of the School of Education	Date
	11/13/14
Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership	Date
	11/13/14
Chair of the Dissertation Committee	Date
	11/13/14
Committee Member	Date
	11/13/14
Committee Member	Date
	11/13/2014
Examiner	Date
	11/13/14
Examiner	Date
	11/13/14

School of Education
Wilkes University
November 13, 2014

Abstract

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the attitudes of Pennsylvania public middle school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. This study focused on factors that may affect the attitudes of middle school principals toward inclusion and on the relationship between these attitudes and the recommended appropriate placement of students with disabilities. A total of 135 middle school principals completed a modified version of Praisner's *Principals Inclusion Survey*. That data was analyzed using various descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients. Results showed that the majority of middle school principals in the state of Pennsylvania have positive attitudes toward inclusion. Although no statistically significant relationships were found between principals' attitudes toward inclusion and demographics, training, and credits ($p > .05$), the results suggested that middle school principals with special education teaching experience and special education credits are more likely to have favorable attitudes toward inclusion. A significant relationship was discovered between middle school principals' attitudes and their experience with students with disabilities ($r = .195, p = .023$). Similarly, a positive correlation was identified between the principals' experience with students with disabilities and their recommendation for the most appropriate placement ($r = .438, p = <.0001$). As a result, a recommendation from this study is for school district and higher education officials to ensure principals are equipped with the knowledge, expertise, and attitudes to successfully lead inclusive schools.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family whose constant love, support, and encouragement have helped me through this journey. I am grateful for my parents who have instilled a passion for learning and education in my life. To my brother, although you were lost along the way, I cannot help but believe that you have also been part of the process. I am especially indebted to my wife, Danielle, who has shown a deep level of understanding and patience with me as we have witnessed many changes in our lives. Thank you for allowing me to slip away to my office on many occasions to work and for the sacrifices you have made so that I might achieve this goal of completing my doctorate.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank my mentor, Dr. Karim Medico Letwinsky, for her unwavering support and assistance throughout this entire process. I could not have finished the dissertation without her wealth of knowledge and expertise. Thank you to my committee members, Dr. John Kurelja and Dr. Karen Frantz-Fry who provided much needed feedback and encouragement along the way. I am especially grateful for the support of Dr. Kurelja, also my superintendent, who not only continually supported me in completing my dissertation but also continued to strengthen my role as an instructional leader in the Warrior Run School District. Thank you also to Dr. Kurt Eisele and Dr. Thomas Duffy who selflessly gave of their time to be a part of this amazing journey.

I would like to thank the graduate education faculty at Wilkes University for imparting their knowledge of teaching and learning. Thank you to the members of the Fall 2011 cohort for helping me understand that we are “all in this together.” I would like to express a sincere thank you to my friend, colleague, and collaborative cohort member Lynn Fuini-Hetten who consistently provided direction and motivation in times when I was feeling lost and overwhelmed. The friendships that were established have meant the world to me.

Thank you to the administrators, faculty, and staff of the Warrior Run School District for your support over the last two years. I have enjoyed working with all of you while learning and growing as a person and as a professional. I am grateful for the understanding and encouragement of my building principal, Susan Mabus, who allowed me to continue pursuing my degree while also fulfilling my administrative duties in the middle school.

I would like to truly acknowledge everyone who has helped make this dream a reality. I simply could not have done it without any of you and hope one day I may return the favor.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures.....	x
Chapter I. Statement of the Problem.....	1
Problem Statement.....	4
Purpose of the Study.....	6
Research Questions.....	6
Theoretical Framework.....	7
Significance of the Study.....	9
Assumptions and Limitations	10
Delimitations.....	12
Definitions.....	12
Chapter II. Review of the Literature.....	15
History of Special Education	15
Least Restrictive Environment.....	18
Overview of Inclusion.....	21
Impact of Inclusion	25
Principal's Role in Inclusion.....	27
Ingredients of Inclusive Schools.....	31
Beliefs and Attitudes toward Inclusion.....	34

Pennsylvania Statistics.....	42
Summary.....	46
Chapter III. Methodology.....	48
Research Method and Design.....	48
Setting and Sample.....	49
Instrumentation and Materials.....	51
Data Collection Procedures.....	54
Data Analysis.....	55
Chapter IV. Findings.....	58
Data Analysis.....	59
Research Question 1.....	61
Research Question 2.....	65
Research Question 3.....	67
Research Question 4.....	69
Research Question 5.....	72
Summary.....	74
Chapter V. Conclusion.....	76
Discussion of Findings.....	78
Research Question 1.....	78
Research Question 2.....	81
Research Question 3.....	84
Research Question 4.....	86
Research Question 5.....	88

Implications..... 90

Recommendations for Practice 91

Recommendations for Future Research 95

Summary..... 96

References..... 98

Appendices..... 113

Appendix A: Letter to Participants 114

Appendix B: Survey Instrument 116

Appendix C: Letters of Permission..... 117

Appendix D: Follow-up E-mail to Participants 119

Appendix E: Descriptive Statistics for Attitude Scores by Training and Experience 120

Appendix F: Summary of Correlation of Individual Attitude Items and Demographics, Training,
and Experience..... 121

Appendix G: Middle School Principals' Experience with Students with Disabilities in the
School Setting..... 123

Appendix H: Frequency Table for Inclusiveness Responses..... 125

List of Tables

Table 4.1 <i>Demographic Information</i>	60
Table 4.2 <i>Attitudes Toward Inclusion of Students with Disabilities</i>	62
Table 4.3 <i>Descriptive Statistics for Attitude Scores by Gender</i>	64
Table 4.4 <i>Pearson's Correlation Between Attitude Scores & Variables</i>	65
Table 4.5 <i>Summary of Correlation Coefficients of Individual Attitude Items and Experience</i>	69
Table 4.6 <i>Pearson's Correlation Coefficient for Attitude Score Versus Inclusiveness Score</i>	70
Table 4.7 <i>Pearson's Correlation for Comparing the Section III Items and Inclusiveness Score</i> ..	71

List of Figures

Figure 4.1. Scatterplot of the Attitude Score versus the Experience Score.....68

Figure 4.2. Scatterplot of the Experience Score versus the Inclusiveness Score.....73

Chapter I. Statement of the Problem

Educating students with disabilities and the best way in which to meet their individual needs is a primary focus in public education. With increased accountability, high-stakes testing, and funding-based special education formulas, educational leaders are faced with making difficult program and placement decisions for students with disabilities within their school districts (Lynch, 2012). As defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004, disabilities range from more severe disabilities such as intellectual disability and emotional disturbance to less severe including visual, hearing, or other health impairment.

Prior to the approval of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law § 94-142) in 1975, very few regular education classrooms included students with disabilities. Educating students with disabilities meant placing them in a special classroom or alternative environment in a different school or facility. Over the last two decades, public school systems have revisited their special education programs and have begun to channel additional resources into inclusive programs. Such attempts are being made in order to increase the number of students with disabilities in the regular education classrooms and to better provide special education services to those students (La Morte, 2012; Yell, 2012). According to the U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2012), by 2009, nearly 95% of students with disabilities were served in regular schools and within the regular education classroom. In comparison, 95.7% of students with disabilities in the state of Pennsylvania were included in regular schools during the 2009-2010 school year (Pennsylvania Bureau of Special Education, 2013a).

Federal law now mandates that students with disabilities be placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and to the greatest extent included with nondisabled students (Etscheidt,

2006). With a variety of students with disabilities present in many public schools, principals have taken a greater role in determining the appropriate placement for those students (McLaughlin, 2009). Such placements range from full-inclusion in the regular education classrooms to alternative facilities such as a special school, hospital, or institution (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Stecker, 2010). As a result, the need for principals to become more knowledgeable about inclusion and laws governing special education has never been more critical. Such knowledge is important. Prior research has shown that principals' attitudes toward inclusion affect student placement, which can have either a positive or negative impact on the success of inclusive programs within their schools (Farris, 2011; Lindsey, 2009; Praisner, 2000; Ramirez, 2006; Smith, 2011; Vazquez, 2010).

Traditionally, central office administrators have managed special education programs and assisted teams of teachers and parents in making placement recommendations for students with disabilities within a school district (Boscardin, 2005). However, the responsibility of managing special education programs, practices, and decisions has begun to shift to the building level principals, a move which they must be well-prepared (Frick, Faircloth, & Little, 2013). As a result, the effectiveness of inclusive programs in schools is now, more than ever before, highly-dependent on the building principal (McClean, 2007; McLaughlin, 2009). Building principals have been given more authority and oversight over special education resources and programs within their respective building as placement decisions usually are based upon the availability of resources (Lashley, 2007; McLaughlin, 2009).

As principals assume a greater role in determining the placement of students with disabilities within the context of the education system, the role in which they make the decisions must be void of personal opinions, self-interests, or prior experiences. When making important

decisions regarding the placement of students, principals are required to adhere to special education law and consider the benefits individual students will receive by being placed in an LRE (Frick et al., 2013; Lashley, 2007).

Inclusive schools exist in an educational environment that fosters the growth and development of all students by placing students with disabilities in classrooms with nondisabled students. However, changes supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom require educational leaders who place an emphasis on teamwork and critical analysis (Sage & Burrello, 1994). According to Parker and Day (1997), effective inclusive schools also require principals who support a philosophy of inclusiveness and “continually encourage and strengthen the culture for inclusion of all members of the learning community” (p. 83).

Leadership is a critical component to the success of inclusive schools. According to Villa, Thousand, Nevin, and Liston (2005), administrative support, ongoing professional development, and collaboration are three key components to inclusive practices. Research has shown that the success of including students with disabilities in the regular education classroom is linked to building principals and their attitudes (Reynolds, 2008; Santoli, Sachs, Romey, & McClurg, 2008). Principals' attitudes, knowledge of special education, and experience with inclusion are key components to the implementation of successful inclusive programs (Garrison-Wade, Sobel, & Fulmer, 2007). McMaster (2012) has suggested that key ingredients to successful inclusive programs include “school leadership [that] model inclusive attitudes and behaviours” (p. 18) while also developing a school culture that reflects inclusive values and practices.

Research further charges principals with facilitating collaboration between regular education teachers and special education teachers to ensure that high standards and expectations are established for all students (Boscardin, 2005; Lynch, 2012). A principal's attitude toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education classrooms and the collaboration between regular education and special education personnel may determine the outcome of inclusive programs (McGrew, 2008).

The attitudes of elementary and secondary principals toward inclusion are influenced by factors such as knowledge of special education law, and for some, years of experience as a special education teacher which in turn may directly affect programmatic and placement decisions (Harris 2009; Praisner, 2000; Vazquez, 2010). Lindsey (2009) also noted that most middle school principals in their studies have positive attitudes toward inclusion, however, their responses to program and placement decisions varied significantly based on demographics, experience, and training. While research has been conducted concerning the principals' role in inclusion, limited research exists regarding the attitudes of public middle school principals in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom.

Problem Statement

From the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law § 94-142) passed in 1975 to the reauthorization of the IDEA in 2004, federal law requires school districts to place students with disabilities in an LRE ranging from placements in regular education classrooms full-time to alternative placements outside of the regular school setting based on their disability. As a result, the responsibilities of principals have been extended to include the oversight and

management of inclusive practice and ensuring that students with disabilities are included in the regular education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate.

Although research studies have been conducted at the elementary and secondary levels regarding principals' attitudes toward inclusion, minimal research exists at the middle school level. Prior research has suggested that the attitudes of elementary and secondary principals are generally favorable toward inclusion, however, placement decisions vary based on experience and exposure to students with disabilities (Praisner, 2000; Ramirez, 2006; Weller 2012). Horrocks, White, and Roberts (2008) and Lindsey (2009) also noted in their studies that while most principals favored inclusion, demographics, experience, and training had a significant impact on their overall attitudes. Additionally, the work of Kuzma (2004) found that the role of middle school principals varied from that of elementary or secondary principals and thus likely affected their attitudes toward making important programmatic decisions which may include special education programs and student placement.

While prior research has suggested that principals generally favor inclusion and that their attitudes play a major role in the effectiveness of inclusion, limited research is available regarding the specific characteristics that influence their attitudes (Lindsey, 2009; Smith, 2011). Additional research is required to determine the current status of public middle school principals' attitudes toward inclusion in Pennsylvania and the variables that influence their attitudes toward inclusion. Therefore, this study has added to the existing body of research through the examination of attitudes of public middle school principals in Pennsylvania and the factors that affect their attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of Pennsylvania public middle school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. Such disabilities may range from less severe disabilities, as visual, hearing, or other health impairment to more severe disabilities, such as intellectual disability and emotional disturbance (IDEA, 2004). In addition to the existing research conducted at the elementary and secondary levels, this study focused on factors that may affect the attitudes of principals serving public middle schools in the state of Pennsylvania, as well as on the relationship between these attitudes and the recommended appropriate placement of students with disabilities. This study also examined characteristics that may affect the placement decisions of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Pennsylvania middle school principals toward inclusive programs in which students with disabilities receive classroom instruction with nondisabled peers?
2. What are the factors that affect the attitudes of middle school principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom?
3. What is the relationship between middle school principals' attitudes toward inclusion and their experiences with individuals with disabilities?
4. What is the relationship between principals' attitudes toward inclusion and their recommended appropriate placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment as mandated by IDEA?

5. What is the relationship between middle school principals' experiences with individuals with disabilities and their support of recommendations for the most appropriate placement for students with disabilities?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study related to leadership theory and the effect a principal's leadership approach has on school culture and key instructional programs such as inclusion. Burns (1978) defined leadership as "leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations—the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations—*of both leaders and followers*" (p. 19). According to Leithwood and Jantzi (1990), the purpose of transformational leadership is "the enhancement of individual and collective problem-solving capacities of organizational members; such capacities are exercised in the identification of goals to be achieved and practices to be used in their achievement" (p. 5). School leaders with the characteristics of a transformational leader continually seek three goals:

- a) Helping staff members develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture,
- b) Fostering teacher development, and
- c) Helping teachers solve problems together more effectively (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006, p. 188).

Transformational leadership as it applies to principals and inclusion described an instructional leader as one that continually seeks to improve the school culture, the organization as a whole, and to ensure that educational outcomes are available to all students, including students with disabilities (Boscardin, 2005). According to McLaughlin (2009), principals who create a culture "that supports teachers while promoting continuous improvement is critical to

effective special education ... school administrators must help teachers reshape beliefs and attitudes toward students with disabilities as they implement a shared vision of high expectations for all students” (p. 84).

Fullan (2001) stated “the more complex society gets, the more sophisticated leadership must become. Complexity means change, but specifically it means rapidly occurring, unpredictable, non-linear change” (p. ix). Special education mandates grow in number and complexity, principals must be transformational leaders and advocates for all students including those with disabilities. Principals must be prepared to function effectively within the context of change and uncertainty because the needs of students are continuously in a state of change. Transformational leaders have the ability to identify the need for continuous change in their respective learning communities not only as a result of federal and state mandates but also as a result of the needs of students. Principals who act as change agents in the collaborative development of visions, goals, and accompanying strategies work to build consensus throughout their schools which may lead to an increase in student achievement for all students, including those with disabilities (Reinhartz & Beach, 2004).

Huber and West (2002) claimed that “the school leader is most often cited as the key figure in the individual school’s development, either blocking or promoting changes, acting as the internal change agent, overseeing the processes of growth and renewal” (p. 1072). Transformational leaders seek to empower all stakeholders within the organization to facilitate continuous improvement through collective commitment and collaboration (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006). According to Ingram (1997), “transformational principals build school cultures which value sharing and exchange among colleagues” (p. 424). In contrast, transactional leadership is based on rewards and consequences. Transactional leaders often fail to motivate

employees beyond the expectations required to gain extrinsic rewards or avoid punishment (Awamleh, Mahate, & Evans, 2005). As principals assume greater roles in regular and special education programs within their respective buildings, their attitudes and leadership approach are paramount in the development and implementation of effective programmatic changes (Garrison-Wade, Sobel, & Fulmer, 2007; Stewart, 2006).

The attitudes and beliefs of principals are critical components which influence their perception of special education and working with students with disabilities (Sage & Burrello, 1994). The manner in which building principals exercise transformational leadership is critical when developing an environment in which inclusion is most likely to prevail (Stainback & Stainback, 1996). As a result, research has shown that principals' leadership styles and attitudes directly and indirectly affect the success of many instructional and program decisions principals make on a regular basis and thus can lead to the success or failure of the inclusive programs in their schools (McLaughlin, 2009).

Significance of the Study

This study examined the attitudes of middle school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education classrooms to determine the factors that may influence their attitudes toward the implementation and maintenance of inclusive programs. This is significant to superintendents, other school leaders, and principal preparation programs for several reasons. Because principals are key individuals in the implementation of building policies and programs, their attitudes may affect the direction and success of inclusive practices (Seltzer, 2011). Not only do the attitudes of principals affect the outcomes of programs they oversee, their attitudes can also influence the attitudes of faculty, staff, and students (Salisbury & McGregor, 2002; Santoli et al., 2008).

Lynch (2012) concluded “that creating an environment supportive of students with disabilities requires knowledge of special education, learner characteristics, and a functional understanding of special education” (p. 42). Research has shown that principals’ attitudes were more positive toward inclusion as the number of special education credits a principal earned increased (Farris, 2011; Lindsey, 2009; Praisner, 2003). Claxton (2002) and Copenhaver (2005) also reported that principals with higher degrees and more professional experience generally had a more solid understanding of special education laws. Furthermore, to begin effectively implementing inclusive programs in their schools, principals must maintain an attitude that is reflective of the laws of special education (Ramirez, 2006).

The results of this study can be a benefit to superintendents, special education directors, principals, and other administrators in developing plans that will address the individual needs of all students and in ensuring that students with disabilities receive the appropriate services in the LRE. Additionally, the findings of the study may be used to enhance education administrator preparatory programs to ensure that future administrators receive a solid background in effectively understanding and following special education law in order to assist in making appropriate placement decisions.

Assumptions and Limitations

An assumption in this study was based on prior research that indicated the relationship between attitudes and placement can be generalized to the population in this research study. The study also assumed the participants would respond honestly to the survey instrument, and that the responses collected from the sample would represent the population of middle school principals working in rural, suburban, and urban middle schools in the state of Pennsylvania.

There was an assumption that the modifications made to the survey instrument did not affect the validity of the instrument as originally verified by the designer of the instrument.

This study focused on the attitudes of middle school principals in the state of Pennsylvania. With a wide range of state, district, and building policies governing special education programs and services in public schools across the nation, the results of the study may not fully represent the population of all middle school principals in Pennsylvania or in the nation. Another potential limitation of this study was the way in which participants may have interpreted and responded to the questions included in the survey. Fowler (2009) noted errors associated with self-reported answers may include “misunderstanding the question, not having the information needed to answer, and distorting answers in order to look good” (p. 15). Therefore, the participants’ responses in this study may not have been reflective of their true beliefs. Questions may also have been answered according to what the participants believed would benefit the researcher and this study.

In addition, the fact that the survey instrument was web-based may have been a limitation in this study. The e-mail addresses secured for this study may not have been current or accurate, thus not reaching the intended participant. Furthermore, additional technical difficulties may have affected access to the survey which may have resulted in fewer responses (Granello & Wheaton, 2004). Similarly, volunteer effects may have been a limitation in this study. Vogt (2007) defined volunteer effect as the bias which results from the collection of participants who are actually willing to respond to the survey, thus not including the responses of all intended participants. The individuals who volunteered to respond to the survey may have been more likely to have different characteristics than those who declined to respond. According to Vogt (2007), “it is usually impossible to study these differences directly, because doing so would

require that the nonvolunteers agree to be studied, in which case they would be volunteers” (p. 123).

Delimitations

This study only sought to identify attitudes of public middle school principals in Pennsylvania toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom, thus assistant middle school principals were excluded from the study. Although the roles of assistant principals continue to evolve, assistant principals in many school districts still assume more of a disciplinarian role focusing on student management and discipline under the direction of the building principals (O’Prey, 1999; Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett, 2012; Scoggins & Bishop, 1993). As a result, program decisions and placement of special education students may be primarily made by building-level principals instead of assistant principals. This focus allowed the researcher to more accurately ensure the respondents to the survey were indeed responsible for making the programmatic and placement decisions related to this study.

Despite the assumptions, delimitations, and potential limitations, this study yielded substantial results that contributed to the existing research regarding principals’ attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities with nondisabled students, the factors affecting such attitudes, and the recommended placement of students with disabilities. An analysis of the results also yielded recommendations to higher education officials for improving educational administration programs at the post-secondary level.

Definitions

The following definitions are provided to support a general understanding of the research conducted in this study.

Inclusion—Inclusion is defined as the “commitment to educating students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment” (Sayeski & Cooper, 2003, p. 6). Students with disabilities are afforded the same social and educational opportunities as their nondisabled peers while receiving supportive services within the classroom (Praisner, 2000).

