

AN ANALYSIS OF OPINIONS ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION INCLUSION AMONG
VIRGINIA ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

by

Pattye Keeling Leslie

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

2021

AN ANALYSIS OF OPINIONS ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION INCLUSION AMONG
VIRGINIA ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

by Pattye Keeling Leslie

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2021

APPROVED BY:

Jeff Rector Ed.D., Committee Chair

Lisa Hall Foster, Ph.D., Committee Member

Rebecca Plesko-DuBois, Psy.D., Committee Member

ABSTRACT

Past research has shown a relationship between individuals' attitudes and their intentions to act. The attitudes of principals and assistant principals can impact the implementation of inclusion in the public school setting. This predictive correlational study used multiple regression to analyze the linear relationship between the opinions about inclusion and the factors of administrative assignment, school level, administrative experience, special education endorsement, gender, percentage of minority students served, percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students served identified with a disability. The sample included 104 elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals representing 26 Virginia school divisions. Administrator opinions were measured by completion of the Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI). Data analysis revealed the percent of the variance is explained by the linear combination of the eight predictor variables was not statistically significant. Examination of the partial correlations for each predictor variable revealed that only the condition of holding a special education endorsement or not made a unique contribution to explaining the score on the ORI. Suggestions for future research include replicate the study in more Virginia divisions or other states, expand the study to include qualitative components, or expand the scope of the study to include other administrative roles, instrumentation, or theoretical constructs.

Keywords: inclusion, principal, special education, opinions

Dedication

This research is dedicated to those who have loved and supported me through the doctoral journey. My family, I love you more than I say; you are my world.

To my parents, Earlene and Bud Keeling, you have provided for every educational need and believed I can achieve anything. Knowing Marta and my four footed children were in loving hands made many hours of study and days away for course completion easier.

To my daughter, Marta, you have never questioned why computers and books took me away from you, mentally and physically, so many times. I hope you will be able to look back and know your mother persevered and accomplished a valuable goal. You are the greatest blessing in my life and your support has been priceless.

Finally, to my husband, Stephen Leslie. You are my rock. Without you this journey would not have happened. You have cheered for me when I did not believe in myself, held me when I fell apart, and rescued me in countless emergencies. This manuscript and degree would not be complete without you.

Acknowledgments

I owe the members of my committee a huge debt of gratitude for the support throughout this process. Dr. Jeff Rector, my chair, has been a great source of strength and peace. His kind spirit and words of encouragement fit my needs throughout the journey. I always knew he was there to assist and his dedication to meeting my individual needs, made all the difference. Dr. Lisa Foster nurtured this project before it was even a viable dissertation topic. She has served a double role as my institution chair and research consultant and her ongoing stream of perspective and feedback has helped to shape this study from beginning to end. Dr. Rebecca Plesko-Dubois served as the external committee member. She has believed I could complete the doctoral process even when I had doubts. Her friendship and encouragement professionally and academically have helped visions and dreams become reality. The guidance of these committee members has been the inspiration and support needed to complete a life goal.

To the many divisions who granted permission for surveys to be distributed to building level administrators and to those who completed the survey, thank you for believing in this research and supporting the process.

I am indebted to my supervisors and colleagues who have offered support by checking on my progress and offering periodic words of encouragement. You provided gentle, yet necessary accountability.

Thank you to the members of the Liberty University community who supported me through application, online courses, research, intensives, and the dissertation process. With the support of the university community, I have been supported and encouraged.

Finally, to the fellow doctoral students I have met along the way, thank you for your friendship and prayers. It has been an honor to share the journey with you.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	3
Dedication.....	4
Acknowledgments.....	5
Table of Contents.....	6
List of Tables	9
List of Figures.....	10
List of Abbreviations	11
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	12
Overview.....	12
Background.....	12
Problem Statement.....	17
Purpose Statement.....	19
Significance of the Study.....	19
Research Question	20
Definitions.....	20
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	23
Overview.....	23
Theoretical Framework.....	23
Theory of Planned Behavior.....	23
Related Literature.....	28
Transition to Middle School	28
Middle School Transitioning for Students with Disabilities	32