Least Restrictive Environment—The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines the least restrictive environment (LRE) as “the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (20 U.S.C. 1412 (5)(B)).

Regular Education Classroom—Regular education classrooms refer to the “educational environments where children without disabilities receive instruction and participate in activities throughout the school day” (Office for Exceptional Children, 2013)

Special Education—Special education under IDEA means “specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability” (20 U.S.C. 1401(a)(16)).

Students with Disabilities—Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA), students with a disabilities means students have been evaluated and identified as having “mental retardation, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this part as "emotional disturbance"), an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, another health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple

disabilities, and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services” (20 U.S.C. 1401(a)(1)).

Chapter II. Review of the Literature

Chapter II presents an overview of the history of special education and inclusion while examining the elements of effective inclusive practices and principals' roles in leading successful inclusive schools. The literature review includes a comprehensive review and synthesis of existing research related to the problem and purpose of this study. The final section of this chapter briefly outlines current special education statistics in the state of Pennsylvania.

History of Special Education

Prior to the passage of state and federal laws protecting students with disabilities, the large majority of students with disabilities were excluded from public schools. Those who were fortunate to attend a public school often did not receive the supports and services appropriate to their needs. Furthermore, students who received such services often received them in an alternative setting which deprived them of the interaction with their nondisabled peers (Yell, 2012). Reports have indicated that prior to the enactment of Public Law § 94-142 of 1975, nearly two million students with disabilities were denied access to public schools (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Yell, Katsiyannis, & Hazelkorn, 2007), and “more than half of the students with disabilities in the United States were not receiving appropriate educational services” (La Morte, 2012, p. 254). Earlier legislation had failed to guarantee students with disabilities access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) or provide for the inclusion of these students in the regular education classroom.

Following the contentious battle of racial discrimination and segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the direction of public education changed for students of different racial backgrounds as well as students with disabilities (Permuth & Maudsley, 2001). In 1950, the National Association for Retarded Children was formed to advocate for students diagnosed

with mental retardation. This included students with IQs below 50 who were historically excluded from public schools. In the *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972) case, a federal district court concluded that school districts could no longer deny an education to students with mental retardation. School districts were subsequently required to provide a FAPE to children with mental retardation ages six through twenty-one and include them in the regular education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate or in special classes based on their individual needs (Smith & Kozleski, 2005). In *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972), a federal district court extended this principle to all students with disabilities. Subsequently, Congress passed Public Law § 94-142 in 1975, later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990 and reauthorized in 1997 and 2004. The IDEA continues to have the greatest influence on public schools and strives to protect the rights of students with disabilities and their parents (La Morte, 2012).

The authorization and reauthorization of the IDEA intended to provide students with disabilities the right to a FAPE and ensure that appropriate supports and services unique to their individual needs were delivered through an Individualized Education Program (IEP). While the terms “free public education” are clearly identified and understood under the law, the definition of “appropriate” has continued to provide a complex interpretation for many parents, school officials, and attorneys (Yell, 2012). The court case *Board of Education of the Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley* (1982) challenged the definition of “appropriate” and set the standard for understanding the context of a FAPE. The Supreme Court ruled that as long as school districts are “providing personalized instruction with sufficient support services to permit the child to benefit educationally from that instruction” (*Board of Education of the Hendrick*

Hudson Central School District v. Rowley, 1982, para. 44), the district has met the requirements of providing a FAPE to such students.

The reauthorization of the IDEA in 1997 placed a greater emphasis on providing students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum or the same curricular experiences available to their nondisabled peers. Ben-Porath (2012) described the new provisions as a rights model in which legislators and advocates recognized the importance of protecting students' right to a FAPE in a learning environment appropriate for their learning. At the same time, Congress increased the accountability for the students and the school districts by including students with disabilities in statewide assessments (Crawford & Tindal, 2006). In the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, still widely known as IDEA, Congress not only extended the many protections and rights under the IDEA of 1997 but also included substantial provisions to assist with advancement of students with disabilities. The new initiatives in the IDEA placed a greater emphasis on the training of special education teachers, the use of researched-based instructional practices, and providing a meaningful educational program and supports to students with disabilities through an IEP (Yell 2012; Yell et al., 2007).

In accordance with the IDEA, the IEP is defined as a written, legal document central to ensuring that students with disabilities are provided with appropriate special education or related services. Once a student is identified with a disability and determined to require special education services as a direct result of the disability, the IEP is developed to address the student's unique needs and provide meaningful education benefits to the student (Yell, 2012). The IEP includes an "assessment of the student's areas of need, individualized annual goals, measures of progress toward goals, services that will be provided, and the settings in which services will be provided" (McLaughlin, 2009, p. 7). Lynch (2012) stated that at a minimum,

principals should be actively involved in the IEP process and demonstrate a general understanding of all aspects of special education including the programs, services, and placement options available for students with disabilities.

Least Restrictive Environment

The placement of students with disabilities is an important consideration when developing a student's IEP and must reflect the least restrictive environment (LRE) provision under Section 1412 of the IDEA (McLaughlin, 2009). The federal law defines LRE as

“the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (20 U.S.C. 1412 (5)(B)).

Furthermore, school districts are required to provide supports and services to students with disabilities despite their needs at no cost to the parents or family.

Although federal law requires public schools to provide a FAPE to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment, early reports revealed that PDE failed to ensure districts were in compliance with the mandates. In fact, the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia (2012) reported that in the 1990s, Pennsylvania had the second worst rate of inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom in the United States. Likewise, the students who were included in the regular education classroom often received minimal supports. As a result, a class action suit was brought against the Commonwealth of

Pennsylvania advocating for the rights of all students with disabilities in public schools in the Commonwealth.

The *Gaskin v. PDE* (2004) lawsuit focused on students with disabilities who were allegedly denied the right to a free appropriate public education in the general classroom and that Pennsylvania schools failed to offer a full continuum of services needed to assist special needs students to function in the general school environment. The *Gaskin* Settlement outlined specific details in which Pennsylvania promised to develop an LRE monitoring system to ensure that students were receiving the appropriate supports and services in the LRE (Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia, 2012). The settlement specifically directed IEP teams to carefully determine the placement of students with disabilities based on their individual needs while taking into consideration the full continuum of available services in the LRE (Bell, 2010).

As a result of the *Gaskin* Settlement, IEP teams are required to follow strict guidelines when making placement decisions. These guidelines have served as a basis for IEP teams not only in Pennsylvania but throughout the United States. Pennsylvania has served as a forerunner in developing guidelines and ensuring that students with disabilities have access to the regular education classroom to the greatest extent possible. Such access is ensured by eliminating personal biases towards students with disabilities and following these guidelines:

1. A Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) must be provided to every student with an IEP; moreover, FAPE must be delivered in the LRE as per the IEP team.
2. Students will not be removed from regular education classrooms merely because of the severity of their disabilities;
3. When students with disabilities, including students with significant cognitive disabilities, need specially designed instruction or other supplementary aids and

services to benefit from participating in regular education classrooms, as required in their IEP, local education agencies are obliged to ensure that those services are provided;

4. IEP teams must determine whether the goals in the student's IEP can be implemented in regular education classrooms with supplementary aids and services before considering removal from the regular education classroom;
5. School districts will consider the full range of supplementary aids and services in regular education classrooms, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, including modification of curriculum content, before contemplating placement in a more restrictive setting (*Gaskin v. PDE, 2004*).

Options for placing students with disabilities in the LRE include lesser restrictive settings by being fully included in the regular education classrooms and receiving supports and services to more restrictive learning environments such as a private or alternative school. Special education services must be delivered to all students with disabilities in the setting in which they experience the most success (Yell, 2012). The placement of students with disabilities in the state of Pennsylvania fall into three categories: regular education for 80% or more of the regular school day, regular education for less than 40% of the regular school day, and an alternative setting (PDE, 2009). Public schools expand the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom to include full inclusion in the regular classroom with supplementary aids and services, inclusion in the regular classroom for most of the day while receiving additional special education services in a separate location, a part-time special education class, a special or pull out class for most or all of the school day, or a private or

alternative setting outside the regular school in which special education services are delivered (Yell, 2012).

While arguably many professionals and advocates for students with disabilities prefer to view special education as a service rather than a placement (Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, 2001), school districts must “consider the full range of supplementary aids and services in regular education classrooms, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, including modification of curriculum content, before contemplating placement in a more restrictive setting” (Pennsylvania Department of Education [PDE], 2009, para. 4). Providing special education services within the regular education classroom to the maximum extent appropriate and thus educating students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers is a preferred placement (La Morte, 2012; Yell, 2012). As a result, the passage of federal legislation protecting the rights of students with disabilities and the rulings in contentious lawsuits brought against individual states and school districts has helped shape the inclusion movement and the roles principals and school districts take in the creation of inclusive schools (Lindsey, 2009).

Overview of Inclusion

Although the term inclusion is not distinctly used or defined in legislation, organizations and advocacy groups have made attempts to provide a clearer understanding and application of inclusion. Sayeski and Cooper (2003) defined inclusion as the “commitment to educating students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment” (p. 6). Inclusion according to Halvorson and Neary (2001)

“means that students with disabilities are supported in chronologically age-appropriate general education classes in their home schools and receive the specialized instruction

delineated by their individualized education programs (IEP's) within the context of the core curriculum and general class activities” (p. 37).

Together, inclusion substantiates the need for parents, teachers, and administrators to employ a sound, philosophical belief that all students, including students with disabilities “can learn when supported in the right way with the right assistance in the right environment” (Giovannetti & Opalack, 2008, p. 1).

Inclusive classrooms invite all students, regardless of ability, to be “integral members of classrooms, feel a connection to their peers, have access to rigorous and meaningful general education curricula, and receive collaborative support to succeed” (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2009, p. 45). Kilanowski-Press, Foote, and Rinaldo (2010) suggested that “bringing services and support to the student in the general education classroom, as opposed to removing students from learning experiences with same age peers, is largely viewed as the hallmark of inclusion” (p. 43).

Inclusion does not constitute placing students with disabilities in regular education classrooms without the supports and services needed for them to be successful, nor is placing students with disabilities in the regular education classroom and providing special education services in a separate classroom classified as inclusion (Rudd, 2002; Sayeski & Cooper, 2003). While the needs of students are unique, the inclusion of students with disabilities should be based on the individual needs of the students (Merritt, 2001). Therefore, the effectiveness of including students with disabilities in the regular classroom begins with the commitment of parents, teachers, and administrators to adopt a philosophy that all students, regardless of ability, belong in the regular education classroom (McMaster, 2012). Furthermore, “special education and

related services are [to be] provided in flexible arrangements to support access to the general education curriculum” (McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004, p. 15).

Educators and administrators across the country continue to question what it means to have access to the general education curriculum (McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004). School officials may no longer deny students with disabilities access to their schools, however, “participation in academic and other activities with peers is often limited” (Ben-Porath, 2012, p. 37) and varies widely based on available special education programs and services.

Students with disabilities have a wide range of needs each of which requires a specially designed program. As student needs vary among public schools, so do the recommendations for placing students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. Federal law requires school districts to maintain a continuum of alternative placements to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The required continuum must include placements such as special classes, special schools, or home instruction, and “make provision for supplementary services (such as resource room or itinerant instruction) to be provided in conjunction with regular class placement” (IDEA Regulations, 34 C.F.R. § 300.551). In accordance with the law, the assignment of placements or services for students with disabilities based on availability or convenience by IEP teams and school administrators is widely unacceptable (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; McLaughlin, 2009).

Although Public Law § 94-142 initially mandated that students with disabilities be educated in the LRE, the interpretation of LRE varied among states. As a result, the general education classroom was originally not perceived as the LRE, and pull-out programs were subsequently designed (Robertson & Valentine, 1998). While this arrangement provided a FAPE to all students with disabilities, students with mild disabilities requiring only minimal

support were included in these pull-out programs and subsequently denied access to the regular education classroom (Lindsey, 2009).

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, students with disabilities included in the regular education classroom for at least part of the day were considered to be mainstreamed.

Mainstreaming simply meant that students with disabilities were included with nondisabled peers in the regular education classroom (McLaughlin, 2009). According to Bateman and Bateman (2001), students initially placed in special education classes were required to prove they had the ability to handle the general education curriculum and behave well prior to being placed in the regular education classroom. As a result, only students with mild disabilities were considered for mainstreaming while “students with more severe disabilities and those with serious behavioral problems had no real opportunity to participate with peers” (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, p. 74).

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence issued the report entitled “A Nation at Risk” indicating that America’s schools were failing, and thus prompting a wave of educational reform throughout the United States. Will (1986), U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education, responded to the report by suggesting a bridge between regular education and special education programs around the nation which eventually led to the beginning of the regular education initiative. Supporters of the regular education initiative have contended that students with disabilities and students without disabilities have a legal right to be educated together (Ben-Porath, 2012; D'Alonzo & Boggs, 1990). As a result, regular education teachers were given more responsibility in the education of students with disabilities, thereby increasing the expectation that special education services would be delivered to students with disabilities in the regular education classroom (Bateman & Bateman, 2001). The regular education initiative

shifted the responsibility of those providing an education to students with disabilities and laid the groundwork for inclusion. Research has shown that

“increases in the placement of students with disabilities in more inclusive environments occurred in the decade following the regular education initiative, but the extent of those changes were shown to have varied at the state level, between age groups and disability category” (Handler, 2003, p. 19).

Impact of Inclusion

Recent studies have shown that the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom has mixed results. Kamenopoulou (2012) reported that the inclusion of deaf-blind students assisted in the growth of student achievement, social skills, and behavioral success. With the implementation of interventions and low teacher-to-student ratios, Kamenopoulou (2012) also noted that positive effects of social inclusion were observed among the students with disabilities. Hawkins (2011) reported that inclusion of middle school students with mild to moderate disabilities had a positive impact on the results from state assessments. Bowers (2009) also reported inclusion had a significant, positive impact on state assessments in Indiana Middle Schools. Dessemontet, Bless, and Morin (2012) concluded that “children included in general education classrooms did not differ significantly from children in special schools as regards their progress in mathematics and global adaptive behavior; however, a significant, but slight, difference was noted between the progress of the two groups in literacy” (p. 585). A study conducted by Wiley, Siperstein, and Forness (2011) yielded mixed results as the inclusion of emotionally disturbed students had neither a positive nor negative affect on student achievement and behavioral progress. Westling and Fox (2009) also reported that students with severe disabilities successfully met IEP goals and developed social, emotional, and

communication skills as a result of being included in the regular education classroom with nondisabled students.

The effects of inclusion on students without disabilities have also been studied. An analysis of data presented in the study conducted by Huber, Rosenfeld, and Fiorello (2001) suggested that the effects of achievement of regular education students varied. The inclusion of students with disabilities proved to have “a differential effect, as low achieving general education students appeared to benefit academically, while higher achieving students lost ground” (Huber, Rosenfeld, & Fiorello, 2001, p. 497). Litvack, Ritchie, and Shore (2011) reported in general, nondisabled students held positive perceptions of and engaged in similar activities as their peers with disabilities. However, their study concluded that “average-achieving children were more likely than high-achieving children to report that the presence of classmates with disabilities did not affect their learning” (Litvack, Ritchie, & Shore, 2011, p. 484).

In general, research has shown that the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom with nondisabled peers does not have a consistently negative effect on the learning of regular education students (Antia, Jones, Luckner, Kreimeyer, & Reed, 2011; Bowers, 2009; Dessemontet, Bless, & Morin, 2012; Kamenopoulou, 2012; Wiley, Siperstein, & Forness, 2011). In fact, Stainback and Stainback (1996) supported that “given the opportunity, students of all ages and diverse abilities demonstrate resourcefulness as collaborators in the design of and active contributors of classrooms and schools that work a little better for everyone” (p. 40). Nevertheless, the perception and attitude of inclusion varies from school to school and among educational professionals as to the benefits of including students with disabilities in the regular education classroom with nondisabled students which may impact the success of the inclusion program (Cardona, 2009; Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2009; Merritt, 2001).

Principal's Role in Inclusion

Reinhartz and Beach (2004) noted that, “providing leadership to all aspects of a school is, arguably, one of the most difficult and sophisticated jobs” for school leaders (p. 80). Special education is one of the most complex and arduous responsibilities facing principals today, according to DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003). Principals are charged with making important decisions that affect all aspects of a school, including special education, from the climate and culture of the building to making recommendations for staffing and programming. Principals should act responsibly and ethically when making decisions that directly impact the learning of all students (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Standards created by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (2008) identify a principal as “an education leader [who] 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. 14). Building principals have been given the responsibility to establish and maintain a positive learning environment supported with inclusive practices in order to meet the needs of all students. As their leadership responsibilities increase, principals should know and understand their role as a special education leader (Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006).

Research has shown that principals' leadership styles have a direct and indirect effect on school culture, program effectiveness, and student outcomes (Korkmaz, 2007; Soehner & Ryan, 2011, Stewart, 2006). According to Hoppey and McLeskey (2013), “the types of activities principals engage in to support inclusive schools include shared decision making, leading by example, and actively promoting learning communities” (p. 246). These transformational characteristics build stronger inclusive schools as principals emphasize the importance of empowerment, shared leadership, and organization learning (Stewart, 2006). On the other hand,

a transactional leader utilizes an “exchange process where the leader administers rewards and sanctions. One way or another, the leader and follower agree, explicitly or implicitly, that desired follower behaviors will be rewarded” (Awamleh et al., 2005, p. 5).

According to Stewart (2006), transactional leaders tend to focus more on the basic needs of an organization, while transformational leaders work to build commitment and facilitate change. Transformational leaders strive to facilitate change that has a positive effect on all stakeholders involved in the change. Ingram (1997) stated that based on the “need for cultural changes in the school community, increases in teacher motivation, and strong commitment to collaborative relationships, transformational leadership is more effective than transactional leadership in achieving the goal of equal educational opportunity for all students in inclusion schools” (p. 424). The application of transformational components in inclusive schools allows principals to build collaborative learning environments in which the faculty and staff may be focused on the needs of students with disabilities. Creating successful inclusive environments for all students with disabilities may be achieved when principals embrace such transformational and inclusive leadership practices (Garrison-Wade et al., 2007).

According to Seltzer (2011), “an inclusive school culture is essential to addressing the needs of students with disabilities along with meeting both the spirit and practice of the mandates set forth by IDEA and NCLB” (p. 131). Principals should promote an inclusive school culture founded on the philosophical belief that all students, including students with disabilities, can learn and succeed academically (Giovannetti & Opalack, 2008). This involves helping teachers reshape attitudes and beliefs toward students with disabilities, developing and supporting instructional programs conducive to effective inclusive classrooms, and examining the practices and expectations set forth for all students (McLaughlin, 2009). Students with disabilities who

feel supported by principals and have access to high quality instruction benefit from inclusive environments as supports and services are provided in the regular education classroom, as opposed to receiving the services in a separate location away from nondisabled peers (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006).

When principals advocate for all students, the right to a free and appropriate public education, and inclusive practices, their commitments have an impact on the attitudes and perceptions of teachers as well as students (Garrison-Wade et al., 2007). Fullan (2010) suggested that a principal who continues to provide consistent support and is actively involved in promoting a theory of change effectively assists the success of programs and initiatives such as inclusion. Principals have the ability to impact inclusive programs as they rank first in the role of creating an effective school (Seltzer, 2011). Alquraini and Gut (2012) noted a critical component of principal leadership is through the support and promotion of collaboration among teachers of inclusive classrooms “through joint problem solving, maintaining data, facilitating staff development programs, providing emotional support in tough times, modeling collaborative traits and communication, providing resources, providing advocacy, providing time for staff to engage in collaboration, and assessing program efforts” (p. 52). This component of transformational leadership assists in maintaining a collaborative and professional school culture while encouraging teachers to work together in addressing problems, such as inclusion, more effectively (Stewart, 2006).

In a culture of increased accountability and continuous change, the role of principals has become more critical in leading successful schools (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013). Leadership is essential to effectively achieve change in any organization, especially public schools (Fullan, 2001). A study conducted by Fuchs (2010) revealed that the majority of participants expressed a

lack of administrative support as a primary barrier to inclusion. Furthermore, Glazzard (2011) reported attitudinal barriers as a common theme in his study, stating that “inclusion will remain a significant challenge if practitioners are not committed to its principles, and it will be impossible if practitioners fail to embrace their responsibilities for the education of all children” (p. 56). Therefore, principals should have a strong foundation and commitment to effectively promote and implement inclusion. Principals who are transformational leaders guide faculty and staff in the development of a shared vision of inclusion and are empowered to ensure its success (Evans, Thornton, & Usinger, 2012). The collaboration of all colleagues and the sharing of responsibilities are critical components in the quest to change and improve instructional practices (Hall & Hord, 2011). However, the idea of including students with disabilities in the regular education classroom will continue to be a paradigm shift for many educators and administrators (McLaughlin, 2009).