Special Education Services33

Inclusion.....42

School Leadership for Inclusion46

Summary53

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS56

 Overview56

 Design56

 Research Question57

 Null Hypothesis57

 Participants and Setting.....58

 Instrumentation60

 Procedures62

 Data Analysis64

 Data Screening65

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS71

 Overview71

 Research Question71

 Null Hypothesis71

 Descriptive Statistics.....71

 Results.....72

 Data Screening72

 Data Analysis74

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS78

Overview.....	78
Discussion.....	78
Research Question	80
Implications.....	85
Limitations	87
Recommendations for Future.....	89
REFERENCES	91
APPENDIX A.....	116
APPENDIX B.....	117
APPENDIX C.....	118
APPENDIX D.....	120
APPENDIX E.....	122
APPENDIX F.....	123
APPENDIX G.....	129

List of Tables

Table 1: Demographics of Sample.....	59
Table 2: Collinearity Statistics—Criterion Variable: Opinions about Inclusion	70
Table 3: Descriptive Statistics—Criterion Variable: Opinions about Inclusion.....	72
Table 4: Model Summary Table—Criterion Variable: Opinions about Inclusion	75
Table 5: ANOVA—Criterion Variable: Opinions about Inclusion	75
Table 6: Coefficients—Criterion Variable: Opinions about Inclusion	76

List of Figures

Figure 1: Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) Score Distribution	67
Figure 2: Scatterplot of Studentized Residuals Versus Unstandardized Predicted Values	68
Figure 3: Normal Q-Q Plot of the studentized residuals.....	69

List of Abbreviations

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA)

Free and appropriate public education (FAPE)

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

Institutional review board (IRB)

Least restrictive environment (LRE)

Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI)

Opinions Relative to Mainstreaming (ORM)

Public law (PL)

Scale of Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons (SADP)

Statistical Package for the Social Science – Version 25.0 (SPSS-25.0)

Students with disabilities (SWD)

Variance inflation factors (VIF)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Chapter One introduces the background information related to this study including an overview of the most recent literature, historical information, social context, and the theoretical basis. The problem that grounds the study is introduced, as well as the purpose and significance of the study. The research question is introduced. Finally, relevant terms and their definitions are introduced.

Background

An ongoing debate exists about whether students with disabilities (SWD) improve their educational outcomes with access to the educational opportunities offered in general classroom settings (DeMatthews, Serafini, & Watson, 2021; Naraian, Chacko, Feldman, & Schwitzman-Gerst, 2020). Inclusion with supports to access the general education curriculum has been and remains the highest standard for educating all students with disabilities (Agran et al., 2020; DeMatthews, 2020). Many educators are left wondering how to implement inclusion models so that achievement expectations for non-disabled students are maintained while simultaneously meeting the higher support and service needs of SWD (DeMatthews, 2020).

Historical Context

Inclusion of SWD into general education classrooms has a stressful and tumultuous history. For centuries individuals with exceptionalities were shunned or feared (Frost & Kersten, 2011) and these children were kept in the home environment, unwelcome in schools (Ball & Green, 2014). If enrolled in schools, SWD remained isolated in specialized, separate schools (Ball & Green, 2014; Frost & Kersten, 2011). Significant court decisions and legislation compelled states to reform education of SWD (Frost & Kersten, 2011). In 1975 federal

legislation passed that began to address the needs of SWD throughout the United States (Frost & Kersten, 2011). The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA), also known as Public Law (PL) 94-142, officially required schools to improve access to public educational services for all students regardless of category or severity of disability (Ball & Green, 2014).

Since the passage of PL 94-142, other laws have been passed, including the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), providing states with mandates and guidelines for providing appropriate services to children with disabilities (Ball & Green, 2014; Frost & Kersten, 2011; Pullen, 2016). Special education programming has always varied among states, divisions, and schools, but fundamental expectations for inclusion and equity remain the same (Cobb, 2015), services and supports may provide more than required, but not less (Pullen, 2016). Similar international actions have been documented to support inclusive, special education practices such as the Salamanca Statement drafted and passed in 1994 indicating schools are to be inclusive and nondiscriminatory (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013, Yan & Sin, 2015).

Inclusive education is overwhelmingly supported as the preferred means for providing effective instruction to SWD in integrated, nondiscriminatory environments (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Pace & Aiello, 2016; Yan & Sin, 2015). Recent research indicates only about one half of students with disabilities are now receiving most of the instruction in general classrooms (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015; Sailor & McCart, 2014). Schools are expected to provide instruction to SWD with non-disabled, age appropriate peers to the greatest extent possible with appropriate supports and services, in the least restrictive environment (LRE); however, there is no legal mandate for inclusion (Cobb, 2015; Sailor & McCart, 2014).

There is long standing debate over where students should receive special education services. One group supports full inclusion with opportunities for all students to be educated in general classrooms with access to the general curriculum, regardless of limitations (Sailor & McCart, 2014). The other side believes some SWD require separate environments in order to receive highly specialized services, indicating inclusion is not an option for all SWD (Sailor & McCart, 2014). School leaders, principals, and assistant principals, may make efforts to accommodate inclusion or they may choose to continue to support pull out and separate service models (Cobb, 2015). Leaders often vary support for inclusion based on level of individual disability and support needs (Ball & Green, 2014; Sailor & McCart, 2014). Teachers tend to express positive views about the potential benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities (Ball & Green, 2014; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). Teachers also express concerns about the practicality of teaching students of all abilities in one classroom (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Sailor & McCart, 2014). There have been ongoing concerns about the possibility of inclusive practices depriving students, with and without disabilities, of the level of instruction and support they require as a result of inclusive educational practices (Sailor & McCart, 2014).

Social Context

For many years, federal legislation has set specific, high academic expectations for all students, schools, and divisions causing administrators to focus on meeting the established achievement standards (Gosnell-Lamb, O'Reilly, & Matt, 2013; Sailor & McCart, 2014). Federal standards have been specific and applied to all students regardless of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, or disability (Nichols & Sheffield, 2014) but the reality is that these standards have challenged schools' abilities to effectively meet the diverse needs of all populations (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013).

Principals of schools today have greater responsibilities as they manage resources while striving to effectively understand and address the strengths and weaknesses within a given school in order to accommodate and overcome challenges (Ball & Green, 2014; Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013). Effective principals must use their positions to empower and nurture relationships with stakeholders to engage and collaborate to improve achievement for all students (Cobb, 2015). Principals must also spend a lot of time addressing special education related duties since they carry a heavy responsibility as first line authorities to make decisions, interpret policy, and take action in special education matters (Cobb, 2015). Although, many principals have inadequate training or experience in special education (Ball & Green, 2014), it is still important that they are able to effectively demonstrate skills and knowledge in this particularly complex and litigious category of educational services (Cobb, 2015).

Principals and assistant principals have significant roles in the successful implementation and effectiveness of special education programs and inclusive practices (Ball & Green, 2014; Cobb, 2015; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; McLeskey & Waldron, 2015; Yan & Sin, 2015). They are key to establishing the expectations, missions, cultures, and visions that propel schools to establish and deliver a continuum of services that supports successful inclusive models (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Yan & Sin, 2015). The most successful inclusion efforts are led by strong leadership with knowledge and understanding in the area of special education (Ball & Green, 2014; McLeskey & Waldron, 2015). Research has demonstrated that inclusion success directly relates to strong school-based leadership (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015).

Principals can play a key role in helping with students' transition from one level of schooling to the next. These transitions can have an impact on any student and their educational programming. School transitions create significant change for all children and families, but

particularly SWD (Lane, Oakes, Carter, & Messenger, 2015). Students with disabilities are at greater risk for experiencing the negative effects of school transitions than typically developing peers (Lane et al., 2015). Administrators, counselors, and educators who have an opportunity to partner across school levels in order to learn about each other's programs and plan smooth, supported transitions are better poised to support students so they transition to new programming in a supportive manner which helps continue successful inclusion in general classrooms (Lane et al., 2015).

Theoretical Context

The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) asserts that any behavior is a direct function of an individual's intentions and perceived behavioral control and addresses how attitudes, norms, and perceived behavioral control may predict intentions and actions. Ultimately, the theory helps explain motivational factors that indicate how much a person will try or exert effort in order to perform a given behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The completion of or success in a given task is not in question with theory of planned behavior; the intention to perform the task is the focus (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen asserts that individuals tend to favor behaviors believed to have desirable outcomes and since attitudes link to particular behaviors, positive attitudes will result from behaviors viewed as desirable (1991). Attitudes are a mediating factor in theory of planned behavior and may be influenced by past and present experiences as well as future changes (Ball & Green, 2014).