Prior research has suggested that the degree to which the principals demonstrate support for inclusion has a direct correlation to the attitude toward and success of the inclusive practices of regular education classroom teachers (Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996). As a result, Villa et al. (2005) have identified five critical actions principals should take in order to facilitate inclusive practices:

- a) build consensus for a vision of inclusive schooling,
- b) develop educators' skills and confidence to be inclusive educators by arranging on-going meaningful professional development,
- c) create incentives (e.g., time to meet, training, listening to staff concerns, collaborative decision-making) for people to risk to change to inclusive schooling practices,
- d) reorganize and expand human and other teaching resources, and

e) plan for and take actions to help the community see and get excited about a new vision (p. 43).

According to Cunningham and Cordeiro (2006), principals who understand and utilize these practices are transformational leaders. As transformational leaders in inclusive schools, the principals “ensure the existence of collaborative goal setting, shared power and responsibility, continued professional growth ... teamwork, engagement in new activities, a broad range of perspectives, validated assumptions, periodic reflection, monitored progress, and intervention when progress stalls” (p. 188).

Including students with disabilities in the regular classroom is often viewed as a “constant power struggle between the general and special education teachers” (Fuchs, 2010, p. 33). Transformational leadership is necessary to focus the attention of all teachers on the needs of students with disabilities and their ability to thrive in the regular education classroom. Students with disabilities need to feel as though they belong, and teachers should be equipped with the knowledge and resources necessary to meet the needs of all their students (McMaster, 2012). As a result, building relationships among regular education teachers and special education teachers and fostering collaboration among staff is a major responsibility for principals striving to establish inclusive schools (Fullan, 2001; Seltzer, 2011).

Ingredients of Inclusive Schools

The existence and support of inclusive schools also varies from state to state. However, the structure and ingredients of effective inclusive classrooms have remained consistent throughout research. According to Alquraini and Gut (2012), inclusive classrooms should be supported by administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals and designed to meet the needs of students with disabilities within the regular education classroom setting. Successful inclusive

classrooms have been reported to be more focused on the high quality instruction that is delivered to all students despite their ability level rather than the setting itself (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006). As a result, students with disabilities are no longer simply mainstreamed or placed in the regular education classroom to receive the same instruction as their nondisabled peers. Students with disabilities have access to specially designed instruction and assessments intended to meet their needs while delivered in a manner that allows them to learn and grow successfully within the regular classroom (McLaughlin, 2009). Despite the ongoing support for inclusion, Frick, Faircloth, and Little (2013) stated that teachers, administrators, and other special education professionals will continue to weigh and judge “the collective interests of other students potentially affected by the education and inclusion of students with disabilities within the general education environment” (p. 230).

Collaboration among regular education teachers and special education teachers may take many forms. In an inclusive classroom, coteaching is the most common collaborative model which includes at least one regular education teacher and one special education teacher sharing the responsibility of providing instruction to regular education and special education students in the same classroom. Coteaching exists in several models including one teaching one supporting, station teaching, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, and team teaching (McLaughlin, 2009). Principals are given the task of assigning partnerships, developing building schedules, and coordinating student schedules conducive to the implementation of such approaches to coteaching. When effectively designed and supported by principals, coteaching allows regular education and special education teachers the opportunity to collaborate in planning for and supporting each other in an inclusive classroom (Villa, Thousand, Nevin, & Liston, 2005).

Principals should work collaboratively with faculty and staff members to design special education programs that support the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. By embracing inclusion, principals take the first step toward ensuring that all students receive a quality education (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2012). Although inclusion may meet resistance among faculty and staff, staff attitudes generally become more positive over time (Rudd, 2002). When principals work to create a school climate that also supports inclusion, stakeholders are more likely to benefit from the change and effectively implement inclusive practices (Bateman & Bateman, 2001).

Collaboration is a key component to successful inclusion (Carter, Parter, Jackson, & Marchant, 2009). According to Smith and Leonard (2009), “professional collaboration and facilitative principal leadership are considered foundational to successful inclusive educational programs” (p. 269). Principals should also be attentive to the available resources, materials, professional development and the application of those resources in order to provide teachers with the necessary means to assist the learning of all students with disabilities (Kearns, Klienert, Clayton, Burdge, & Williams, 1998).

Research, however, also has shown that many teachers and principals lack the requisite knowledge to work with students with disabilities and are in need of additional training and professional development (Garrison-Wade et al., 2007; Kilanowski-Press, Foote, & Rinaldo, 2010). In a study conducted by Jones (2006), the results suggested that many principals lack the experience, training, and preparation in special education to effectively lead inclusive schools. Praisner (2003) also has determined that the number of special education credits and training hours acquired by principals influences their attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. Principals who may have received less training in

special education often use resources such as experts from within their school system, the state, or a professional organization for assistance when dealing with issues related to special education (Seltzer, 2011).

Beliefs and Attitudes toward Inclusion

According to Garrison-Wade et al. (2007), “beliefs and attitudes that principals hold toward special education are key factors in implementing inclusive school programs” (p. 119). As the role of principals continue to shift from being a manager and disciplinarian to more of an instructional leader, principals are critical in building relationships, developing and implementing instructionally-sound programs, and establishing a positive school climate supportive of all students (Lynch, 2012). As instructional change agents, principals play a vital role in implementing and supporting inclusive classrooms. Principals have the ability to establish the conditions within their schools that support the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. However, principals must continue to assume a strong, confident leadership approach and utilize components associated with transformational leadership in order for inclusion to be a success. As principals embrace the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom, they should also encourage faculty and staff to embrace the concept as well (Salisbury & McGregor, 2002).

Research has consistently supported that a person’s attitude and concerns directly influence his/her level of commitment to and response to change (Hall & Hord, 2011). Fullan (2001) also suggested that “leading a culture of change means creating a culture of change” (p. 44). Praisner (2003) noted that “the degree to which administrators support change efforts is often determined by the attitudes and values they hold” (p. 141). Therefore, in order to foster positive attitudes toward inclusion, principals must first be cognizant of their own attitudes and

work to change the culture of inclusion by providing guidance and direction to all faculty and staff members (Paliokosta, & Blandford, 2010). According to Lindsey (2009), “students with disabilities will only be accepted fully when educators modify their attitudes toward this group of students” (p. 30).

Praisner (2000) surveyed 408 Pennsylvania elementary principals in regard to their attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. The results from the study found that 20% of principals surveyed had positive attitudes toward inclusion. While the remaining participants displayed neutral attitudes toward inclusion, principals with positive experiences with students with disabilities also had more positive attitudes toward inclusion. In addition, principals with positive attitudes were more likely to suggest a least restrictive environment for a student with a disability.

In a similar study conducted by Ramirez (2006), 73 out of 108 elementary principals in Texas showed favorable attitudes toward inclusion. The factors determined to have a significant influence on the principals' attitudes toward inclusion included experience in the special education classroom and knowledge of special education. Similarly, the study concluded that principals with these types of experiences were more likely to place students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment compared with principals lacking such experiences. Ramirez also concluded that experience, training, and demographic factors did not have a significant influence on principals and their attitudes toward inclusion.

Horrocks et al. (2008) surveyed a random selection of principals in Pennsylvania, including elementary, middle, and high school principals, regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities, particularly students diagnosed with autism, in the regular education classroom. A total of 571 principals responded to an original survey developed by the researchers entitled

The Principals' Perspective Questionnaire. The survey contained four parts with questions related to demographics, placement decisions related to autism, attitudes about inclusion, and attitudes toward inclusion. The researchers determined that principals with the longest tenure in the district had less positive attitudes about inclusion than did principals with experience working with autistic students. The latter group tended to have a more positive attitude toward inclusion and recommended the students be placed in the least restrictive environment. The study also suggested that these principals had a positive attitude toward the inclusion of all students with disabilities. However, principals who believed that students with autism could be included in the regular education classroom were more likely to have higher attitude scores overall for the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. This discovery supported Praisner's (2000) conclusion that beliefs and experiences influence placement decisions. Factors which did not have a significant impact on principals' attitudes included their position level, gender, or formal training; the latter of which contradicts the results from the study conducted by Ramirez (2006).

Harris (2009) used a quantitative study to determine the attitudes of 76 elementary school assistant principals in a metropolitan school district in North Central Texas toward inclusion and recommended instructional arrangements for students with disabilities. Harris used a modified open-ended version of Praisner's Principals and Inclusion Survey to solicit responses. Recommendations for placing students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment varied. The respondents recommended a more restrictive placement for most or all of the school day for students with autism, mental retardation, and emotional disturbance while students with mild disabilities were recommended to be included in the regular education classroom with appropriate supports and services. Harris discovered a correlation between the elementary

school assistant principals' knowledge of special education law and their attitudes toward inclusion. Participants who identified themselves as more knowledgeable of special education law were also identified as having more positive attitudes toward inclusion. Additionally, relationships were found between the elementary school assistant principals' years of teaching regular education versus their special education experiences. Participants with special education teaching experience responded more positively to the survey questions and agreed that inclusive classrooms benefit students with and without disabilities as a result of the interaction with one another. The opposite was true of participants with only regular education teaching experience (Harris, 2009).

Vazquez (2010) also used Praisner's survey to study the attitudes of elementary, middle, and high school principals toward inclusion in a large suburban district in Florida. Of the 176 principals selected for the study, 98 principals responded to the survey. Vazquez discovered a positive correlation between principals' inclusive attitude and the inclusiveness of their recommended placement of students with disabilities. This finding supported Praisner's (2000) claim that principals with more positive attitudes toward inclusion are more likely to place students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. While the majority of principals indicated that the regular education classroom was the most appropriate placement for students with mild disabilities, principals generally suggested a more restrictive placement for students with more severe disabilities such as emotional disturbance and autism.

Additional findings have suggested that principals with formal training in inclusion, earned special education credits, and professional experience working with students with disabilities have more positive attitudes toward inclusion. However, Vazquez (2010) noted that there was no significant relationship between gender, years of special education teaching

experience, and the amount of in-service training and the principals' attitudes toward inclusion. These results contradicted the study conducted by Lindsey (2009) where the number of years of special education teaching and in-service hours was discovered to have a significant impact on principal's attitudes toward inclusion.

Results from Smith (2011) indicated a growing and favorable trend toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. The majority of the 102 secondary principals surveyed in Georgia supported inclusion and believed that both students with disabilities and nondisabled students can benefit from inclusion. Smith also reported that principals with less positive attitudes generally had less experience as administrators. Consistent with prior studies, demographic factors including age, gender, and school size did not significantly affect the attitudes of principals toward inclusion. However, the results indicated that the percentage of students with IEPs was the most significant indicator of principals' attitudes toward inclusion. As the continuum of services continues to expand in public schools, research reveals that an increasing number of students are receiving special education and related services in their home school (McLaughlin, 2009).

Using a modified version of Praisner's (2000) Principals and Inclusion Survey, Farris (2011) studied the attitudes of high school principals in the state of Texas toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. The results of the study revealed that the attitudes of the high school principals were positive toward inclusion. The results also showed a positive correlation between personal experiences with students with disabilities and their overall attitude. Additionally, a positive correlation was discovered between principals' attitudes and the number of special education credits earned and their in-service training experiences. The results of this study were consistent with studies conducted by Ramirez (2006)

and Lindsey (2009). Farris also examined the principals' placement recommendations for students with disabilities. With the exception of mental retardation and emotional disturbance, the majority of principals chose the least restrictive environment for students with all other disabilities.

Lorio (2011) focused her study on high school principals in the state of Louisiana and their attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. Lorio used a modified version of Bailey's Principals' Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education to solicit responses from the sample. Of the 52 high school principals who responded to the survey, female principals were found to have more positive attitudes toward inclusion than male principals. While principals with special education teaching experience were more favorable toward inclusion, most of the respondents had less favorable attitudes toward the inclusion of students who were physically aggressive or severely disabled in the regular education classroom. The former part of Lorio's conclusions supported the research findings of Harris (2009) and Lindsey (2009). Of particular interest, Lorio noted that principals of more affluent schools were less favorable toward inclusion.

Elementary principals in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and South Dakota were surveyed during the 2010-2011 school year regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. Johnson (2011) discovered the pull-out model of inclusion in public schools was the most preferred placement by principals, whereas fully including students with disabilities in the regular education classroom was the least utilized method of inclusion. While principals strongly agreed that all students can learn, principals with four or fewer years of administrative experience generally had a more positive attitude toward inclusion than their more

experienced counterparts. This discovery contradicted the results from the study conducted by Smith (2011).

Weller (2012) designed a qualitative study that examined the attitudes of six elementary principals in the state of Pennsylvania toward the inclusion of students with autism in the regular education classroom. Weller concluded that participants in the study who had more positive experiences with students with autism tended to recommend less restrictive placements. However, those with more administrative experience were more likely to recommend more restrictive placements for students with autism. All principals in the study expressed limited training and knowledge of working with students with autism as a concern with the inclusion of students with autism in the regular classroom. However, the majority of the elementary principals in the study agreed that if students with disabilities were placed in the regular education classroom, the achievement level of all students could increase. The participants also suggested that the placement of students with autism in the regular education classroom needed to be made on a case by case basis (Weller, 2012).

Research regarding the attitudes of public school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom has primarily involved elementary and secondary principals. While the research findings among elementary and secondary principals are mixed, few such studies have been conducted with middle school principals. Seigler (2003) focused his research on the attitudes of middle school principals in the state of Georgia toward inclusion. The results of the survey compiled using the responses from 200 middle school principals indicated that no relationship existed among principals' knowledge of inclusion, experience with inclusion, and their attitudes toward inclusion. However, Seigler concluded that attitudes of male principals were slightly more negative toward inclusion than the

attitudes of female principals. The results also suggested that principals with more administrative experience and higher level degrees had more positive attitudes toward inclusion. These results support the findings of Smith (2011) but contradict the results of the study conducted by Johnson (2011). Unlike Praisner (2000) and Ramirez (2006), Seigler's research found no relationship between principals' prior experience working with students with disabilities and their attitude toward inclusion.

Duquette (2004) used a self-created survey entitled Middle School Principals' Attitudes toward Inclusion to examine the attitudes of South Carolina middle school principals and their attitudes toward inclusion. The results concluded that overall, the middle school principals responded favorably to inclusive programs. Middle school principals in schools with higher socioeconomic status were noted to be less favorable toward inclusion than those in schools with lower socioeconomic status. These results are consistent with Lorio's (2011) findings that high school principals in more affluent schools were less favorable toward inclusion. The results also suggested that a significant number of more restrictive classrooms still exist. Of the 151 middle school respondents, 80% of the teachers and students with disabilities were located in segregated settings.

Lindsey (2009) conducted a study in Tennessee using a modified version of the survey created by Praisner (2000). The 120 middle school principals participating in the study generally expressed positive attitudes toward inclusion. Race and gender were among the variables that had no significant effect on the principals' attitudes toward inclusion. However, the number of in-service hours and special education credits earned by middle school principals influenced their attitude. The majority of respondents also recommended a less restrictive placement for students with a minimal disability such as specific learning disability, blindness, or speech and language

impairment, whereas more restrictive placements were suggested for mild to severe disabilities including those with mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or autism. Similar results were discovered at the elementary and secondary levels in studies conducted by Harris (2009) and Vazquez (2010).

Minter (2012) modified the survey instrument created by Seigler (2003) to examine the attitudes of Missouri middle and junior high school principals toward inclusion. Consistent with the studies conducted with elementary and secondary principals, the results suggested that middle and junior high school principals had favorable attitudes toward inclusion. Survey data collected from the 94 respondents also indicated that principals have at a minimum the basic knowledge of inclusion. Minter noted that prior experience with students with disabilities and inclusion did not influence the principals' overall attitudes toward inclusion. Additional findings indicated that while respondents with a special education certificate tended to have a more positive attitude toward inclusion, the level of degree held by the principals had no impact on their attitude. Further analysis of the location of the schools, whether rural, suburban, or urban, suggested that location influenced the principals' attitudes toward inclusion. Principals in urban and suburban schools were more likely to agree that general education students benefit socially and easily accept students with disabilities in the regular education classroom.

Pennsylvania Statistics

The last four decades of public education have experienced a significant growth in special education programs and in the number of students receiving services and supports. Following the passage of Public Law § 94-142 in 1975, the percentage of students identified as having a disability and receiving special education services in public schools across the United States increased nearly 75% from the 1976-1977 school year to the 2009-2010 school year

(NCES, 2011). In the 2012-2013 school year, PDE reported that 268,640 students, or 15.3% of the total number of public school students, ages 6 to 21, were identified with a disability and receiving special education services. According to the Pennsylvania Bureau of Special Education (2013b), 62.1% of those students were included in the regular education classroom 80% or more during the regular school day compared with a national average of 59.4%.

The eligibility for special education services under the IDEA stipulates that students must be between the ages of three and twenty-one and undergo a comprehensive evaluation prior to receiving services. Students must also be diagnosed with a disability in one of thirteen categories under the IDEA and require special education services as a result of their identified disability in order to be successful in the regular education classroom (McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004). According to Yell (2012), "states are required to provide services to students who meet the criteria in the IDEA. This does not mean that states must adopt every category exactly as specified in the IDEA" (p. 68). The PDE's Bureau of Special Education (2013c) and the IDEA define the following disabilities:

- Autism, also known as pervasive developmental disorder (PDD), is a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engaging in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.
- Deaf-blindness means concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs

that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

- Deafness is a hearing impairment so severe that a child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, which adversely affects a child's educational performance.
- Hearing Impairment includes an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance but is not included under the definition of "deafness."
- Intellectual Disability means significantly sub average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, which adversely affects a child's educational performance
- Multiple Disabilities signifies concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness, intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness.
- Orthopedic Impairment means a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).
- Other Health Impairments is having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with

respect to the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and adversely affects a child's educational performance.

- Emotional Disturbance means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.
- Specific Learning Disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; of intellectual disability; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

- Speech or Language Impairment is a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
- Traumatic Brain Injury means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech.
- Visual Impairment indicated an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness (20 U.S.C. 1401(3); 1401(30)).

Summary

The inclusion movement has led to a significant increase in the placement of students with disabilities in regular education classrooms with nondisabled peers in public schools all around the country. Principals must be cognizant of their own attitudes while making a commitment to facilitate change and take charge in the development of more inclusive schools (Frost & Kersten, 2011). Prior studies have concluded that principals' attitudes toward inclusion are generally positive, however, results related to the factors influencing these attitudes have been mixed. Research has also shown that principals' actions and attitudes, positive, negative, or neutral, influence the success of inclusive programs. However, there is no clear evidence describing how principals' attitudes relate to placement decisions. Analyzing the relationship

between principals' attitudes toward inclusion and the factors affecting those attitudes is critical to this study. As a result, this study examined the attitudes of public middle school principals in the state of Pennsylvania toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom and the recommended appropriate placement of those students in the least restrictive environment as mandated by IDEA.

Chapter III. Methodology

This chapter will define the methodology that was used to investigate the attitudes of principals of public middle schools in Pennsylvania toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom with nondisabled students. The results from this study were analyzed to determine if certain characteristics or factors evident in a school system are related to middle school principals' attitudes toward inclusion. This chapter includes a description of the research design, the population and sample size, a description of the survey instrument, and the procedures to be used in the organization and analysis of the data. These components assisted the researcher in determining the attitudes of Pennsylvania middle school principals relative to the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom setting while examining the characteristics, experiences, and program factors that may influence these attitudes.

Research Method and Design

A quantitative method was chosen for this study because quantitative research focuses on the description of trends and the comparison and relationship of variables that are measurable (Creswell, 2012). This quantitative research method is most appropriate as it led to a more accurate measurement of respondents' attitudes toward inclusion using the Praisner's (2000) Principals and Inclusion Survey (PIS) and conducting correlation coefficients to determine what relationships exist between the attitude score (dependent variable) and the following independent variables: demographics, training and experience, and knowledge of special education law. This study also investigated the relationship between the respondents' attitudes (dependent variable) and experiences with students with disabilities (dependent variable), and the respondents'

recommendation for the most appropriate placement of students with disabilities (independent variable).

This study used a survey design to examine the attitudes of middle school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities with nondisabled students in the regular education classroom, and to determine what factors may affect such attitudes. According to Vogt (2007), surveys are popular in educational research as they are efficient, cost effective, and yield substantial information given a large sample. Surveys also “help identify important beliefs and attitudes of individuals” (Creswell, 2012). A modified survey instrument based on Praisner’s (2000) PIS was used to gather data related to middle school principals’ attitudes toward inclusion (see Appendix B). Minor additions and modifications to the survey were made by the researcher with permission from the developer.

Upon review of the dissertation advisory committee, a written request was made to the Wilkes University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in research. Participants were informed that responding to the survey was voluntary and no responses were linked to or reported using individual responses. A summary of the data was shared with participants upon written request at the conclusion of the study.

Setting and Sample

According to the PDE (2014), there are 500 school districts in the state of Pennsylvania. Of the 500 school districts, approximately 51.9% are classified as rural districts while 41.7% and 6.4% of school districts are located in suburban and urban regions respectively (Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, 2013). The target population in this study was all public middle school principals in Pennsylvania. With the intention of obtaining responses from middle schools of all demographics while maximizing the response rate, the survey instrument was sent

to all public middle school principals in Pennsylvania. The total number of public middle school principals with e-mail addresses secured for this study and invited to participate in the survey was 465.

Prior to participating in the survey, all potential participants received a letter including information describing the study, the researcher's contact information, and a direct link to the survey (see Appendix A). Hardcopies of the survey were mailed to participants upon request. In order to participate in the study, participants must have been a certified principal serving students in a middle school or junior high setting which included any combination of students in grades five through eight. Participants serving multiple middle schools were instructed to complete the demographics portion of the survey using only one of their respective buildings. Building principals in charge of students in grades other than five through eight were asked to respond to the survey questions considering only students in the indicated grade levels.

Potential participants who chose to complete the survey acknowledged that they met all of the participant requirements outlined in the survey before beginning the survey (see Appendix B). Once participants made such acknowledgements, the Google Form allowed them to proceed with the survey. Participants were informed that they may choose to end the survey at any time by exiting out of the survey. There were no consequences for choosing to not complete the survey, and no survey responses were recorded as a result. Participants in this study were assured of anonymity and confidentiality of their submission. Upon completion of the survey, results were recorded in a password-protected spreadsheet and saved to the researcher's computer. The spreadsheet can only be accessed by the researcher. Results from the study were shared with participants upon written request.

Instrumentation and Materials

The survey instrument used in this study was a web-based questionnaire developed using a modified version of Praisner's (2000) PIS. Permission was obtained from Praisner in order to utilize Sections I, II, and IV of the instrument to build upon the existing research regarding the attitude of administrators toward inclusion (see Appendix C). Permission was also obtained from Stainback to use Section III of the survey instrument (see Appendix C). The survey instrument was designed to determine whether demographics, training/experience, and knowledge of special education law affect principals' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom with nondisabled students. Furthermore, the survey instrument allowed the researcher to determine the relationship between respondents' experience with students with disabilities and their recommendation for the most appropriate placement for such students. Praisner (2000) used the PIS to determine the attitudes of elementary school principals toward inclusion whereas this study will use the instrument tailored for middle school principals.

The survey instrument contains four sections: (a) demographics, (b) training and experience, (c) attitudes toward inclusion, and (d) beliefs about most appropriate placements. Section I contained five questions related to demographics of the principals' school such as campus size, percentage of special education students, percent of identified students that are included in general classrooms for at least 80% of the school day, and the type of special education programs represented in the building. It is important to note that Praisner (2000) omitted gifted students from the survey to accurately represent the percentage of students identified with a physical, mental, or learning disability. Question 1 was added to the survey to

obtain further demographic information as to the programs available in the respondent's middle school.

Section II of the instrument included 10 questions related to training and experience. Survey questions included: (a) age, (b) gender, (c) years of full-time general education teaching experience, (d), years of full-time special education teaching experience, (e) years of experience as a middle school principal, (f) approximate number of special education credits earned in formal training, (g) recency of special education training, (h) level of understanding of special education law, (i) personal experience with an individual with a disability outside the school setting, and (j) experience with students with disabilities in the school setting.

The question related to experience with students with disabilities in the school setting included a 5-point Likert scale with the following options for each disability category: negative experience, somewhat negative experience, no experience/neutral experience, somewhat positive experience, and positive experience. A value from 1 to 5 was assigned to each category, 1 indicating a negative experience and 5 indicating a positive experience. Experience scores were calculated for each respondent by summing the scores from individual responses. Questions 7 and 8 of the survey were modified to solicit information as to the recency of the respondents' special education training and their level of understanding of special education law. Questions 8, 9, 10, and 12 original to the survey were eliminated from this study due to irrelevance.

In the study of elementary principals' attitudes toward inclusion conducted by Praisner (2000), content validity for Section II was established through expert judgment. Praisner (2000) submitted the completed survey to a panel of four Lehigh University professors who "reviewed, analyzed, and evaluated the questions to assure the potential content validity of the questions for measuring the variables that may relate to the attitudes of [elementary] principals" (p. 34). This

researcher piloted the newly-revised PIS with 18 administrators in the state of Pennsylvania to further establish content validity and ensure consistency of measurements. By conducting a pilot study, the panel of experts further assisted the researcher in the identification of any problems associated with the survey questions (Presser & Blair, 1994). As a result, the validity of the survey instrument was established by the content experts in the pilot study as well as the research performed by Praisner (2000) and those who used a modified version of Praisner's (2000) PIS for their own research (Farris, 2011; Harris, 2009; Lindsey, 2009; Ramirez, 2006; Smith, 2011; Vazquez, 2010).

Section III of the survey contained 10 questions that were taken from the Superintendents' Attitude Survey on Integration, adapted by Stainback (1986) from the Autism Attitude Scale for Teachers (Olley, Devellis, Devellis, Wall, & Long, 1981). These questions were used to determine principals' attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education classrooms with non-identified students. The researcher used a 5-point Likert scale with the following options for each statement: strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, and strongly disagree. Attitude scores were determined for each respondent by summing the scores from individual responses. Respondent scores ranged from 10 to 50 with a higher score representing a more positive attitude toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom while lower scores represented a more negative attitude. The validity of Section III was established by Stainback (1986) using a panel of experts and determining a reliability coefficient of 0.899 (Praisner, 2000). No modifications were made to this section.

In Section IV, participants were asked to recommend the most appropriate placement for students with a physical, mental, or learning disability. For each disability category, participants

selected one of five placements: (a) special education services outside of regular school, (b) special class for most or all of the school day, (c) part-time special education class, (d) regular classroom instruction for most of the day, or (e) full-time regular education with support. The researcher determined an inclusiveness score for each participant as well as average responses for each disability category. Values of 1 to 5 were assigned to each placement category with 1 representing the least inclusive placement to 5 representing the most inclusive placement. Total scores ranged from 10, representing the most restrictive placements to 50, representing the most inclusive placements. A total score was calculated based on the responses of each participant. The validity of Section IV was founded on the available placement options and categories as identified by the Bureau of Special Education within the Pennsylvania Department of Education (Praisner, 2000; PDE, 2013).

Fowler (2009) suggested that using a survey instrument designed by a previous researcher is advantageous and may assist in the generalization of the research, while Harkness (2010) claimed that minor modifications to existing survey instruments does not affect the overall validity and reliability of the instrument. The minor revisions made to the original survey were intended to more accurately reflect the research questions associated with middle school inclusive programs while including current language and definitions used by the state of Pennsylvania regarding special education and inclusive practices.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher in this study created the modified PIS using a Google Form and e-mailed the hyperlink, accompanied by an electronic cover letter (see Appendix A), to all Pennsylvania public middle school principals. The cover letter provided a brief overview of the intended study along with the researcher's contact information and a request for the principal's participation in

completing the survey. Over the past decade, computer-assisted data collection tools, such as Google Forms has allowed researchers to compile data in a more cost effective and timely manner. Responses are available almost instantly upon submission from respondents and are presented in a more manageable electronic format (Fowler, 2009). No further benefits were available to the respondents; however, the use of the electronic survey protected the anonymity of the respondents. An e-mail reminder was sent to all participants approximately three weeks following the initial point of contact. Researchers have suggested sending multiple e-mail reminders to participants as a best research practice that may improve response rates (Crawford, Couper, & Lamias, 2001; Umbach, 2004).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to examine the data and analyze the relationships between the variables presented in the research questions. The researcher calculated central tendency data for the demographic section of the survey for general reporting purposes within the study. An experience score was calculated for all participants using question 10 in Section II of the PIS. The score was computed by summing individual participant's responses to the type of experience with each disability category. Each of the 10 disability categories was rated on a scale of 1 for negative experiences to 5 for positive experiences. The resulting experience scores ranged from 10 representing the most negative experiences to 50 which represented the most positive experiences with students with disabilities in the school setting.

An attitude score for each respondent was calculated using the responses compiled from Section III of the survey. Each of the 10 statements was rated on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The resulting scores ranged from 10 representing the most negative attitude to 50 which represented the most positive attitude toward the inclusion of

students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. Similarly, an inclusiveness score was calculated for each participant using Section IV of the survey. Each placement within the disability categories was assigned a value of 1 to 5 with 1 representing the least inclusive placement to 5 representing the most inclusive placement. Total scores ranged from 10, representing the most restrictive placements to 50, representing the most inclusive placements.

Research Questions

This study sought to address the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Pennsylvania middle school principals toward inclusive programs in which students with disabilities receive classroom instruction with nondisabled peers?
2. What are the factors that affect the attitudes of middle school principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom?
3. What is the relationship between middle school principals' attitudes toward inclusion and their experiences with individuals with disabilities?
4. What is the relationship between principals' attitudes toward inclusion and their recommended appropriate placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment as mandated by IDEA?
5. What is the relationship between middle school principals' experiences with individuals with disabilities and their support of recommendations for the most appropriate placement for students with disabilities?

To answer the first research question regarding the attitudes of middle school principals, descriptive statistics were used to analyze and synthesize the attitude scores of all participants calculated using Section II of the survey. Furthermore, the inclusiveness scores calculated from

participant responses in Section IV of the survey were used to assist in answering the second research question. A Pearson r Correlation Coefficient (PCC) was used to determine the relationship between principals' attitudes (attitude score) and their experience with individuals with disabilities (experience score). Correlation coefficients were used in this study to "describe and measure the degree of association (or relationship) between two or more variables" (Creswell, 2012, p. 338).

The researcher used correlation coefficients to determine if a significant relationship existed at the $p = .05$ level of significance between each variable and the attitudes of middle school principals in research questions three, four, and five. A PCC was used for all additional continuous variables (i.e. age, years of experience, training, percentage of students with IEPs in a building, percentage of students with IEPs included in general education classrooms for at least 80% of the day) while a Point Biserial Correlation Coefficient (PBCC) was calculated for all dichotomous variables (i.e. gender and experience with an individual with a disability outside the school setting).

In order to determine if a relationship existed between middle school principals' attitude toward inclusion and their recommended appropriate placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (research question four), the researcher computed a PCC. In addition, PCC coefficients were calculated between the experience scores and inclusiveness scores to examine the relationship between individual participant's attitude and experience with regard to placement recommendations (research question five). The summary of these results are presented in chapter four.

Chapter IV. Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of Pennsylvania public middle school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. In addition, this study attempted to identify the characteristics which may affect the placement decisions of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. Data were collected from 135 middle school principals across the state of Pennsylvania and examined to address the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Pennsylvania middle school principals toward inclusive programs in which students with disabilities receive classroom instruction with nondisabled peers?
2. What are the factors that affect the attitudes of middle school principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom?
3. What is the relationship between middle school principals' attitudes toward inclusion and their experiences with individuals with disabilities?
4. What is the relationship between principals' attitudes toward inclusion and their recommended appropriate placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment as mandated by IDEA?
5. What is the relationship between middle school principals' experiences with individuals with disabilities and their support of recommendations for the most appropriate placement for students with disabilities?

Data were collected using a modified version of the Principals and Inclusion Survey (PIS) that was e-mailed to 465 middle school principals in the state of Pennsylvania. A letter to participants accompanied the e-mail with instructions and procedures for completing the survey.

Of the 465 intended recipients, 18 e-mails were returned as undeliverable, and eight required the researcher's e-mail address verification in order to be delivered. Verification was provided for all eight e-mails, and updated e-mail addresses were secured from the school websites of the 18 intended recipients. After re-sending the e-mail to the 18 initial participants, five e-mails were returned as undeliverable. In all, the process resulted in 460 middle school principals receiving the e-mailed survey, thus having an opportunity to participate in the study. An e-mail reminder was sent to all participants approximately three weeks after the receipt of the initial e-mail (see Appendix D).

Data Analysis

Demographic Information. Section I of the PIS asked participants to respond to questions related to the characteristics of their schools. These questions procured information regarding the type of school (rural, suburban, urban), an approximate number of students in the building, an approximate percentage of students with IEPs (excluding gifted) in the building, an approximate percentage of students with IEPs included in the general education classrooms for at least 80% of the school day, and the type of special education programs available in the building. Table 4.1 describes the participants' responses. A total of 135 middle school principals responded to the survey. The respondents consisted of 37 female middle school principals (27.4%) and 98 male middle school principals (72.6%). The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 41 and 50 ($n = 62$, 45.9%). A total of 37 respondents (27.4%) were between 31 and 40 years of age while 29 (21.5%) were between the age of 51 and 60. Significantly fewer respondents reported being between the age of 20 and 30 ($n = 1$, .7%) and 61 years of age or older ($n = 6$, 4.4%).

Table 4.1

Demographic Information

Variable (<i>n</i> = 135)	<i>n</i>	%
District Classification		
Rural	52	38.5
Suburban	67	49.6
Urban	16	11.9
Campus Size		
0-250	5	3.7
251-500	44	32.6
501-750	51	37.8
751-1000	23	17.0
1000+	12	8.9
Percentage of Students with IEPs (excluding gifted)		
0-5%	1	.7
6-10%	25	18.5
11-15%	55	40.7
16-20%	36	26.7
21%+	18	13.3
Percentage of Students with IEPs Included in Regular Education		
0-20%	9	6.7
21-40%	7	5.2
41-60%	11	8.1
61-80%	30	22.2
81-100%	78	57.8

Training and Experience. Participants were asked to respond to questions concerning their training and experience in Section II of the PIS. Data were collected reflecting participants' experience as a regular education teacher, special education teacher, principal, and their experience with individuals with disabilities. The majority of middle school principals had no special education teaching experience (*n* = 113, 83.7%) while 80.7% of principals had 10 or fewer years of experience as a middle school principal (0-5, *n* = 46; 6-10, *n* = 63). Section II also asked participants to identify the number of special education credits they had received, the

recency of special education training, and their understanding of special education law (see Appendix E).

Research Question 1

What are the attitudes of Pennsylvania middle school principals toward inclusive programs in which students with disabilities receive classroom instruction with nondisabled peers?

Section III of the PIS asked middle school principals to respond to 10 statements reflecting their opinions about inclusion as shown in Table 4.2. The majority of middle school principals agreed or strongly agreed that “classrooms with both students with disabilities and without disabilities enhance the learning experiences of students with disabilities” (87.3%); that “an effective general education can help a student with a disability to succeed” (87.4%); that “students without disabilities can profit from contact with students with disabilities” (88.1%); that “general education should be modified to meet the needs of all students including students with disabilities” (85.1%); that “it should be policy and/or law that students with disabilities are integrated into general education programs and activities” (66.6%).

Nearly 95% of the middle school principals disagreed or strongly disagreed that “only teachers with extensive special education experience can be expected to deal with students with disabilities in a school setting,” while only 3.6% agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. Similarly, a large percentage of principals disagreed or strongly disagreed “it is unfair to ask/expect general education teachers to accept students with disabilities in their classrooms” (88.0%) and that “no discretionary financial resources should be allocated for the integration of students with disabilities” (82.1%). Fewer middle school principals disagreed or strongly disagreed that “students with severe/profound disabilities are too impaired to benefit from the

activities of a regular school” (64.4%) and that “students with disabilities should be placed in special classes/schools specifically designed to their needs” (67.3%) while 20% of principals agreed or strongly agreed to each of these statements.

Table 4.2

Attitudes Toward Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

Item* (N = 135)		<i>n</i>	%
Only teachers with extensive special education experience can be expected to deal with students with disabilities in a school setting.	Strongly Agree	3	2.2
	Agree	2	1.5
	Uncertain	2	1.5
	Disagree	56	41.5
	Strongly Disagree	72	53.3
Classrooms with both students with disabilities and without disabilities enhance the learning experience of students with disabilities.	Strongly Agree	49	36.3
	Agree	69	51.1
	Uncertain	3	2.2
	Disagree	5	3.7
	Strongly Disagree	9	6.7
Students with severe/profound disabilities are too impaired to benefit from activities of a regular school.	Strongly Agree	11	8.1
	Agree	16	11.9
	Uncertain	21	15.5
	Disagree	48	35.6
	Strongly Disagree	39	28.9
An effective general education can help a student with a disability to succeed.	Strongly Agree	52	38.5
	Agree	66	48.9
	Uncertain	2	1.5
	Disagree	3	2.2
	Strongly Disagree	12	8.9
In general, students with disabilities should be placed in special classes/schools specifically designed to meet their needs.	Strongly Agree	10	7.4
	Agree	17	12.6
	Uncertain	17	12.6
	Disagree	51	37.8
	Strongly Disagree	40	29.6
Students without disabilities can profit from contact with students with disabilities.	Strongly Agree	67	49.6
	Agree	52	38.5
	Uncertain	2	1.5
	Disagree	3	2.2
	Strongly Disagree	11	8.1

(table continues)

Item* (N = 135)		<i>n</i>	%
General education should be modified to meet the needs of all students including students with disabilities.	Strongly Agree	53	39.3
	Agree	62	45.9
	Uncertain	6	4.4
	Disagree	4	3.0
	Strongly Disagree	10	7.4
It is unfair to ask/expect general education teachers to accept students with disabilities into their classrooms.	Strongly Agree	10	7.4
	Agree	4	3.0
	Uncertain	2	1.5
	Disagree	41	30.3
	Strongly Disagree	78	57.8
No discretionary financial resources should be allocated for the integration of students with disabilities.	Strongly Agree	10	7.4
	Agree	3	2.2
	Uncertain	11	8.1
	Disagree	45	33.3
	Strongly Disagree	66	48.9
It should be policy and/or law that students with disabilities are integrated into general education programs and activities.	Strongly Agree	33	24.4
	Agree	57	42.2
	Uncertain	17	12.6
	Disagree	16	11.9
	Strongly Disagree	12	8.9

Note. *Items are from Section III of the PIS

Responses to questions in Section III were coded using a Likert scale with ratings ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). For negatively-keyed questions, the items were reverse scored accordingly prior to computing individual participants' attitude scores. A total attitude score was computed by summing the responses to each question in Section III. Possible attitude scores ranged from a minimum score of 10 to a maximum score of 50. Lower scores represent attitudes which are less favorable toward inclusion while higher scores indicate attitudes favoring inclusion.

Total attitude scores of the 135 participants ranged from a minimum of 12 to a maximum of 50 with a mean score of 40.19, standard deviation of 8.05, and median of 42. Seventy-five

percent of participants had an attitude score of 37 or higher, while 25% had an attitude score of 46 or higher. The average attitude score of female middle school principals in this study was slightly higher than that of male middle school principals. Table 4.3 represents a comparison of attitude scores based on gender.

Table 4.3

Descriptive Statistics for Attitude Scores by Gender

	N	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Overall	135	40.19	42	8.05	12	50
Male	98	39.50	41	8.68	12	50
Female	37	42.03	43	5.79	26	50

Middle school principals with 0-5 years of experience had an average attitude score of 41.33, with 6-10 years of experience had an average attitude score of 40.10, with 11-15 years of experience had an average attitude score of 38.45, and with 16-20 years of experience had an average attitude score of 38.25. Middle school principals who described their level of understanding of special education law as expert had an average attitude score of 43 while those who described their level of understanding as minimal or moderate had average attitude scores of 39.33 and 39.84, respectively. Middle school principals who identified that they had personal experience with an individual with a disability outside the school setting had an average attitude score of 41.30 compared to an average score of 38.76 for those who had no such personal experience. A detailed summary of average attitude scores based on training and experience is represented in Appendix E.

In general, the results showed that middle school principals in the state of Pennsylvania have favorable attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom.

Research Question 2

What are the factors that affect the attitudes of middle school principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom?

Using Pearson *r* Correlation Coefficients (PCC), an analysis was performed to determine whether a relationship existed between the attitudes of middle school principals toward inclusion (attitude score) and factors related to demographics, training, and experience at the $p = .05$ level. Based on the analysis, no significant relationships were discovered between the overall attitude scores (independent variable) of middle school principals and the selected variables (dependent variable) from Section I and Section II of the survey (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4

Pearson's Correlation Between Attitude Scores & Variables

Variable	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Building Size	.047	.592
No. of IEP Students	-.010	.905
No. of IEP Students Included >80%	.063	.471
Age	-.017	.844
Years of General Education Teaching Experience	-.067	.438
Years of Special Education Experience	.163	.059
Years of Experience as a Middle School Principal	-.125	.147
No. of Special Education Credits	.161	.063
Recency of Training	.081	.352

A Point Biserial Correlation Coefficient (PBCC) was calculated between the overall attitude score and for the two dichotomous variables, gender and experience with an individual with a disability outside the school setting. The statistical analysis yielded no significant relationship between the attitude score and gender ($r = .140, p = .104$) or attitude score and personal experience with an individual with a disability outside the school setting ($r = -.157, p = .069$). Although no significant relationship was discovered between the attitude score and experience with an individual outside the school setting, the average attitude score for middle school principals who had such experience was 41.30 compared to 38.76 for those who had no such experience.