If attitudes can predict intention and intention is a predictor of behavior, based on theory of planned behavior, then attitudes have the potential to determine whether individuals hold positive or negative views of performing given behaviors or tasks (Pace & Aiello, 2016). Ajzen recognizes a variety of social and demographic variables including age, gender, and education as

well as outside information sources such as experience and knowledge that should be considered when examining attitudes as predictors of behavior (2005).

The theory of planned behavior is often used in general and inclusive education research since attitudes can be indicators for behavioral intent and future actions (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Yan & Sin, 2015). The attitudes of school leaders are critical when considering how leaders will shape school programs and embrace practices (Ball & Green, 2014). The theory of planned behavior provides a basis for understanding how the attitudes and opinions of principals and assistant principals impact how they set priorities, take action, and influence the attitudes of others.

Problem Statement

Past research indicates building administrators directly impact school improvement (DeMatthews, Billingsley, McLeskey, & Sharma, 2020a; DeMatthews, D. E., Kotok, S., & Serafini, 2020b; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Sun, & Xin, 2020) and student outcomes (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Leaders can mobilize efforts through modeling by articulating beliefs, allocating resources, and demonstrating values in support of the implementation of quality practices (DeMatthews, 2020; DeMatthews, et al., 2020b; DeMatthews et al., 2021; Murphy, 2018; Sun et al., 2020). Studies demonstrate that experience, special education coursework, and certifications may directly relate to personal attitudes and knowledge about inclusion practices among principals (Pregot, 2021; Schulze & Boscardin, 2018). There is an indication that building leaders must have adequate knowledge and preparation in the area of special education to provide informed leadership for special education programming (Roberts, Ruppard, & Olson, 2018; Schulze et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2020).

Past studies focus on leadership by principals for inclusive practices (DeMatthews et al., 2021; Pregot, 2021), but not other building leaders. Even though past studies acknowledge the role assistant principals play in leading building programs and impacting student achievement for all students, including special education (DeMatthews, et al., 2020b; Houchens, Niu, Zhang, Miller, & Norman, 2018; Morgan, 2018) no recent studies examined characteristics of assistant principals or were specific to assistant principals as related to any aspect of special education. One study was found examining building leaders and their impact on school transitioning for students (Naraian et al., 2020). A study was found that focused on perceptions of leadership based on whether principals had special education background; the student did not focus on the perception of special education (Schulze et al., 2018). No studies were found considering any significant differences that may exist based on type of building leadership assignments or comparing across school levels (elementary and middle schools). While some studies considered individual school levels such as elementary, middle school, or high school (DeMatthews, 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2020a; DeMatthews, et al., 2020b; DeMatthews et al., 2021), other studies did not consider school level as a significant variable (Schulze et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2020).

The problem is the attitudes of building leaders may be influenced by a variety of factors which may then influence how they lead the implementation of educational programming. The educational programs led by principals and assistant principals include special education programming such as inclusion efforts. A clear understanding of the different factors impacting the opinions of principals and assistant principals may support better understanding of how special education leadership within schools can be improved. Minimal quantitative research has been completed about the factors influencing the opinions of elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals. Planning for supports and professional development that has

the potential to improve special education leadership within schools is difficult without an understanding of the target audience.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this predictive correlational study was to determine if there is a statistically significant linear relationship in opinions related to the integration of students with special education needs among school administrators at the elementary and middle school levels and the characteristics of those of administrators and their professional assignments. The criterion variable was the overall score obtained by each participant on the Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) survey created by Antonak and Larrivee (1995). Predictor variables were administrative role, school level, administrative experience, special education endorsement, gender, percentage of minority students served, percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students served identified with a disability. Participants for this study were drawn from a convenience sample of elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals located in 26 Virginia school divisions during the 2019-2020 academic school year.

Significance of the Study

Provision of special education services for students with disabilities is a requirement and schools are expected to provide individualized services within a placement on a continuum of least restrictive environments (Cobb, 2015). For children to be expected to succeed in postsecondary life, appropriate education services must be provided at all levels (Zirkle, 2013). The expectation is for all special education students to receive as much instruction in settings that are as inclusive as possible (Sailor & McCart, 2014). Stable, effective leadership is critical to the achievement of all students (Avci, 2015) at the primary and secondary school levels.

Students with disabilities need programs led by administrators who prioritize high expectations and quality services for all students in placements at every grade level (Dhuey & Smith, 2014).

This study sought to add research that examined the attitudes and opinions of principals and assistant principals in elementary and middle schools regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in general classroom settings. By analyzing the correlation of scores on the Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995) with demographic variables, the study examined factors that may influence administrators' opinions about inclusion. Theory indicates attitudes and opinions have the potential to influence behavioral intent; therefore, understanding variance in attitudes and opinions across leadership groups may offer insight to help further understand how building administrators uniquely impact inclusion efforts (Ajzen, 1991). If differences in elementary and middle school building leaders' opinions related to inclusion exist, there may be implications for how leadership teams interact, the types of educational and professional development supports they may require, and how to differentiate support needs provided to school leaders in order to support more effective implementation of inclusive practices (Yan & Sin, 2015).

Research Question

RQ1: How accurately does a linear combination of demographic factors predict administrators' opinions about inclusion?

Definitions

1. *Attitudes* - Attitudes are defined as principals' and assistant principals' feelings toward or opinions about educating students with disabilities (Ball & Green, 2014).

2. *Equity* – Equity in education is based on the idea that every student has the right to the same educational opportunities; within those educational opportunities educators should then differentiate to meet the needs of individual students (Cobb, 2015).
3. *Experience* – Experience is defined as a principal’s or assistant principal’s personal or on the job interactions or observations with students with disabilities (Ball & Green, 2014).
4. *General Classroom* – The Virginia Department of Education defines a general classroom as a classroom in which students without disabilities receive instruction in the state and locally approved, general curriculum (Virginia Department of Education, 2010).
5. *Inclusion* – Not defined by the federal government, the philosophy of inclusion is that all students, regardless of abilities or differences, should be educated in the general curriculum with age-appropriate peers and appropriate supports to the greatest extent possible (Virginia Department of Education, 2014). Inclusion is seeking to provide learning experiences in a less restrictive environment with more integrated forms of support (Cobb, 2015).
6. *Pull out Services* – Special education services provided in a classroom down the hall from the regular early childhood program or in some other location within the regular, public school (Virginia Department of Education, 2017).
7. *Student with Disabilities* – A student with disabilities is a child evaluated in accordance with the guidance of the state department of education as having an intellectual disability, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disability (referred to in this part as “emotional disability”), an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, another health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, developmental delay, or

multiple disabilities. By meeting the criteria for one or more of these categories, the student requires special education and related services (Virginia Department of Education, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter Two examines the theoretical framework for this study based on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985). Literature in the areas of middle school transition, special education historical and regulatory topics, inclusion, and school leadership for inclusionary practice are reviewed to provide support for the relevance of the described study.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985) creates a theoretical framework for why understanding the opinions of principals and assistant principals is important. In this study, attitudes regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities (SWD) in the general education classroom are examined among these key instructional leaders, specifically among principals and assistant principals at the elementary and middle school levels.

Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior has been widely cited, applied, and considered influential throughout research in the field of education, particularly as it relates to topics related to inclusive education (Ajzen, 2011; Campbell, 2010; Rivis, Sheeran, & Armitage, 2009; Yan & Sin, 2015). Ajzen's theory of planned behavior developed from revisiting and extending the theory of reasoned action he developed with Fishbein (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The theory of planned behavior suggests that future sociological behaviors are best predicted by prior behaviors and are mediated only by constructs such as one's attitudes (Bentler & Speckart, 1979). By considering factors including attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, behavioral intentions, and beliefs (Fazio & Zanna, 1978;

MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013) a range of behaviors have been shown to be predictable (Conner & Abraham, 2001).