Upon closer examination of the middle school principals' responses to each item in Section III of the survey instrument with regard to the selected variables in Section I and II, four statistically significant relationships were identified. A negative correlation was found between years of experience as a middle school principal and the statements "only teachers with extensive special education experience can be expected to deal with students with disabilities in a school setting" ($r = -.183, p = .034$) and "in general, students with disabilities should be placed in special classes/schools specifically designed to meet their needs" ($r = -.170, p = .049$). The more years of experience the principals had, the more they tended to agree with these statements. The converse may also be said that principals with less experience tended to disagree more with these statements.

A positive correlation was identified between the number of students with IEPs in the building and the statement that "students with severe/profound disabilities are too impaired to benefit from activities from a regular school" ($r = .187, p = .03$). The larger the population of students with IEPs in the school, the more the principals tended to disagree with this statement.

Similarly, principals with a larger number of special education credits in their formal training tended to disagree more with the statement that “it is unfair to ask/expect general education teachers to accept students with disabilities into their classrooms” ($r = .19, p = .028$). A summary of these results are displayed in Appendix F.

Research Question 3

What is the relationship between middle school principals' attitudes toward inclusion and their experiences with individuals with disabilities?

Section II of the PIS asked participants to identify their experience with various types of students with disabilities in the school setting as shown in Appendix G. Responses to this question were coded using a Likert scale with ratings ranging from 1 (*negative experience*) to 5 (*positive experience*). Total experience scores were calculated using the responses to question 10 in Section II which ranged from a minimum score of 10 to a maximum score of 50. Lower scores represent experiences with students with disabilities which are more negative while higher scores indicate experiences that were more positive.

Total experience scores of the 135 participants ranged from 30 to 50 with a mean score of 43.94, standard deviation of 4.98, and median of 45. Seventy-five percent of participants had an experience score of 40 or higher, while 25% had an experience score of 48 or higher. The average experience score of female middle school principals in this study (43.11) was slightly lower than that of male middle school principals (44.26). The lowest and highest experience score recorded for both female and male middle school principals were 30 and 50, respectively.

Using a PCC, an analysis was performed to determine if a relationship existed between middle school principals' attitude toward inclusion and their experience with individuals with disabilities. A significant relationship was discovered between middle school principals' attitude

score and experience score ($r = .195, p = .023$). Middle school principals with higher experience scores tended to also have higher attitude scores. Figure 4.1 represents a scatterplot which shows the relationship between the attitude score and experience score. The figure provides some evidence of a positive correlation between the two variables.

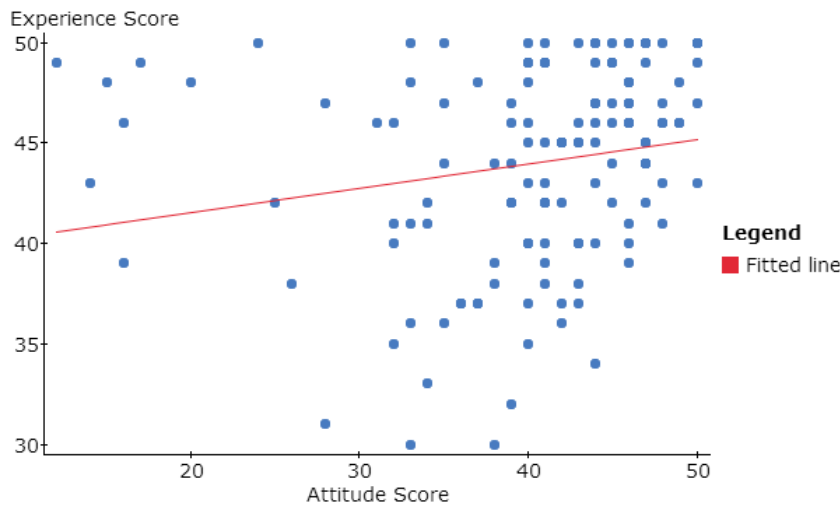


Figure 4.1. Scatterplot of the Attitude Score versus the Experience Score

In order to identify the existence of additional relationships between the attitudes of middle school principals toward inclusion and their experience with students with disabilities, further analysis was conducted between the responses to each of the 10 items that made up the attitude score and each of the disability categories that made up the experience score. Pearson r correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the existence of relationships between the variables. Significant relationships were discovered between the principals' responses to six attitude statements and their experience with students with disabilities. Table 4.5 consists of a correlation matrix presenting the relationships between middle school principals' responses to the individual attitude statements and their professional experience with students with each type of disability.

Table 4.5

Summary of Correlation Coefficients of Individual Attitude Items and Experience

	SLD	ID	ED	Blind	Deaf	Speech	OHI	PD	Multi-	Autism
Item 1	.07	.12	.13	-.03	.14	.09	.05	.15	.05	.19*
Item 2	.14	.11	.13	.10	.27*	.22*	.19*	.20*	.12	.17*
Item 3	.05	.10	.22*	.06	.07	.04	.10	.05	.05	.07
Item 4	.13	.14	.16	.10	.17*	.10	.15	.10	.04	.09
Item 5	.08	.10	.05	.11	.18*	.12	.15	.19*	.11	.05
Item 6	.11	.09	.08	.14	.14	.03	.10	.10	.04	.05
Item 7	-.06	-.08	-.01	.09	.08	-.13	-.04	-.05	-.12	-.06
Item 8	.09	.05	.14	.01	.02	.04	.07	.07	.07	.01
Item 9	.11	.10	.12	.04	.01	.00	.00	.03	-.02	-.10
Item 10	.19*	.11	.17	.15	.23*	.17*	.23*	.16	.11	.25*

Note. SLD = Specific Learning Disability, ID = Intellectual Disability, ED = Emotional Disturbance, Blind = Blindness/Visual Impairment, Deaf = Deafness/Hearing Impairment, OHI = Other Health Impairment, PD = Physical Disability, Multi = Multihandicap, Item numbers represent corresponding statements from Section III of the PIS, *p < .05.

Research Question 4

What is the relationship between principals' attitudes toward inclusion and their recommended appropriate placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment as mandated by IDEA?

An inclusiveness score was calculated for each participant using the responses to questions in Section IV. For 10 different categories of disabilities, participants were asked to identify the placement that they believed to be the most appropriate for students with the corresponding disability (see Appendix H). Participants were provided with five choices ranging from least inclusive (special education services outside regular school) to most inclusive (full-time regular education with support). Using a Likert scale, the least inclusive choice was assigned a score of 1 while the most inclusive choice was assigned a score of 5 thus with scores

ranging from 10 (least inclusive) to 50 (most inclusive). Inclusiveness scores of the 135 participants ranged from 19 to 50 with a mean score of 41.32, a standard deviation of 5.27, and median of 42. Seventy-five percent of participants had an inclusiveness score of 38 or higher, while 25% had an inclusiveness score of 45 or higher. Female middle school principals tended to have slightly lower inclusiveness scores (40.76) than male middle school principals (41.53).

The relationship between principals' attitudes toward inclusion and educational placement decisions was tested using a PCC coefficient, and the results are presented in Table 4.6. This value showed there was no significant correlation between the total attitude score and total inclusiveness score ($r = .106, p = .219$).

Table 4.6

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient for Attitude Score Versus Inclusiveness Score

		Inclusiveness Score
Attitude Score	Pearson Correlation	.106
	p-value	.219
	N	135

Each of the 10 items that make up the attitude score was compared with the total inclusiveness score to determine the existence of relationships between the variables (Table 4.7). A positive correlation was discovered between inclusiveness scores and middle school principals who disagreed with the statements “only teachers with extensive special education experience can be expected to deal with students with disabilities in a school setting” ($r = .170, p = .048$) and “students with severe/profound disabilities are too impaired to benefit from the activities of a regular school” ($r = .227, p = .008$). Similarly, principals who agreed with the statement “it should be policy and/or law that students with disabilities are integrated into general education

programs and activities” ($r = .194, p = .024$) had higher inclusiveness scores. This data suggested that middle school principals with more positive attitudes toward these statements tended to have higher inclusiveness scores, thus recommending a less restrictive placement for students with disabilities.

Table 4.7

Pearson’s Correlation for Comparing the Section III Items and Inclusiveness Score

<i>(n = 135)</i>	Inclusiveness Score	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Only teachers with extensive special education experience can be expected to deal with students with disabilities in a school setting.	.170	.048*
Classrooms with both students with disabilities and without disabilities enhance the learning experiences of students with disabilities.	.083	.341
Students with severe/profound disabilities are too impaired to benefit from the activities of a regular school.	.227	.008*
An effective general education can help a student with a disability to succeed.	.017	.847
In general, students with disabilities should be placed in special classes/schools specifically designed to meet their needs.	.113	.192
Students without disabilities can profit from contact with students with disabilities.	.017	.845
General education should be modified to meet the needs of all students including students with disabilities.	-.047	.587
It is unfair to ask/expect general education teachers to accept students with disabilities into their classrooms.	.007	.933
No discretionary financial resources should be allocated for the integration of students with disabilities.	-.017	.842
It should be policy and/or law that students with disabilities are integrated into general education programs and activities.	.194	.024*

Note. * $p < .05$

Based on the significance discovered between the three statements and inclusiveness scores, additional Pearson correlation coefficients were computed between these statements and the recommendation for placement in each disability category. A positive correlation was discovered between the statement “only teachers with extensive special education experience can be expected to deal with students with disabilities in a school setting” and the recommended placement for students with a speech and language impairment ($r = .17, p = .049$). Middle school principals who disagreed with the statement tended to suggest more inclusive placements for such students. Principals who disagreed with the statement “students with severe/profound disabilities are too impaired to benefit from the activities of a regular school” tended to suggest more inclusive environments for students with a specific learning disability ($r = .236, p = .006$), serious emotional disturbance ($r = .219, p = .011$), and speech and language impairment ($r = .236, p = .006$). A positive correlation was also found between middle school principals who agreed with the statement “it should be policy and/or law that students with disabilities are integrated into general education programs and activities” and the recommended placement for students with serious emotional disturbance ($r = .183, p = .027$), speech and language impairment ($r = .236, p = .006$), and autism ($r = .251, p = .003$).

Research Question 5

What is the relationship between middle school principals' experiences with individuals with disabilities and their support of recommendations for the most appropriate placement for students with disabilities?

The relationship between principals' experience with individuals with disabilities (experience score) and their educational placement recommendation (inclusiveness score) was tested using a PCC. A significant relationship was discovered between middle school principals'

experience score and inclusiveness score ($r = .438, p = <.0001$). Middle school principals with higher experience scores tended to also have higher inclusiveness scores, thus suggesting more recommendations for placing students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

Figure 4.2 represents a scatterplot which shows the relationship between the experience score and inclusiveness. The figure provides evidence of a positive correlation between the two variables.

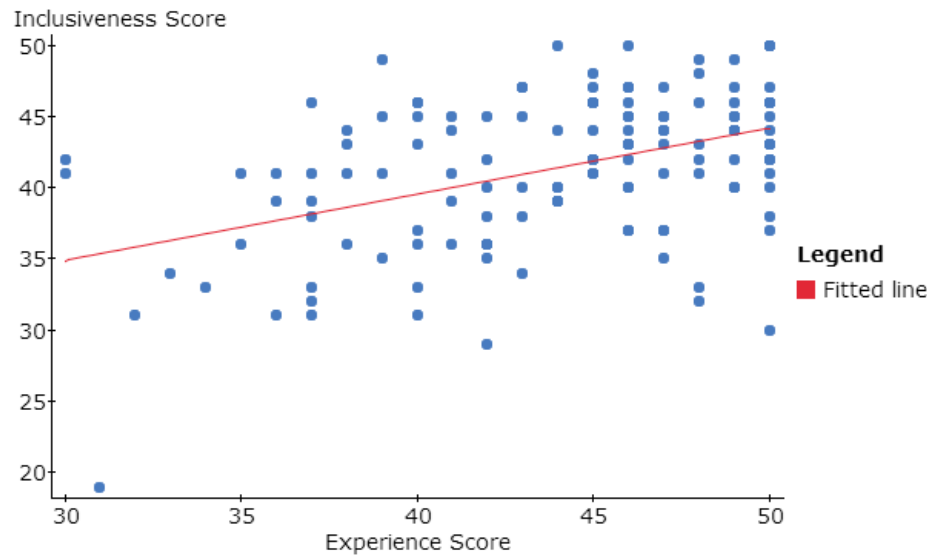


Figure 4.2. Scatterplot of the Experience Score versus the Inclusiveness Score

Further analysis was conducted between individual responses of experience with students with each type of disability compared with the recommended placement for students in that disability category. Positive correlations were identified between middle school principals' experience and recommended placement of students with the following disability categories: serious emotional disturbance ($r = .431, p = <.0001$), speech and language impairment ($r = .345, p = <.0001$), other health impairment ($r = .312, p = .0002$), physical disability ($r = .205, p = .017$), multihandicap ($r = .205, p = .017$), and autism/pervasive developmental disorder ($r = .266, p = .002$). These correlations suggest that the more positive experience middle school principals'

had with selected types of disabilities, the higher the likelihood of recommending a less restrictive or more inclusive placement.

Summary

Chapter IV presented the data collected from the PIS and the analysis performed for each of the research questions. The survey was completed voluntarily by 135 middle school principals across the state of Pennsylvania. The data in this study suggested that the attitudes of middle school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom in the state of Pennsylvania is positive, with a mean score of 40.19 out of a total score of 50. Middle school principals who responded to the survey also had a mean experience score of 43.94 out of a total score of 50 and a mean inclusiveness score of 41.32 out of a total score of 50. Thus, suggesting that most middle school principals have had significant experience with inclusion and implementing inclusive practices.

Research question two sought to identify the factors that affect the attitudes of middle school principals. While a Pearson correlation revealed no significant relationship between the demographics, training, and experience and attitude score, correlations were discovered between the individual attitude statements and the years of experience as a middle school principal, number of students with IEPs in the building, and the number of special education credits earned.

A Pearson correlation revealed a positive correlation ($r = .195, p = .023$) between middle school principals' attitude score and experience score. A scatterplot of these scores provided additional evidence of a positive correlation between the two variables. Additional analyses revealed a positive correlation between individual attitude items and experiences with students with the following disabilities: specific learning disability, serious emotional disturbance,

deafness/hearing impairment, speech and language impairment, other health impairment, physical disability, and autism/pervasive developmental disorder.

Research question four sought to identify the relationship between principals' attitudes toward inclusion and their recommended appropriate placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment as mandated by IDEA. A Pearson coefficient revealed no significant relation between total attitude scores and total inclusiveness scores ($r = .106, p = .219$). Upon further analysis of responses to individual attitude statements, a positive correlation was discovered between the total inclusiveness score and three out of the 10 statements.

Lastly, a Pearson coefficient identified a positive correlation between the middle school principals' experience score and inclusiveness score ($r = .438, p = < 0.0001$). A scatterplot of these scores provided additional evidence of a positive correlation between the two variables. Further analyses between the responses to experiences with students in each disability category and the recommended placement for students in the corresponding disability category, positive correlations were discovered in six out of the 10 disability categories. The four disability categories in which there was no significant relationship included: specific learning disability ($r = .107, p = 0.216$), intellectual disability ($r = .145, p = 0.093$), blindness/visual impairment ($r = .132, p = 0.126$), and deafness/hearing impairment ($r = .160, p = 0.063$).

Based on these results, Chapter VI presents conclusions and recommendations for current principals, central office administrators, and higher educational leaders.

Chapter V. Conclusion

Educating students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment has been a mandate for public schools since the inception of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975. Prior to 1975, nearly two million students with disabilities were denied access to a free and appropriate education particularly in a least restrictive environment (Aron & Loprest, 2012). Over the last four decades, school leaders have been charged with providing an inclusive learning environment in which such students have access to the regular education curriculum alongside their nondisabled peers. However, principals continue to assist IEP teams in making difficult program and placement decisions for students with disabilities within their schools as the level of accountability increases for students, teachers, and administrators (Lynch, 2012). Leading and managing special education programs are among the most complex responsibilities for current school administrators. Principals have been identified as the primary figure in the development of school programs, the promotion or blocking of changes, and oversight of leading schools in a forward direction (Huber & West, 2002). Hall & Hord (2011) have stated that a person's attitude directly influences his/her level of commitment to change and thus, provides a constructive environment that supports the need for change.

As advocates for students with disabilities, principals must be willing to establish a learning environment that is accepting and inclusive of all students regardless of their needs. Garrison-Wade et al. (2007) noted that when principals advocate for all students and embrace transformational leadership practices, their commitment to creating an effective inclusive program has an impact on the attitudes of teachers as well as students. However, in order for inclusive programs to function successfully, principals should be supportive of collaboration, empowerment, shared learning, and continual improvement, all of which are reflective of a true

transformational leader (Stewart, 2006). Ultimately, the attitudes of principals may be connected to the success of such programs and influence the way in which inclusive practices are viewed within a school district.

The challenges principals face in meeting federal mandates set forth by the IDEA and meeting the needs of students with disabilities has served as a basis for this study. Researchers have claimed that the attitudes of principals and their leadership style are linked to the outcomes of instructional programs within the school system (Salisbury & McGregor, 2002; Santoli et al., 2008). The need for this study was further derived from evidence of previous studies conducted at the elementary and secondary levels which yielded inconsistent results regarding the factors affecting attitudes of principals toward inclusion (Harris, 2009; Lorio, 2011; Praisner, 2000; Ramirez, 2006; Seigler, 2003; Smith, 2011).

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of Pennsylvania public middle school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. This study also identified the characteristics that may affect the attitudes of principals and influence their recommended placement for students with disabilities. Data collected using a modified version of the Principals and Inclusion Survey (PIS) served as the basis for this study. A total of 460 middle school principals were invited to participate in the study, and 135 principals completed the survey.

Chapter V presents an analysis of the results outlined in Chapter IV and discusses the implications related to the research questions in this study. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of how the results relate to prior research, implications and recommendations for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Findings

Data were collected using an electronic survey developed based on Praisner's PIS. The survey instrument was used to determine the attitudes of middle school principals in the state of Pennsylvania toward inclusion, the factors that affect principals' attitudes, and to identify relationships between principals' attitudes, experiences, and placement recommendations for students with disabilities. A total of 460 middle school principals in the state of Pennsylvania were invited to participate in the study while 135 participants completed the survey.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze and present the attitudes of middle school principals toward inclusion. Correlation coefficients were used to examine the relationship between middle school principals' attitude toward inclusion (Section II of PIS), experience with students with disabilities (Section III of PIS), and recommended for the most appropriate placement for students with disabilities (Section IV of PIS). Specifically, a Pearson r correlation coefficient (PCC) was used for all non-dichotomous variables while a Point Biserial Correlation Coefficient (PBCC) was used for dichotomous variables.

Research Question 1. What are the attitudes of Pennsylvania middle school principals toward inclusive programs in which students with disabilities receive classroom instruction with nondisabled peers?

Total attitude scores were calculated using Section III of the PIS. Higher scores indicated a more favorable attitude toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom while lower scores indicated less favorable attitudes toward inclusion. The total attitude scores for middle school principals ranged from a low score of 12 to a high score of 50. The mean attitude score was 40.19; the median score was 42; and the standard deviation was

8.05. Consistent with research conducted by Seigler (2003) and Lorio (2011), the attitudes of female middle school principals (42.03) were slightly higher than that of male principals (39.50). Of the 135 principals who completed the survey, 91 had an attitude score of 40 or higher, while six had an attitude score less than 20. These results contradicted Praisner's (2000) study in which only 20% of principals were found to have favorable attitudes toward inclusion. In general, the results of this study indicated that the attitudes of Pennsylvania middle school principals are favorable toward the inclusion.

Results of this study indicated that 87.3% of middle school principals agreed or strongly agreed that "classrooms with both students with disabilities and without disabilities enhance the learning experiences of students with disabilities" and that "students without disabilities can profit from contact with students with disabilities" (88.1%). This finding suggested that middle school principals favor the inclusion and collaboration of students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers in the regular education classroom. Research has shown that the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom with nondisabled peers does not have a consistently negative effect on the learning of regular education students (Antia et al., 2011; Bowers, 2009; Dessemontet et al., 2012). Also, 87.4% of principals agreed or strongly agreed that "an effective general education can help a student with a disability to succeed," and 85.1% agreed or strongly agreed that "general education should be modified to meet the needs of all students including students with disabilities." Ensuring that specially designed instruction is effectively implemented may help students with disabilities achieve success in the regular education classroom (McLaughlin, 2009). Coyne, Kame'enui, and Carnine (2011) also stated that "teachers may find that they need to modify existing programs to accommodate the needs of their most diverse learners" (p. 73).

The positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom found in this study indicated that middle school principals are likely committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. One participant stated, "We need to support all students in as many full-time regular education classes with their peers." The concept of inclusive education refers not only to placing students with disabilities in the regular education classroom but more importantly providing specially designed instruction to such students based on their individual needs (Smith & Kozleski, 2005). Another participant commented that "All students belong to all of the educators in the building," thus suggesting that all teachers, including administrators, are truly responsible for the success of the entire student body within the school.

Fewer middle school principals disagreed or strongly disagreed that "it should be policy and/or law that students with disabilities are integrated into general education programs and activities" (66.6%). While 12.6% of principals were uncertain, 20.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Nearly one in five principals (19.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that "students with disabilities should be placed in special classes/schools specifically designed to meet their needs" while 67.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Similar to the findings reported by Praisner (2000) and Vazquez (2010), many of the principals indicated that such an opinion is primarily based on the type and severity of the disability. This data suggested that middle school principals prefer that placement decisions and inclusive practices are made at the local level rather than from directives from the state or national levels. Regardless, the IDEA (2004) has placed a greater emphasis on all students with disabilities having access to the general education classroom, thus holding middle school principals even

more accountable for ensuring compliance with special education policies and regulations (McLaughlin, 2009).

For less severe disabilities such as a specific learning disability, blindness/visual impairment, deafness/hearing impairment, speech and language impairment, other health impairment, and physical disability, middle school principals chose “full-time regular education with support” as the primary recommended placement. Principals recommended more restrictive placements for students with more severe disabilities, such as intellectual disability, serious emotional disturbance, multi-handicap, and autism. Based on the results, principals indicated that students with such disabilities would be better served in a special class for most or all of the school day. Ramirez (2006) and Lindsey (2009) reported similar findings in their respective studies. These results suggest that by placing students with more severe disabilities in a special education class, they would not be disruptive or a distraction to the education of students without disabilities. Weller (2012) also noted that school leaders are often more concerned about the behavior issues associated with students with more severe disabilities. These findings have the potential to violate the guidelines set forth in the *Gaskin* Settlement. The provision in the settlement states that “students will not be removed from regular education classrooms merely because of the severity of their disabilities” (*Gaskin v. PDE*, 2004). However, principals in this study and in prior research were more likely to believe that students with more severe disabilities should not be fully included in the regular education classroom with their nondisabled peers.

Research Question 2. What are the factors that affect the attitudes of middle school principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom?

Correlation coefficients were calculated to identify the factors related to demographics, training, and experience that influenced the attitudes of principals toward inclusion. Based on

principals' responses to individual attitude items in Section III of the PIS, it was determined that the following demographic categories had no significant effect on the principals' attitudes toward inclusion: school size, percentage of students with IEPs included in the general education classroom, age, and gender. These results supported prior research (Lindsey, 2009; Praisner, 2000; Ramirez, 2006; Smith, 2011) with regard to such factors related to demographics. The percentage of students with IEPs in the building, excluding gifted, was determined to have a positive correlation ($r = .187, p = .03$) with regard to principals' attitudes toward the benefit of inclusion. This finding supported results reported by Smith (2011) who also found a positive correlation between the percentage of students with IEPs and the attitudes of principals toward inclusion. The consistent positive correlation indicated that principals serving middle schools with a higher percentage of students with IEPs had more favorable attitudes toward inclusion, yet no correlation was discovered between principals' attitudes and the percentage of students with IEPs included in the general education classroom. Further research may be required to analyze the special education programs and practices in such middle schools to determine the level of impact on principals' attitude toward inclusion.

The number of years of full-time general education teaching experience and recency of special education training was found to have no effect on the attitudes of middle school principals. While no statistical significance was discovered between principals' overall attitude score and the number of years of full-time special education teaching experience ($r = .163; p = .059$), this result suggested that principals with special education teaching experience are more likely to have favorable attitudes toward inclusion. This finding supported the research conducted by Harris (2008) and Lorio (2011) whose results indicated that principals with special education teaching experience had more positive attitudes toward inclusion.

The number of years of experience as a middle school principal was also determined to impact on the attitudes of principals' toward inclusion. Specifically, middle school principals with more years of experience tended to agree with the statements "only teachers with extensive special education experience can be expected to deal with students with disabilities in a school setting" ($r = -.183, p = .034$) and "in general, students with disabilities should be placed in special classes/schools specifically designed to meet their needs" ($r = -.170, p = .049$). The results indicated the more experience as a principal, the less favorable their attitudes toward inclusion.

Principals with five or fewer years of administrative experience had an average attitude score of 41.33 while principals with 11-15 and 16-20 years of administrative experience had attitude scores of 38.45 and 38.25, respectively. Horrocks et al. (2008) reported similar findings in their study of attitudes toward inclusion in selected elementary, middle, and high school principals. Stainback and Stainback (1996) noted that many administrators and educational professionals have been educated in non-inclusive schools. As a result, they may have little knowledge of inclusive practices to guide their own responses to the needs of students with disabilities. Further analysis is needed to examine the differences in attitudes between principals who have a longer administrative tenure and the general population of principals.

A PCC was calculated between the number of special education credits earned at the attitudes of middle school principals ($r = .161, p = .063$). This result was found to be close to the standard level of significance ($p < .05$) and consistent with prior research (Farris, 2011; Lindsey, 2009; Seigler, 2003; Vazquez, 2010). While this result did not reveal statistical significance, the practical implication of this finding indicated that principals with more formal training have more favorable attitudes toward inclusion which may ultimately lead to more successful

inclusive practices within their schools. Principals with no special education credits in their formal training had an average attitude score of 37.77 while principals with 19+ credits had an average score of 43.33.

Over 20 years ago, Valesky and Hirth (1992) reported the need for administrator preparatory programs to include special education coursework to better prepare principals and special education leaders for the challenging and complex task of managing special education programs within their schools. The inadequacy of training was further analyzed by Pazey and Cole (2013), who reported that many programs have not fully heeded such a need. In their report, the researchers also strongly advocated for more authentic special education coursework for pre-service administrators (Pazey & Cole, 2013). Subban and Sharma (2005) also reported that receiving training in special education improves teachers' and administrators' understanding and attitudes toward inclusive practices. This study provided further evidence that current administrators require adequate training and professional development in special education in order to effectively lead and manage inclusive schools.

Research Question 3. What is the relationship between middle school principals' attitudes toward inclusion and their experiences with individuals with disabilities?

Total experience scores were calculated using responses to question 10 in Section II of the PIS. Participants were asked to mark a level of professional experience with students with disabilities in each disability category. These disabilities categories ranged from less severe disabilities including specific learning disability and other health impairment to more severe disabilities such as intellectual disability, serious emotional disturbance, and autism. Higher scores reflected a more positive experience with students with disabilities while lower scores indicated a negative experience with students with disabilities. Total experience scores for

middle school principals in this study ranged from 30 to 50. The mean experience score was 43.94, the median score was 45, and the standard deviation was 4.98.

A positive correlation was discovered between the middle school principals' attitude toward inclusion and their experience with individuals with disabilities ($r = .195, p = .023$). Middle school principals with higher experience scores, tended to also have higher attitude scores, thus suggesting that principals with more positive experiences with students with disabilities also had more positive attitudes toward inclusion. This significant finding is consistent with prior research conducted by Farris (2011) and Praisner (2000). However, the results differed from studies conducted by Minter (2012) and Seigler (2003), who reported finding no relationship between professional experience with students with disabilities and attitudes toward inclusion. This finding may reveal that middle school principals who have had positive experiences with students with disabilities develop more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of such students in the regular education classroom. As a result, their understanding and commitment to providing accommodations and resources to meet the needs of students with disabilities is likely greater than those principals who have had less positive experiences.

Middle school principals who reported positive experiences with students with disabilities tended to agree or strongly agree with the statement "classrooms with both students with disabilities and without disabilities enhance the learning experiences of students with disabilities." This finding is significant for the development of positive, inclusive learning environments. Transformational leaders should be aware of the key components of successful inclusive classrooms and empower teachers to create such learning environments to ensure the success of all students (Giovannetti & Opalack, 2008). Principals who reported having positive experiences with students with disabilities also tended to agree or strongly agree with the

statement “it should be policy and/or law that students with disabilities are integrated into general education programs and activities.” Not only is this finding fundamental to the mandates set forth by the IDEA 2004 and *Gaskin* Settlement, principals must also be cognizant of their own prior experiences when collaborating with IEP teams to determine the placement of a student with disabilities. All placement decisions must be devoid of personal biases and prior experiences with such students, particularly those experiences which were negative.

Research Question 4. What is the relationship between principals' attitudes toward inclusion and their recommended appropriate placement of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment as mandated by IDEA?

In Section IV of the PIS, participants were asked to identify a placement they believed was most appropriate for students with disabilities in each individual disability category. A total inclusiveness score was then calculated using the responses to questions in Section IV. Inclusiveness scores ranged from 19 to 50 with a mean score of 41.32, a median score of 42, and a standard deviation of 5.27. The primary recommended placement for students with less severe disabilities (specific learning disability, blindness/visual impairment, deafness/hearing impairment, speech and language impairment, other health impairment, and physical disability) was full-time regular education with support. More restrictive placements were suggested for students with severe disabilities including intellectual disability, serious emotional disturbance, multi-handicap, and autism. These results are consistent with the research conducted by Harris (2008), Lindsey (2009), and Vazquez (2010). Although an IEP team is required to determine the placement of students with disabilities based on their individual needs, the results suggested that students with more severe disabilities are more likely to be placed in a more restrictive environment than students with less severe disabilities.

The relationship between principals' attitudes toward inclusion and educational placement decisions was tested using a PCC and yielded no significant correlation between the total attitude score and total inclusiveness score ($r = .106, p = .219$). Praisner (2000) and Vazquez (2010), on the other hand, both reported a positive correlation between the attitudes of principals (attitude score) and recommended placement of students with disabilities (inclusion score).

Upon further analysis of inclusiveness scores with respect to individual attitude responses in Section III of the PIS, positive correlations were discovered in three out of the 10 items, thus prompting additional analyses to determine the relationship between specific disability categories. PCCs were computed between the three identified statements and the recommendation for placement in each disability category. A positive correlation was discovered between the statement "only teachers with extensive special education experience can be expected to deal with students with disabilities in a school setting" and the recommended placement for students with a speech and language impairment ($r = .17, p = .049$). Middle school principals who disagreed with the statement tended to suggest more inclusive placements for such students. One belief that may exist for principals agreeing with this statement is that regular education teachers are not adequately trained to meet the needs of such students (Fuchs, 2010).

Principals who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement "students with severe/profound disabilities are too impaired to benefit from the activities of a regular school" tended to suggest more inclusive environments for students with a specific learning disability ($r = .236, p = .006$), serious emotional disturbance ($r = .219, p = .011$), and speech and language impairment ($r = .236, p = .006$). The converse may imply that principals who agreed or strongly

agreed with the statement tended to suggest less inclusive placements for such students. This data suggested that such principals may less likely recommend inclusive environments because they believe students with severe/profound disabilities would receive a better education in an environment separate from their nondisabled peers. Consistent with prior research, principals and educators are concerned with the behaviors of students with emotional needs and the impact they may have on other students in the classroom (Weller, 2012).

A positive correlation was found between middle school principals who agreed with the statement “it should be policy and/or law that students with disabilities are integrated into general education programs and activities” and the recommended placement for students with serious emotional disturbance ($r = .183, p = .027$), speech and language impairment ($r = .236, p = .006$), and autism ($r = .251, p = .003$). Middle school principals who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement tended to suggest more inclusive placements for students with such disabilities. These results suggested that a relationship exists between the attitudes of principals toward inclusion and the recommended placement of students with disabilities. Regardless of the disability, IEP teams must ensure that students’ needs are being evaluated when determining their educational placement and compliance with federal mandates is maintained (Yell, 2012; Yell & Katsiyannis, 2004).

Research Question 5. What is the relationship between middle school principals’ experiences with individuals with disabilities and their support of recommendations for the most appropriate placement for students with disabilities?

The final research question guiding this study investigated the relationship between principals’ experience with students with disabilities (experience score) and the recommendation for the most appropriate placement for students with disabilities (inclusiveness score). A PCC

was calculated resulting in a significant relationship between the two variables ($r = .438, p = <.0001$). A positive correlation was identified between the principals' overall experience with students with disabilities and their recommendation for the most appropriate placement. Middle school principals with higher experience scores tended to also have higher inclusiveness scores, thus suggesting more recommendations for placing students with disabilities in less restrictive environments. While the converse is also true, this finding is consistent with prior research (Farris, 2011; Praisner, 2000; Vazquez, 2010; Weller, 2012). This result suggested that principals with more positive experiences with students with disabilities are more likely to suggest more inclusive placements and thus are more supportive of inclusive practices. As a result, the implications of this finding may assist researchers in identifying specific components of successful inclusive schools.

Additional analyses were conducted between the middle school principals' experiences and recommended placements for students with disabilities according to each individual disability category. Positive correlations were identified between principals' experience and recommended placement for students with the following disabilities: serious emotional disturbance ($r = .431, p = <.0001$), speech and language impairment ($r = .345, p = <.0001$), other health impairment ($r = .312, p = .0002$), physical disability ($r = .205, p = .017$), multihandicap ($r = .205, p = .017$), and autism/pervasive developmental disorder ($r = .266, p = .002$). These correlations suggested that the more positive experience middle school principals' had with selected types of disabilities, the higher the likelihood a more inclusive placement was recommended for students with the corresponding disability.

The IDEA (2004) requires the IEP team to determine the educational placement for a student with a disability based on evidence. When making a placement decision, the IEP team

must do so in an objective manner and gather information from a variety of sources. In addition to personal experiences and opinions, IEP teams are restricted from making placement decisions based on the “category of disability, severity of disability, availability of educational or related services, availability of space, or administrative convenience” (Yell & Katsiyannis, 2004, p. 31).

Implications

Supportive principal leadership is an integral component for successful school change (Fullan, 2001) and successful inclusion (Sage & Burello, 1994). Principals are responsible for creating a positive school climate in which all students have the ability to succeed. Therefore, principals' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom represent a powerful influence over the implementation and success of inclusive practices. Transformational leaders supportive of inclusion strive to ensure educational outcomes are available to all students, including students with disabilities (Boscardin, 2005).

The findings of this study showed that middle school principals in the state of Pennsylvania generally have a positive attitude toward inclusion. Positive correlations were discovered between principals' attitudes toward inclusion and experience with students with disabilities, attitudes and recommended placements for students with disabilities, and experience with students with disabilities and recommended placements for students with disabilities. However, the results revealed a negative correlation between the years of experience as a principal and their attitude toward inclusion. These results are important for superintendents, central office administrators, and principals because these relationships may impact the success of inclusive programs and level of inclusiveness of students with disabilities.

Successful inclusive programs must be supported by administrators, teachers, and paraprofessionals who are committed to ensuring that the needs of all students with disabilities

are met in the regular education classroom setting to the greatest extent possible (Alquraini & Gut, 2012). Not only is educating students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment a federal mandate, researchers have found that students with disabilities benefit from having access to the regular education classroom (Bowers, 2009; Hawkins, 2011; Kamenopoulou, 2012). This study provided superintendents and district administrators with information regarding principals' attitudes toward inclusion and inclusiveness when suggesting an appropriate placement for students with disabilities. Thus, this information may assist superintendents, special education directors, and other district administrators when monitoring and analyzing the implementation and success of inclusive programs in their districts.

Maintaining compliance with federal and state special education mandates is critical for school administrators in order to avoid litigious situations. Providing professional development to new and experienced principals may assist in the assurance of such compliance. The results from this study may be beneficial to special education supervisors as educational placement decisions are made by IEP teams. By providing proper education opportunities and training for members of the IEP team, students with disabilities may be more appropriately placed in the least restrictive environment devoid of personal experiences or biases.

Recommendations for Practice

Building principals are often the primary figure in the development of school programs, facilitating change, and overseeing growth and renewal in one's building (Huber & West, 2002). According to Cunningham and Cordeiro (2006), principals are encouraged to become transformational leaders in their buildings by empowering stakeholders, encouraging collaboration, and striving for continuous improvement. Prior research showed that principals' attitudes and leadership styles frequently impact the success of instructional programs, including

that of inclusive education (McLaughlin, 2009; Stewart, 2006). The findings of this study may serve as further evidence for all superintendents, special education directors, and other district administrators that principals' attitudes affect the process and success of inclusive practices at the middle school level.

Superintendents, special education directors, and other district administrators should be cognizant of the impact principals' attitudes and experiences may have on the recommended placement for students with disabilities. Although a team of professionals, including the principal, are tasked with making the placement decision, it is important to note that the principal remains a highly-influential member of the team and ultimately to the entire building. Their influence on program decisions may affect the availability and appropriateness of special education programs within the school building. Principals with more favorable attitudes toward inclusion may be more supportive of inclusive programs within the school, and thus, ensure that the programs are successful. In addition, these results may serve as a guide to superintendents, special education directors, and other district administrators when districts are implementing special education programs for students with more severe disabilities, such as autism, intellectual disability, or serious emotional disturbance in middle schools. Additional exposure and training for middle school principals may be necessary to gain support for the programs. Research has shown that principals tend to recommend more restrictive placements for students with such severe disabilities, especially when their experiences have been negative (Farris, 2011; Harris, 2008; Lindsey, 2009; Vazquez, 2010). Providing more education to principals and educational professionals surrounding students with more severe disabilities may improve their understanding and attitude toward including these students more frequently in the regular education classroom.

Special education directors may particularly benefit from the results of this study in the identification of professional development needs for administrators. Prior research showed a positive correlation between special education training and attitude toward inclusion as well as placement recommendations (Lindsey, 2009; Ramirez, 2006). Providing on-going professional development in the understanding of working with students with disabilities to both new and experienced principals may assist in the placement of such students in the least restrictive environment. Principals supportive of inclusive programs may lead to a higher level of success in the implementation of these programs. Likewise, special education directors and principals may wish to collaborate in the offering of professional development opportunities for faculty and staff related to understanding students with disabilities, co-teaching, and components of successful inclusive classrooms.

Principals who agreed with the statement “students with severe/profound disabilities are too impaired to benefit from the activities of a regular school” tended to suggest more restrictive environments for students serious emotional disturbance. This study showed that principals’ attitudes impact the recommended placements of students with disabilities. Therefore, special attention should be given to students with more severe disabilities, such as autism, intellectual disability, or serious emotional disturbance and the efforts taken to ensure they are placed in the least restrictive environment. Vazquez (2010) concluded that principals with “more training in inclusive practices exhibited higher levels of inclusion in their buildings” (p. 83).

This study challenges middle school principals to reflect on how their experiences with students with disabilities may affect their attitude toward inclusion. Principals should be aware of how their attitudes and experiences may in turn impact the inclusiveness of their buildings. Given that determining the recommended appropriate placement for students with disabilities is

decided upon a case-by-case basis, prior personal and programmatic experiences or biases should not influence these decisions.

Higher education officials may also benefit from the results of this study in the development and review of administrator preparatory programs. Special attention should be given to the adoption of curriculum and coursework supportive of special education and inclusive practices. Of the 135 participants in this study, 21 indicated they had no special education credits in their formal training. Frick et al. (2013) noted that many principals have not received proper pre-service training which prepares them to effectively manage responsibilities related to special education. Adding to the focus on special education and inclusive education in administrator preparatory programs may increase principals' ability to lead special education programs and services more effectively.

Considering the mandates set forth in the IDEA 2004 and the high level of accountability placed on principals and teachers for ensuring the success of all students, including those with disabilities, this study provides information that is significant and relevant to special education. Superintendents, special education directors, and other district administrators may use the data presented in this study to better understand the complexity of implementing and monitoring inclusive practices while ensuring school leaders are equipped with adequate training. Similarly, higher education administrators and professors may use the data to identify ways to improve administrator preparatory programs related to special education. By increasing the exposure to special education in administrator preparatory programs, principals may be better equipped for leading inclusive schools in a climate of continual change.

Recommendations for Future Research

The field of special education is in a constant state of change as new mandates are passed, court cases are determined, and the needs of students with disabilities fluctuate. The knowledge and understanding of how the attitudes of principals affect school climate, change, and inclusive practices is important in leading schools in an era of high-stakes accountability. The following recommendations for future research are suggestions for adding to this knowledge and understanding in the hope that all students have access to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

- This study could be replicated using middle school principals from other states or across the United States. Specific attention may be given to comparing the attitudes of principals toward inclusion based on the demographics of schools in such studies.
- Using a mixed methods approach, this study could be replicated to include interviews with principals of schools with inclusive programs.
- Considering that principals' attitudes toward inclusion may vary depending on the age of students served, a study could be conducted comparing the attitudes of elementary, middle, and high school principals toward inclusion.
- Surveys including assistant principals as participants could serve as a basis for replicating this study.
- Understanding the impact curriculum and instructional practices have on student achievement, a study could be designed to determine if a relationship exists between the attitudes of principals toward inclusion and the achievement of students with disabilities.

- As principals are often identified as the key figure in promoting educational programs, a comparative analysis of principal attitudes and teacher attitudes toward inclusion could provide additional information related to the success of inclusive programs.

Summary

The inclusion of students with disabilities has been a controversial special education topic for the past four decades. Federal mandates serve as a basis for ensuring that students with disabilities have access to the regular education classroom to the greatest extent possible. Prior research has suggested that principals' attitude toward and involvement in creating inclusive practices is linked to the success of the program (Alquraini & Gut, 2012; Villa et al., 1996). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of Pennsylvania public middle school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. Additional analyses were conducted to determine the relationship between principals' attitude, experience, and recommended placement of students with disabilities.

Principals who model a commitment to ensuring the success of all students are likely to empower their teachers to adopt a similar commitment. This element of a transformational leader has the ability to permeate throughout the entire organization collaboration and consensus building (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006; Villa et al, 2005). As principals continue to support their faculty and staff in the development and implementation of inclusive programs, students with disabilities may benefit tremendously from such programs. In conjunction with the fundamentals of Fullan's (2001) change process, transformational leadership has served as the theoretical framework for this study and the premise for principals leading inclusive schools.

The results of this study are beneficial to school leaders and principals in obtaining a better understanding of the attitudes of principals toward inclusion and how these attitudes may

impact the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. With this insight, central office administrators and higher education leaders may align professional development opportunities and coursework to better prepare principals in implementing and monitoring inclusive programs within their schools. As this study has shown, middle school principals in the state of Pennsylvania generally have favorable attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom. The impact of these attitudes on inclusive programs may not be immediately realized but have the potential to directly affect the outcome of such programs and ultimately the education of countless students with disabilities.

References

- Antia, S. D., Jones, P., Luckner, J., Kreimeyer, K. H., & Reed, S. (2011). Social outcomes of students who are deaf and hard of hearing in general education classrooms. *Exceptional Children, 77*(4), 489-504.
- Alquraini, T., & Gut, D. (2012). Critical components of successful inclusion of students with severe disabilities: Literature review. *International Journal of Special Education, 27*(1), 42-59.
- Aron, L., & Loprest, P. (2012). Disability and the Education System. *Future of Children, 22*(1), 97-122.
- Awamleh, R., Mahate, A., & Evans, J. (2005). A test of transformational and transactional leadership styles on employees' satisfaction and performance in the UAE banking sector. *Journal of Comparative International Management, 8*(1), 3-19.
- Bateman, D., & Bateman, C. (2001). *A principal's guide to special education*. Arlington, VA: Council Exceptional Children.
- Bell, S. H. (2010). *A case study of the effects of the Gaskin case on seven school districts in southeastern Pennsylvania*. (Doctoral dissertation, Widener University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 614374761)
- Ben-Porath, S. (2012). Defending rights in (special) education. *Educational Theory, 62*(1), 25-39.
- Board of Education of the Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley*, 458 U.S. 176 (1982). Retrieved from <http://www.wrightslaw.com/law/caselaw/ussupct.rowley.htm>
- Boscardin, M. (2005). The administrative role in transforming secondary schools to support inclusive evidence-based practices. *American Secondary Education, 33*(3), 21-32.

- Bowers, C. (2009). Effectiveness of inclusion in an Indiana middle school. *Online Submission*.
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Cardona, C. M. (2009). Teacher education students' belief of inclusion and perceived competence to teach students with disabilities in Spain. *International Journal of Special Education, 10*(1), 33-41.
- Carter, N., Parter, M. A., Jackson, A., & Marchant, M. (2009). Educators' perceptions of collaborative planning processes for students with disabilities. *Preventing School Failure, 54*(1), 60-70.
- Causton-Theoharis, J. & Theoharis, G. (2009, May). Creating inclusive schools for all students. *Education Digest, 74*(6), 43-47.
- Claxton, C. W. (2002). *The relationship between principals' knowledge of disability laws and their disciplinary practices in Georgia elementary schools*. (Doctoral dissertation, Georgia Southern University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3041643)
- Copenhaver, M. B. (2005). *Survey of North Carolina principals' knowledge of special education law*. (Doctoral dissertation, Purdue University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 31-85748)
- Coyne, M. D., Kame'enui, E. J., & Carnine, D. W. (2011). *Effective teaching strategies that accommodate diverse learners* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Crawford, L., & Tindal, G. (2006). Policy and practice: Knowledge and beliefs of education professionals related to the inclusion of students with disabilities in a state assessment. *Remedial and Special Education, 27*(4), 208-217.

- Crawford, S. D., Couper, M. P., & Lamias, M. J. (2001). Web surveys: Perception of burden. *Social Science Computer Review, 19*, 146-162.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Cruzeiro, P. A., & Morgan, R. L. (2006). The rural principal's role with consideration for special education. *Education, 126*(3), 569-579.
- Cunningham, W. G., & Cordeiro, P. A. (2006). *Ethical leadership: A problem-based approach*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- D'Alonzo, B. J., & Boggs, E. T. (1990). A review of the regular education initiative. *Preventing School Failure, 35*(1), 18-23.
- Dessemontet, R., Bless, G. G., & Morin, D. D. (2012). Effects of inclusion on the academic achievement and adaptive behaviour of children with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 56*(6), 579-587.
- DiPaola, M., & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2003). The principalship at a crossroads: A study of the conditions and concerns of principals. *NASSP Bulletin, 87*(634), 43-65.
- Duquette, S. M. (2004). *Middle school principals' attitudes toward inclusion*. (Doctoral dissertation, South Carolina State University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3219933)
- Etscheidt, S. (2006). Least restrictive and natural environments for young children with disabilities: A legal analysis of issues. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 26*(3), 167-178.
- Evans, L., Thornton, B., & Usinger, J. (2012). Theoretical frameworks to guide school improvement. *NASSP Bulletin, 96*(2), 154-171.

- Farris, T. K. (2011). *Texas high school principals' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom*. (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI 3486477)
- Fowler, F. J. (2009). *Survey research methods*. USA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Frick, W. C., Faircloth, S. C., & Little, K. S. (2013). Responding to the collective and individual "best interests of students": Revisiting the tension between administrative practice and ethical imperatives in special education leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 49(2), 207-242.
- Frost, L. A., & Kersten, T. (2011, April). The role of the elementary principal in the instructional leadership of special education. *National Council of Professors of Educational Administration*, 1-21.
- Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L. S., & Stecker, P. M. (2010). The "blurring" of special education in a new continuum of general education placements and services. *Exceptional Children*, 76(3), 301-323.
- Fuchs, W. W. (2010). Examining teachers' perceived barriers associated with inclusion. *SRATE Journal*, 19(1), 30-35.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Fullan, M. (2010). The awesome power of the principal. *Principal*, 89(4), 10-12.
- Garrison-Wade, D., Sobel, D., & Fulmer, C. L. (2007). Inclusive leadership: Preparing principals for the role that awaits them. *Educational Leadership and Administration: Teaching and Program Development*, 19, 117-132.
- Gaskin v. Pennsylvania Department of Education*, (2004). Retrieved from <http://www.pilcop.org/gaskin-v-commonwealth/#sthash.NSsy6Ejf.dpbs>

- Giovannetti, B., & Opalack, N. (2008). *When all students learn. Special report. Primers on special education in charter schools*. Retrieved from National Charter School Resource Center website:
<http://www.charterschoolcenter.org/sites/default/files/When%20All%20Students%20Learn%202008.pdf>.
- Glazzard, J. (2011). Perceptions of the barriers to effective inclusion in one primary school: Voices of teachers and teaching assistants. *Support for Learning*, 26(2), 56-63.
- Granello, D. H., & Wheaton, J. E. (2004, Fall). Online data collection: Strategies for research. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 82, 387-393.
- Hall, G. E., & Hord, S. M. (2011). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Halvorsen, A. T., & Neary, T. (2001). *Building inclusive schools: Tools and strategies for success*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Handler, B. R. (2003). *Special education practices: An evaluation of educational environmental placement trends since the regular education initiative*, 1-30.
- Harkness, J. (2010). Adaptations of survey instruments guidelines. *Cross-Cultural Survey Guidelines*. Retrieved from <http://ccsg.isr.umich.edu/pdf/07AdaptationNov2010.pdf>
- Harris, J. D. L. (2009). *Elementary school assistant principals' attitudes toward inclusion of special needs students in the general education setting*. (Doctoral dissertation, Texas Women's University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3399046)

- Hawkins, R. C. (2011). *The impact of inclusion on the achievement of middle school students with mild to moderate learning disabilities*. (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (ED526377)
- Horrocks, J. L., White, G., & Roberts, L. (2008). Principals' attitudes regarding inclusion of children with autism in Pennsylvania public schools. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 38(8), 1462-1473.
- Hoppey, D., & McLeskey, J. (2013). A case study of principal leadership in an effective inclusive school. *The Journal of Special Education*, 46(4), 245-256.
- Huber, K. D., Rosenfeld, J. G., & Fiorello, C. A. (2001). The differential impact of inclusion and inclusive practices on high, average, and low achieving general education students. *Psychology in the Schools*, 38(6), 497-504.
- Huber, S., & West, M. (2002). Developing school leaders: A critical review of current practices, approaches and issues and some directions for the future. *Second International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Administration Part 2*, 1071-1099.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1401 *et seq.* Retrieved from <http://idea.ed.gov/>
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 Regulations, 34 C.F.R. § 300 *et seq.*
- Ingram, P. D. (1997). Leadership behaviours of principals in inclusive educational settings. *Journal Of Educational Administration*, 35(5), 411-427.
- Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium. (2008). *Educational leadership policy standards: ISSLC 2008*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.
- Johnson, M. M. (2011). *Practices and perceptions of northern plains elementary principals regarding inclusion for elementary students with special needs*. (Doctoral dissertation,

- University of South Dakota). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3458126)
- Jones, P. K. (2006). *The middle school principal and special education: Are principals prepared to support special education teachers in leading their students in achieving AYP?* (Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3252132)
- Kamenopoulou, L. (2012). A study on the inclusion of deafblind young people in mainstream schools: Key findings and implications for research and practice. *British Journal of Special Education, 39*(3), 137-145.
- Kearns, J. F., Kleinert, H. L., Clayton, J., Burdge, M., & Williams, R. (1998). Principal supports for inclusive education: A Kentucky story. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 31*(2), 16-23.
- Kilanowski-Press, L., Foote, C. J., & Rinaldo, V. J. (2010). Inclusion classrooms and teachers: A survey of current practices. *International Journal of Special Education, 25*(3), 43-56.
- Korkmaz, M. (2007). The effects of leadership styles on organizational health. *Educational Research Quarterly, 30*(3), 23-55.
- Kuzma, D. J. (2004). *The characteristics of effective middle school principals as perceived by middle school leaders and the principals whom they work for*. (Doctoral dissertation, Seton Hall University). Retrieved from <http://scholarship.shu.edu/dissertations/1513>
- La Morte, M. W. (2012). *School law: Cases and concepts*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Lashley, C. (2007). Principal leadership for special education: An ethical framework. *Exceptionality, 15*, 177-187.

- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (1990). *Transformational leadership: How principals can help reform school cultures*, 2-48.
- Lindsey, G. D. (2009). *Middle schools principals' attitudes about inclusion*. (Doctoral dissertation, Arkansas State University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3378931)
- Litvack, M. S., Ritchie, K. C., & Shore, B. M. (2011). High- and average-achieving students' perceptions of disabilities and of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. *Exceptional Children*, 77(4), 474-487.
- Lorio, K. M. (2011). *Louisiana high school principals' attitudes toward inclusion*. (Doctoral Dissertation, Southeastern Louisiana University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3482441)
- Lynch, J. M. (2012). Responsibilities of today's principal: Implications for principal preparation programs and principal certification policies. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 31(2), 40-47.
- Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education. (2001, June). Special education is a service – not a place. *All Inclusive*, 1, 1-8.
- McGrew, A. M. (2008). *A case study of principal leadership in inclusionary education settings* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Houston). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (UMI No. 3340589)
- McClellan, W. A. (2007). *An investigation into the need for effective leadership mechanisms in the management of a successful inclusive programme in the primary school system*. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED500461.pdf>

- McLaughlin, M. J. (2009). *What every principal needs to know about special education* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- McLaughlin, M. J., & Nolet, V. (2004). *What every principal needs to know about special education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- McMaster, C. (2012). Ingredients for inclusion: Lessons from the literature. *Kairaranga*, 13(2), 11-22.
- Merritt, S. (2001). Clearing the Hurdles of Inclusion. *Educational Leadership*, 59(3), 67-70.
- Mills v. Board of Education*, 348 F. Supp. 866 (D.D.C. 1972). Retrieved from <http://educational-law.org/438-mills-v-board-of-education-of-the-district-of-columbia.html>
- Minter, M. A. (2012). *Missouri middle and junior high principals' perceptions of inclusion and collaboration*. (Doctoral dissertation, Central Missouri State University). Retrieved from https://www.bakeru.edu/images/pdf/SOE/EdD_Theses/Minter_Michael.pdf
- O'Prey, S. (1999). *A study of selected middle school assistant principals as instructional leaders*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Houston). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Publication No. AAT 9939688)
- Oleszewski, A., Shoho, A., & Barnett, B. (2012). The development of assistant principals: A literature review. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 50(3), 264-286.
- Olley, G., Devellis, R., Devellis, B., Wall, J., & Long, C. (1981). The autism scale for teachers. *Exceptional Children*, 47, 37-38.
- Paliokosta, P., & Blandford, S. (2010). Inclusion in school: A policy, ideology or lived experience? Similar findings in diverse school cultures. *Support for Learning*, 25(4), 179-186.

Parker, S. A. & Day, V. P. (1997). Promoting inclusion through instructional leadership: The roles of the secondary school principal. *NASSP Bulletin*, 81, 83-89.

Pazey, B. L., & Cole, H. A. (2013). The role of special education training in the development of socially just leaders: Building an equity consciousness in educational leadership programs. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 49(2), 243-271.

Pennsylvania Association of Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 343 F. Supp. 279 (E.D. Pa. 1972). Retrieved from <http://www.pilcop.org/pennsylvania-association-for-retarded-citizens-parc-v-commonwealth-of-pennsylvania/#sthash.aJvpykVZ.dpbs>

Pennsylvania Bureau of Special Education. (2013a). *Special education data report: School year 2009-2010*. Retrieved from: http://penndata.hbg.psu.edu/BSEReports/SD_Reports/2009_2010/PDF_Documents/Speced_Data_Report_State_2009-2010_Final.pdf

Pennsylvania Bureau of Special Education. (2013b). *Special education data report: School year 2012-2013*. Retrieved from: http://penndata.hbg.psu.edu/BSEReports/Data%20Preview/2012_2013/PDF_Documents/Speced_Quick_Report_SD318_Final.pdf

Pennsylvania Bureau of Special Education. (2013c). Chapter 14 special education services and programs. Retrieved from <http://www.drnpa.org/File/publications/chapter-14-special-education-services--comparison-.pdf>

Pennsylvania Department of Education. (2009). *Least restrictive environment (LRE) and educational placement for students with individualized education programs (IEPs)*. Retrieved from

[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pa_codes/7501/least_restrictive_environment_\(lre\)_and_educational_placement_for_students_with_individualized_education_programs_\(ieps\)/507373](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/pa_codes/7501/least_restrictive_environment_(lre)_and_educational_placement_for_students_with_individualized_education_programs_(ieps)/507373)

Pennsylvania Department of Education. (2013). *Pennsylvania education directory*. Retrieved from

http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/http://www.portal.state.pa.us;80/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_123531_1321892_0_0_18/PAEdDirectory_SD.pdf

Pennsylvania Partnership for Children. (2013). *Urban-suburban-rural school district designations*. Retrieved from <http://www.papartnerships.org/pdfs/methodology.pdf>

Permuth, S., & Maudsley, R.D. (2001). The Supreme Court on education: Five defining cases. *Principal Leadership*, 1(8), 29-33.

Praisner, C. (2000). *Attitudes of elementary school principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities*. (Doctoral dissertation, Lehigh University). Available from ProQuest Digital Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 9980932)

Praisner, C. (2003). Attitudes of elementary school principals toward the inclusion of students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 69(2), 135-145.

Presser, J., & Blair, J. (1994). Survey pretesting: Do different methods produce different results? *Sociological Methodology*, 24, 73-104.

Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia. (2012). *Gaskin v. Commonwealth*. Retrieved from <http://www.pilcop.org/gaskin-v-commonwealth/#more-869>

Ramirez, R. C. (2006). *Elementary principals' attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting*. (Doctoral dissertation, Baylor University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3216381)

- Reinhartz, J., & Beach, D. M. (2004). *Educational leadership: Changing schools, changing roles*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Reynolds, B. H. (2008). Are principals ready to welcome children with disabilities? *Principal*, 88(2), 16-19.
- Robertson, T. S., & Valentine, J. W. (1998). *NMSA research summary #14: What is the impact of inclusion on students and staff in the middle school setting?* Retrieved from http://bsnpta.org/user/Impact_of_Inclusion_in_Middle_School.pdf
- Rudd, F. (2002). *Grasping the Promise of Inclusion*. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED471855.pdf>
- Sage, D. D. & Burrello, L. C. (1994). *Leadership in educational reform: An administrator's guide to changes in special education*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
- Salisbury, C., & McGregor, G. (2002). The administrative climate and context of inclusive elementary schools. *Exceptional Children*, 68, 259-274.
- Santoli, S., Sachs, J., Romey, E. A., & McClurg, S. (2008). A successful formula for middle school inclusion: Collaboration, time, and administrative support. *RMLE Online: Research in Middle Level Education*, 32(2), 1-13.
- Sayeski, K. L., & Cooper, J. M. (2003). *An educator's guide to inclusion*. Retrieved from <http://cengagesites.com/academic/assets/sites/4004/Education%20Modules/gd%20to%20inclusion%20CRC.pdf>
- Scoggins, J. A., & Bishop, H. L. (1993). *A review of the literature regarding the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals*. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED371436.pdf>

- Seigler, M. A. (2003). *Georgia middle school principals' perceptions toward inclusion*. (Doctoral dissertation, Georgia Southern University). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3092461)
- Seltzer, M. (2011). The "roundabout" of special education leadership. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 1*(15), 120-139.
- Shapiro, J. P. & J. A. Stefkovich. (2011). *Ethical leadership and decision making in education: Applying theoretical perspectives to complex dilemmas* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Smith, A., & Kozleski, E. B. (2005). Witnessing "Brown": Pursuit of an equity agenda in American education. *Remedial & Special Education, 26*(5), 270-280.
- Smith, C. W. (2011). *Attitudes of secondary school principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://www.georgiasouthern.edu>
- Smith, R., & Leonard, P. (2005). Collaboration for inclusion: Practitioner perspectives. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 38*(4), 269-279.
- Soehner, D., & Ryan, T. (2011). The interdependence of principal school leadership and student achievement. *Scholar-Practitioner Quarterly, 5*(3), 274-288.
- Stainback, S., & Stainback, W. (1996). *Inclusion: A guide for educators*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.
- Stewart, J. (2006). Transformational leadership: An evolving concept examined through the works of Burns, Bass, Avolio, and Leithwood. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 54*, 1-29.

- Subban, P. & Sharma, U. (2005). Understanding educator attitudes toward the implementation of inclusive education. *Disabilities Studies Quarterly*, 25(2).
- U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2012). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2011* (NCES 2012-001).
- Umbach, P. D. (2004). Web surveys: Best practices. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 121, 23–38.
- Valesky, T. C., & Hirth, M. A. (1992). Survey of the states: Special education knowledge requirements for school administrators. *Exceptional Children*, 58(5), 399-406
- Vazquez, M. F. (2010). *Inclusionary practices: Impact of administrators' beliefs on placement decisions*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Central Florida). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis. (ED519511)
- Villa, R. A., Thousand, J. S., Meyers, H., & Nevin, A. (1996). Teacher and administrator perceptions of heterogeneous education. *Exceptional Children*, 63(1), 29-45.
- Villa, R. A., Thousand, J. S., Nevin, A., & Liston, A. (2005). Successful inclusive practices in middle and secondary schools. *American Secondary Education*, 33(3), 33-50.
- Vogt, W. P. (2007). *Quantitative research methods for professionals*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Weller, L. G. (2012). *Principals' attitudes toward inclusion: Including students with autism in elementary classrooms*. (Doctoral Dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania). Retrieved from <http://dspace.iup.edu/bitstream/handle/2069/780/Lynda%20G.%20Weller.pdf?sequence=>

- Westling, D.L., Fox, L. (2009). *Teaching students with severe disabilities* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Wiley, A. L., Siperstein, G. N., & Forness, S. R. (2011). School context and the academic and behavioral progress of students with emotional disturbance. *Behavioral Disorders, 36*(3), 172-184.
- Will, M. C. (1986). Educating children with learning problems: A shared responsibility. *Exceptional Children, 52*, 411-415.
- Yell, M. L. (2012). *The law and special education*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Yell, M. L., & Katsiyannis, A. (2004). Placing students with disabilities in inclusive settings: Legal guidelines and preferred practices. *Preventing School Failure, 49*(1), 28-35.
- Yell, M. L., Katsiyannis, A., & Hazelkorn, M. (2007). Reflections on the 25th anniversary of the U. S. Supreme Court's decision in board of education v. Rowley. *Focus On Exceptional Children, 39*(9), 1.