Based on seminal literature, the theory of planned behavior asserts that performance of any behavior is a direct function of an individual's intentions, beliefs, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991, Armitage & Conner, 1999). The theory indicates attitudes towards behaviors can be influenced by factors such as experiences, knowledge, and training (Ball & Green, 2014).

The intent to perform a behavior can be predicted best by considering an individual's normative beliefs or attitudes about those acts (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1969). The more a person intends to engage in a behavior, the higher the likelihood the person will engage in the behavior (Armitage & Conner, 1999). Research has demonstrated how the combination of attitudes and normative beliefs has a high predictive accuracy for behavioral intent (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1969) and has produced impressive correlational data in some cases (Fazio, 1986). Intent is the greatest predictor of actually acting out a behavior (Ajzen, 1991), but intent and a person's decision to act is influenced by informational factors such as one's attitudes about the given behavior (Doll & Ajzen, 1992; Pace & Aiello, 2016). Ultimately, the theory helps explain motivational factors that indicate how much a person will try or exert effort in order to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

The completion of or success in a given task is not in question with theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The intention to perform a given task is the focus of this theory which may lead to understanding how hard a person is willing to try or how much effort they may exert in order to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). If all factors influencing a behavior remain unchanged the theory of planned behavior indicates behavior will remain stable over time and

past behavior can be expected to predict future behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Thus, the theory lends itself to consideration of more malleable factors that can change over time or under different conditions and may create variance in intentions (Ajzen, 1991, Pace & Aiello, 2016). Specific behaviors are predicted by specific attitudes (Fazio & Zanna, 1978); the more positive the attitude toward a behavior, the more likely a person will intend to perform the given behavior (Pace & Aiello, 2016). It will then make sense to view change of an individual's attitude as a possible means to change an individual's behavioral intent (Armitage & Conner, 1999), otherwise known as attitude-behavior correspondence (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). One might hold various attitudes about factors influencing a behavior such as availability of resources (Ajzen & Madden, 1986), personal ability (Doll & Ajzen, 1992), control, and influence (Ajzen, 1991). Based on the theory of planned behavior, it stands to reason that if one's attitude becomes more positive about related factors, one will become more likely to behave in the predicted manner. The reverse may also be assumed, if a person's attitudes become or remain negative towards a given behavior it can be expected the person will not act as predicted.

Ajzen asserts that individuals tend to favor behaviors believed to have desirable outcomes and since attitudes link to particular behaviors, positive attitudes will result from behaviors viewed as desirable (1991). The decision to take or sustain action, results directly from attitudes developed from personal and environmental factors (Pace & Aiello, 2016). Ajzen recognizes a variety of social and demographic variables including age, gender, education, and religion, as well as outside information sources such as experience and knowledge should be considered when examining attitudes as predictors of behavior (2005).

When applying theory of planned behavior, researchers must remain aware of the extent individuals have actual opportunities and resources to perform the behaviors in question (Ajzen,

1991). Three factors interlink to determine whether a person acts and performs a given behavior: attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). This indicates attitude is one of three important factors identified by the theory of planned behavior when determining behavioral intention. Normative beliefs are concerned with the perceptions an individual has about whether social pressure from individuals or groups related to performing a behavior is perceived to be approving or disapproving (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Madden, 1986; Rise, Sheeran, & Hukkelberg, 2010). Perceived behavioral control is the factor that extends the theory of reasoned action, making it the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This condition refers to a person's perception of how easily a behavior can be performed and the probability of success (Ajzen, 1991; Yan & Sin, 2015); individuals will be more likely to engage in behaviors believed achievable (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Even with perceived behavioral control, one ultimately must have intention to perform an act; people do things they intend to do, not those they do not intend (Sheeran, Trafimow, & Armitage, 2003). When examining the three components of the theory of planned behavior, the intention construct, influenced by attitude towards the behavior, appears critical since intention captures how willing a person is to perform a behavior if afforded the opportunity (Ajzen, 1991; Armitage & Conner, 2001). If behavioral factors or situations give an individual complete control, intentions controlled by attitudes should be sufficient to predict behaviors, a concept central to the theory of reasoned behavior and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Armitage & Conner, 2001). A high correlation between intention and behavior can be expected (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977).