Appendices

Appendix A: Letter to Participants

**Wilkes University
School of Education
84 W. South Street Wilkes-Barre, PA 18766**

Letter of Informed Consent

Title of Study: Middle School Principals Attitudes toward Inclusion

Principal Investigator: Alan Hack

Phone: 570-854-0733

Email: hack0621@gmail.com

Dear Pennsylvania Middle School Principal:

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Alan Hack, as a graduate student to earn the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership from Wilkes University. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding to participate. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to verify on the survey that you read and agree to the terms included in this consent letter.

The purpose of this study is to investigate public middle school principals' attitudes of the inclusion of special education students in the regular education classroom. With the reauthorization of the IDEA in 2004, more students with disabilities are being included in the regular education classrooms. As a result, principals have taken on a greater role in determining educational placements and implementing programs that meet the needs of their students. Given that minimal research exists surrounding the attitudes of middle school principals toward inclusion, this study will provide educational professionals with additional information regarding public middle school principals in the state of Pennsylvania and their attitudes toward inclusion and their beliefs about the most appropriate placement of students with disabilities.

A web-based survey titled "Principals and Inclusion" has been created which requires no more than **ten to fifteen minutes** to complete and if possible, should be completed no later than Friday, July 11, 2014. If there is more than one building for which you are the principal, please complete the survey with information for only one of the schools. To access the survey, please click on the following link:

https://docs.google.com/a/wrsd.org/forms/d/1f_ab4JFCPIA2B9kThMHSpGrqPQ4A8AWUffINx9G1-CE/viewform.

The information collected from the survey will remain confidential with the results being reported by group analysis only. Your participation in this study will help to improve the knowledge of inclusion and assist both current and future educational professionals. Participation in the survey is optional and refusal to complete the survey yields no loss or penalty of benefits. You may end the survey at any time if you choose to no longer participate in the study. Upon request, a hard copy of the survey may be mailed to you, and summary of the results from the study will be made available to those interested at the conclusion of the study.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, contact the principal investigator, Alan Hack at 570-854-0733 or hack0621@gmail.com or the dissertation chair, Dr. Karim Letwinsky, at karim.letwinsky@wilkes.edu or 570-408-5512. If you have questions, concerns, or feel your rights have been violated as a research participant, you may contact the chair of the Wilkes University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 570-408-4241.

Thank you in advance for completing the survey and participating in a study which aims to improve the knowledge of inclusionary practices in the field of special education.

Sincerely,

Alan Hack
Ed.D. Candidate
Wilkes University
570-854-0733
hack0621@gmail.com

Appendix B: Survey Instrument

Principals and Inclusion Survey

The purpose of this survey is to determine the views of middle school principals toward the inclusion of special education students in the regular education classroom. There are no right or wrong answers so please address the questions to the best of your knowledge and provide us with what you believe. This information will remain confidential and no individual responses will be shared.

Please select the appropriate response:

I verify that I have read the consent form and agree that I am at least 18 years of age and currently am a middle school principal working in a public school in the state of Pennsylvania.

I Agree I Disagree

SECTION I – Demographic Information

The following information will only be used to describe the population being studied.

1. Which best describes your school district?

- Rural Suburban Urban

2. Approximate number of all students in your building:

- 0-250 251-500 501-750 751-1000 1000+

3. Approximate percentage of students with IEPs in your building (not including gifted):

- 0-5% 6-10% 11-15% 16-20% 21%+

4. Approximate percentage of students with IEPs in your building (not including gifted) that are included in general education classrooms for at least 80% of the school day:

- 0-20% 21-40% 41-60% 61-80% 81-100%

5. Special education programs available in your building:

- Full inclusion Co-teaching Life Skills
 Autistic Support Resource/Study Support Other inclusion
 Pull-out/Self Contained

SECTION II – Training and Experience

1. Your age:

- 20-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61+

2. Your gender:

- Male Female

3. Years of full-time general education teaching experience:

- 0 1-5 6-10 11-15 16+

4. Years of full-time special education teaching experience:

- 0 1-5 6-10 11-15 16+

5. Years of experience as a middle school principal:

- 0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21+

6. Approximate number of special education credits in your formal training:

- 0 1-6 7-12 13-18 19+

7. Most of your special education training has occurred within the last _____ years:

- 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21+

8. Which describes your level of understanding of special education law?

- Minimal Moderate Expert

9. Do you have personal experience with (an) individual(s) with a disability outside the school setting, i.e. family member, friend, etc.?

- Yes No

10. In general, what has your experience been with the following types of students in the school setting. Mark one level of experience for each disability category.

Disability Type	Negative Experience	Somewhat Negative Experience	No Experience	Somewhat Positive Experience	Positive Experience
Specific learning disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intellectual disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Serious emotional disturbance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blindness/visual impairment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deafness/hearing impairment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speech and language impairment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other health impairment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Physical disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Multihandicap	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Autism/pervasive developmental disorder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION III – Attitudes Toward Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

Please mark your response to each item using the following scale:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Only teachers with extensive special education experience can be expected to deal with students with disabilities in a school setting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Classrooms with both students with disabilities and without disabilities enhance the learning experiences of students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Students with severe/profound disabilities are too impaired to benefit from the activities of a regular school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. An effective general education can help a student with a disability to succeed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. In general, students with disabilities should be placed in special classes/schools specifically designed to meet their needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Students without disabilities can profit from contact with students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. General education should be modified to meet the needs of all students including students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. It is unfair to ask/expect general education teachers to accept students with disabilities into their classrooms.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. No discretionary financial resources should be allocated for the integration of students with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. It should be policy and/or law that students with disabilities are integrated into general education programs and activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION IV – Most Appropriate Placements for Students with Disabilities

Although individual characteristics would need to be considered, please mark the placement that, in general, you believe is the most appropriate for students with the following disabilities.

Please mark only one per section.

Specific Learning Disability

- Special education services outside regular school
- Special class for most or all of the school day
- Part-time special education class
- Regular classroom instruction for most of the day
- Full-time regular education with support

Serious emotional disturbance

- Special education services outside regular school
- Special class for most or all of the school day
- Part-time special education class
- Regular classroom instruction for most of the day
- Full-time regular education with support

Deafness/Hearing Impairment

- Special education services outside regular school
- Special class for most or all of the school day
- Part-time special education class
- Regular classroom instruction for most of the day
- Full-time regular education with support

Other Health Impairment

- Special education services outside regular school
- Special class for most or all of the school day
- Part-time special education class
- Regular classroom instruction for most of the day
- Full-time regular education with support

Multi-handicap

- Special education services outside regular school
- Special class for most or all of the school day
- Part-time special education class
- Regular classroom instruction for most of the day
- Full-time regular education with support

Intellectual Disability

- Special education services outside regular school
- Special class for most or all of the school day
- Part-time special education class
- Regular classroom instruction for most of the day
- Full-time regular education with support

Blindness/Visual Impairment

- Special education services outside regular school
- Special class for most or all of the school day
- Part-time special education class
- Regular classroom instruction for most of the day
- Full-time regular education with support

Speech and Language Impairment

- Special education services outside regular school
- Special class for most or all of the school day
- Part-time special education class
- Regular classroom instruction for most of the day
- Full-time regular education with support

Physical Disability

- Special education services outside regular school
- Special class for most or all of the school day
- Part-time special education class
- Regular classroom instruction for most of the day
- Full-time regular education with support

Autism/Pervasive Developmental Disorder

- Special education services outside regular school
- Special class for most or all of the school day
- Part-time special education class
- Regular classroom instruction for most of the day
- Full-time regular education with support

Appendix C: Letters of Permission

Cindy Praisner cpraisner@prodigy.net
to me

Hi Alan,
You have my permission to use the survey in your work.
Best wishes,
Cindy
Cindy Praisner
Early Childhood Coordinator
East Haddam Early Childhood Council
[860.873.3296](tel:860.873.3296)

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." ~ Dr. Seuss

From: Alan Hack <hack0621@gmail.com>
To: CPraisner@prodigy.net
Sent: Saturday, September 21, 2013 1:42 PM
Subject: Principals and Inclusion Survey

Good afternoon Dr. Praisner,
I hope this finds you well and enjoying your weekend. My name is Alan Hack, and I am a doctoral candidate at Wilkes University, Wilkes-Barre, PA. I am nearing the dissertation phase and would like to build upon your research with regard to administrator attitudes toward inclusion. My focus will focus on middle school principals attitude of inclusion compared to the % of students included in the regular education classroom at various levels (i.e. < 20%, 20% < x < 80%, > 80%). Therefore, I would like to seek your permission to use the survey you developed for your dissertation with the study I intend to pursue in the near future. I would be honored to use your PIS survey and will certainly reference the solid research you have already completed. Thank you in advance for your response.
Best,
Alan

Re: Survey Instrument Permission

Stainback <ghstain@ehc.edu>

To: Alan Hack <ahack@wrsd.org>

Date: 1/16/2014 9:57 PM

You have my permission.

Sent from my iPhone

On Jan 16, 2014, at 9:32 PM, Alan Hack <ahack@wrsd.org> wrote:

> Good evening Dr. Stainback,

>

> My name is Alan Hack, and I am a doctoral candidate at Wilkes University, Wilkes-Barre, PA. I am nearing the dissertation phase and would like to build upon your research with regard to administrator attitudes toward inclusion. My focus will be on middle school principals' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular education classroom with nondisabled peers in the state of Pennsylvania. I would like to use the Principal Inclusion Survey developed by Dr. Praisner from whom I have been granted permission to use sections 1, 2, and 4 of her survey. Therefore, I am requesting permission to use Section III of the survey that you adapted for an autism scale.

>

> Thank you in advance for your consideration as I look to building upon the existing research of inclusion.

>

> Best,

> Alan Hack

Appendix D: Follow-up E-mail to Participants

Good afternoon <<Participant's Name>>,

I wanted to take this time to reach out to you and all the principals initially contacted to participate in my research surrounding Middle School Principals' Attitudes toward Inclusion. This research is part of the requirements for completion of the doctoral program at Wilkes University.

If you have already completed the survey, thank you tremendously for your time and involvement. If you have not yet completed the survey, I would encourage you to consider being part of this important topic. The survey will be open until next Friday, July 18th and should take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. You may access the survey by clicking the following link:

https://docs.google.com/a/wrsd.org/forms/d/1f_ab4JFCPIA2B9kThMHSpGrqPQ4A8AWUffINx9G1-CE/viewform.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me via e-mail or phone [570-854-0733](tel:570-854-0733). If you are interested in the results of this study, please indicate as such, and I would be happy to share them with you.

Again, your participation is greatly appreciated in order to obtain a clear and accurate picture of principals' attitudes of inclusive education across the entire state and is important to the overall success of this project.

Sincerely,
Alan Hack

Appendix E: Descriptive Statistics for Attitude Scores by Training and Experience

	<i>n</i>	%	Mean*	Std. Deviation	Min.	Max.
Years of full-time general education teaching experience						
0	7	5.2	41.43	4.83	34	50
1-5	18	13.3	39.39	8.81	16	47
6-10	44	32.6	41.2	6.73	16	50
11-15	20	14.8	40.65	5.12	31	48
16+	46	34.1	39.15	10.18	12	50
Years of full-time special education teaching experience						
0	113	83.7	39.44	8.33	12	50
1-5	12	8.9	44.67	4.62	32	50
6-10	3	2.2	41.67	8.02	34	50
11-15	2	1.5	46	2.83	44	48
16+	5	3.7	43.2	5.4	36	50
Years of experience as a middle school principal						
0-5	46	34.1	41.33	5.99	20	50
6-10	63	46.7	40.1	8.78	14	50
11-15	22	16.3	38.45	7.65	15	50
16-20	4	3.0	38.25	17.58	12	49
21+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Approximate number of special education credits in training						
0	21	15.6	37.77	10.58	14	50
1-6	66	48.9	40.12	7.92	15	50
7-12	23	17.0	40.83	5.64	25	47
13-18	7	5.2	38.29	11.64	12	44
19+	18	13.3	43.33	5.53	32	50
Recency of special education training						
1-5	35	25.9	40.43	7.25	17	50
6-10	39	28.9	38.28	9.39	14	50
11-15	28	20.7	42.18	5.21	28	49
16-20	20	14.8	38.55	10.43	12	50
21+	13	9.6	43.54	4.98	35	50
Level of understanding of special education law						
Minimal	6	4.4	39.33	3.56	33	43
Moderate	113	83.7	39.84	8.44	12	50
Expert	16	11.9	43	5.83	32	50

Note. N = 135, *Mean = average attitude score

Appendix F: Summary of Correlation of Individual Attitude Items and Demographics, Training, and Experience

		Size of Building	% IEP Population	% IEP Population Included	Age
Item 1	<i>rho</i>	.046	.167	.094	-.144
	<i>P-value</i>	.594	.053	.279	.10
Item 2	<i>rho</i>	.010	.051	.107	.049
	<i>P-value</i>	.906	.554	.219	.572
Item 3	<i>rho</i>	.087	.187	.075	.081
	<i>P-value</i>	.314	.030*	.385	.350
Item 4	<i>rho</i>	.022	.080	.095	.015
	<i>P-value</i>	.797	.355	.271	.865
Item 5	<i>rho</i>	.132	.059	.091	.070
	<i>P-value</i>	.126	.494	.297	.422
Item 6	<i>rho</i>	-.024	-.025	.071	-.011
	<i>P-value</i>	.784	.773	.415	.901
Item 7	<i>rho</i>	-.037	-.049	-.004	-.057
	<i>P-value</i>	.669	.569	.962	.509
Item 8	<i>rho</i>	.000	-.162	-.040	-.012
	<i>P-value</i>	.998	.061	.647	.889
Item 9	<i>rho</i>	.026	-.091	-.123	-.002
	<i>P-value</i>	.766	.294	.156	.980
Item 10	<i>rho</i>	.056	.028	.091	.013
	<i>P-value</i>	.516	.751	.293	.882

Note. * $p < .05$

(cont.)		Full-Time Regular Education Teaching Experience	Full-Time Special Education Teaching Experience	Experience as Middle School Principal	No. of Special Education Credits	Recency of Training
Item 1	<i>rho</i>	-.059	.099	-.183	-.043	-.047
	<i>P-value</i>	.495	.256	.034*	.622	.591
Item 2	<i>rho</i>	-.059	.149	-.125	.152	.072
	<i>P-value</i>	.498	.085	.15	.079	.408
Item 3	<i>rho</i>	.053	.083	-.15	.121	-.042
	<i>P-value</i>	.541	.341	.082	.164	.631
Item 4	<i>rho</i>	-.1	.091	-.101	.053	.147
	<i>P-value</i>	.249	.296	.244	.54	.09
Item 5	<i>rho</i>	-.073	.111	-.17	.146	.084
	<i>P-value</i>	.403	.201	.049*	.091	.331
Item 6	<i>rho</i>	-.066	.099	-.033	.089	.092
	<i>P-value</i>	.448	.256	.707	.306	.288
Item 7	<i>rho</i>	-.068	.076	-.025	.118	.027
	<i>P-value</i>	.436	.383	.771	.172	.754
Item 8	<i>rho</i>	-.024	.135	-.079	.19	.125
	<i>P-value</i>	.783	.117	.362	.028*	.147
Item 9	<i>rho</i>	-.017	.158	.01	.151	.03
	<i>P-value</i>	.843	.067	.905	.081	.733
Item 10	<i>rho</i>	-.08	.162	-.063	.125	.065
	<i>P-value</i>	.356	.059	.465	.149	.454

Note. * $p < .05$

**Appendix G: Middle School Principals' Experience with Students with
Disabilities in the School Setting**

Disability (<i>n</i> = 135)	Response	<i>n</i>	%
Specific Learning Disability	Negative Experience	-	-
	Somewhat Negative Experience	-	-
	No Experience	1	.7
	Somewhat Positive Experience	39	28.9
	Positive Experience	95	70.4
Intellectual Disability	Negative Experience	-	-
	Somewhat Negative Experience	1	.7
	No Experience	1	.7
	Somewhat Positive Experience	45	33.3
	Positive Experience	88	65.2
Serious Emotional Disturbance	Negative Experience	4	3.0
	Somewhat Negative Experience	37	27.4
	No Experience	7	5.2
	Somewhat Positive Experience	53	39.3
	Positive Experience	34	25.2
Blindness/Visual Impairment	Negative Experience	-	-
	Somewhat Negative Experience	1	0.7
	No Experience	44	32.6
	Somewhat Positive Experience	23	17.0
	Positive Experience	67	49.6
Deafness/Hearing Impairment	Negative Experience	-	-
	Somewhat Negative Experience	3	2.2
	No Experience	32	23.7
	Somewhat Positive Experience	22	16.3
	Positive Experience	78	57.8
Speech and Language Impairment	Negative Experience	-	-
	Somewhat Negative Experience	-	-
	No Experience	5	3.7
	Somewhat Positive Experience	33	24.4
	Positive Experience	97	71.9
Other Health Impairment	Negative Experience	-	-
	Somewhat Negative Experience	6	4.4

	No Experience	4	3.0
	Somewhat Positive Experience	42	31.1
	Positive Experience	83	61.5
Physical Disability	Negative Experience	-	-
	Somewhat Negative Experience	1	0.7
	No Experience	5	3.7
	Somewhat Positive Experience	33	24.4
	Positive Experience	96	71.1
Multihandicap	Negative Experience	-	-
	Somewhat Negative Experience	-	-
	No Experience	24	17.7
	Somewhat Positive Experience	35	25.9
	Positive Experience	76	56.3
Autism/Pervasive Developmental Disorder	Negative Experience	1	0.7
	Somewhat Negative Experience	8	5.9
	No Experience	5	3.7
	Somewhat Positive Experience	46	34.1
	Positive Experience	75	55.6

Appendix H: Frequency Table for Inclusiveness Responses

Disability	Response	<i>n</i>	%
Specific learning disability	Special education services outside regular school	-	-
	Special class for most or all of the school day	1	.7
	Part-time special education class	11	8.1
	Regular classroom instruction for most of the day	42	31.1
	Full-time regular education with support	81	60.0
Intellectual disability	Special education services outside regular school	-	-
	Special class for most or all of the school day	14	10.4
	Part-time special education class	45	33.3
	Regular classroom instruction for most of the day	50	37.0
	Full-time regular education with support	26	19.3
Serious emotional disturbance	Special education services outside regular school	12	8.9
	Special class for most or all of the school day	30	22.2
	Part-time special education class	41	30.4
	Regular classroom instruction for most of the day	35	25.9
	Full-time regular education with support	17	12.6
Blindness/visual impairment	Special education services outside regular school	4	3.0
	Special class for most or all of the school day	3	2.2
	Part-time special education class	15	11.1
	Regular classroom instruction for most of the day	39	28.9
	Full-time regular education with support	74	54.8
Deafness/hearing impairment	Special education services outside regular school	2	1.5
	Special class for most or all of the school day	2	1.5
	Part-time special education class	15	11.1
	Regular classroom instruction for most of the day	36	26.7
	Full-time regular education with support	80	59.3
Speech and language impairment	Special education services outside regular school	-	-
	Special class for most or all of the school day	1	.7
	Part-time special education class	4	3.0
	Regular classroom instruction for most of the day	27	20.0
	Full-time regular education with support	103	76.3
Other health impairment	Special education services outside regular school	-	-
	Special class for most or all of the school day	1	.7
	Part-time special education class	7	5.2
	Regular classroom instruction for most of the day	35	25.9
	Full-time regular education with support	92	68.1

Physical disability	Special education services outside regular school	-	-
	Special class for most or all of the school day	1	.7
	Part-time special education class	8	5.9
	Regular classroom instruction for most of the day	25	18.5
	Full-time regular education with support	101	74.8
Multihandicap	Special education services outside regular school	2	1.5
	Special class for most or all of the school day	24	17.8
	Part-time special education class	27	20.0
	Regular classroom instruction for most of the day	40	29.6
	Full-time regular education with support	42	31.1
Autism/pervasive developmental disorder	Special education services outside regular school	3	2.2
	Special class for most or all of the school day	16	11.9
	Part-time special education class	33	24.4
	Regular classroom instruction for most of the day	60	44.4
	Full-time regular education with support	23	17.0

Note. N = 135