The impact of attitude on behavior has been the focus of research and discussion (Armitage & Christian, 2003; Fazio, 1986). The theory of planned behavior addresses an individual's attitude about performing an act in a particular situation and does not focus on

attitudes towards individual or classes of objects (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1972), an important distinction. While attitudes about objects are connected to attributes, characteristics, or other objects, attitudes about behaviors are linked to outcomes (Doll & Ajzen, 1992). Behaviors connected to more positive perceived outcomes and evaluations tend to produce positive attitudes and higher behavioral intent and engagement (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Madden, 1986; Armitage & Christian, 2003; Armitage & Conner, 2001; Johnson, Chang, & Lord, 2006; Ravis et al., 2009). Personal, direct experiences tend to increase the impact on individuals' attitudes (Doll & Ajzen, 1992; Fazio & Zanna, 1978; Fredricks & Dossett, 1983; Regan & Fazio, 1977) resulting in stronger, more predictive factors (Armitage & Christian, 2003). People hold many beliefs and attitudes but can access only a limited number at a given time, indicating the strongest will be recalled faster (Doll & Ajzen, 1992). Once beliefs and attitudes are activated in the mind, an individual is going to act accordingly, accounting for behavioral intention and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 2011; Bentler & Speckart, 1979; Johnson et al., 2006). When an individual behaves in a manner discrepant with previous attitudes, that person's attitude will typically change to become consistent with the behavior pattern indicating a possible reason why attitude-behavior consistency is more common among those with direct experience with a situation (Regan & Fazio, 1977).

Explaining human behavior is a difficult, complex task with many unresolved questions and issues (Ajzen, 1991). Despite ongoing questions and debate, the theory of planned behavior continues to serve as a foundational framework for beliefs about behavior (Ajzen, 2011). The theory does not account for where attitudes or beliefs may originate and how these individual factors may impact each person differently (Ajzen, 2011). What is known is that the theory of planned behavior is recognized as a strong model of attitude-behavior relations that can be used

across numerous disciplines to predict behavioral intention (Armitage & Christian, 2003; Ajzen, 2011).

The theory of planned behavior acts as a framework to support this study since demonstrating a correlational impact between demographic factors and attitude could indicate potential impact of demographic factors on behavioral intent.

Related Literature

Educational leaders have been required to focus on increasing legal and regulatory requirements related to educating students with disabilities (SWD) for many years (CCSSO, 2017). As years have passed, educators have become more aware of student needs, particularly those with disabilities, related to transitions such as the challenges related to moving from elementary to secondary school (Lane, Oakes, Carter, & Messenger, 2015). Literature provides evidence to support inclusion of SWD in general education settings (Ball & Green, 2014; CCSSO, 2017; Sailor & McCart, 2014). Research and related literature also demonstrate the challenges principals face as they strive to meet the needs of all students assigned to the schools they lead (Ball & Green, 2014; Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013).

Transition to Middle School

For most students, at least one school transition will occur during formal education (Madjar & Cohen-Malayev, 2016). The transition from elementary school to middle or junior high school is the one of the significant transitions for students and their parents that coincides with the transition to adolescence (Loke & Lowe, 2014; Odegaard & Heath, 1992). These transitions occur at a time of notable psychological adjustments and development of self-esteem of competence for all children (Lohaus, Elben, Ball, & Klein-Hessling, 2004). While students also experience other significant transitions during their grade school career, such as the moves

from preschool to elementary school or middle or junior high school to high school, no other transition coincides with as significant a developmental change as the transition to adolescence (Loke & Lowe, 2014). Due to this unique characteristic of the transition from elementary school to middle or junior high school, multiple studies have focused solely on this transition to the exclusion of other times of school transition (Akos, Rose, & Orthner, 2015; Bailey, Giles, & Rogers, 2015; Lohaus et al., 2004; Loke & Lowe, 2014; Madjar & Chohat, 2017; Madjar & Cohen-Malayev, 2016; Odegaard & Heath, 1992; Tarekegne, 2015; Vanlaar, Reardon, & Kalogrides, 2014).

While some indicate the implications and overall impact of the transition to middle grades is debatable (Madjar & Chohat, 2017) most literature indicates otherwise. This can be a great time of transition (Shim & Makara, 2013) provoking mixed feelings of readiness for a new challenge with uneasiness about the unknown (Odegaard & Heath, 1992) and it is common for adults and students to be keenly aware about concerns related to the changes (Mullins & Irvin, 2000). The transition is more significant than the grade or age at which it occurs since the change in academic path is so significant (Grills-Taquechel, Norton, & Ollendick, 2010). The transition from elementary school is during a time of developmental changes for students that occur at different times for different children creating varying rates of cognitive, emotional, psychosocial, and behavioral changes for each student (Bandura, 1969; Madjar & Cohen-Malayev, 2016; Proctor & Choi, 1994). Second only to infancy, adolescence is the greatest period of growth and change for a child (World Health Organization, 2013) and adding a significant, stressful change in school environment can be extremely overwhelming for many (Bailey, et al., 2015; Kingery & Erdley, 2007; Mullins & Irvin, 2000). As children deal with the challenges of puberty they are typically also moving into an educational setting with new

educational and social expectations that may not adequately fit their stage of development making this a critical life event (Anderman, Maehr, & Midgley, 1999; Madjar & Cohen-Malayev, 2016; Topping, 2011).

Research has found that students discover the environments at the middle school level are strikingly different from what was provided at the elementary level and difficulties can arise (Anderman et al., 1999). The transitions from primary schools to secondary schools (middle and high) typically involve many changes including: school size, school location, school arrangement, range of subjects, number of teachers, school culture, rigor, social opportunities, peer groups, reduced contact with teachers, and rigid schedules (Carter, Clark, Cushing, & Kennedy, 2005; Mullins & Irvin, 2000; Odegaard & Heath, 1992; Ryan et al., 2013; Tarekegne, 2015). Students often report/experience anxieties related to the new and unknown situations the transition will bring including: changing in PE class, using lockers, navigating a new building, more homework, more difficult work, contact with older/bigger students, bullying, and changing classes (Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010; Vanlaar, et al., 2014; Topping, 2011). As students reach middle school age, they are typically better able to share personal insights, opinions, and thoughts including: self-consciousness, distress, lower self-esteem, changes in self-worth, grappling with identity, desire for control, and worry (Katz, Porath, Bendu, & Epp, 2012; Kingery & Erdley, 2007; Midgley & Urdan, 1992; Ryan et al., 2013; Topping, 2011). During this time of change some students struggle more and are observed to experience declines in academic achievement, have higher rates of truancy, or engage in riskier behaviors which can lead to a higher risk for drop out from school later (Bailey et al., 2015, Ryan et al., 2013, Tarekegne, 2015).

Primary educational programs tend to emphasize nurture and caring with a goal of helping students find a sense of belonging within smaller school communities (Tarekegne, 2015). Secondary instructional settings often become less personal and teachers focus more on providing subject-oriented instruction in an impersonal style with less care and nurturing (Carter et al., 2005; Loke & Lowe, 2014; Proctor & Choi, 1994; Pullen, 2016; Tarekegne, 2015).

Adolescents with strong peer relationships tend to adjust better during the transition from elementary school to a middle or junior high school setting (Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010). Despite the changing adult relationships, peer relationships tend to be stable across settings and can act as a system of support during transition (Kingery & Erdley, 2007). In addition, students who felt more competent in establishing social relationships tended to report higher levels of school engagement and fewer school concerns (Madjar & Chohat, 2017). It may be reasonable to think that students with fewer peer relationships or difficulty forming relationships would not benefit from this type of transitional peer support.

Students transitioning between schools, particularly those at higher risk of negative effects, need effective and meaningful information with the introduction of interventions and supports to help them prepare for the transition experience (Carter et al., 2005; Lane et al., 2015). The transition to middle grades does not have to be negative (Anderman et al., 1999); administrators, counselors, and educators have an opportunity to partner across school settings in order to learn about each other's programs and plan smooth, supported transitions (Carter et al., 2005). Students benefit from opportunities to experience empathy, receive understanding, build hope, and focus on the positive (Bailey et al., 2015).

Some perceptions regarding the middle grades may result from negative popular culture images (Bailey et al., 2015), but some researchers state that students find the positive aspects of

middle school outweigh the negative (Berndt & Mekos, 1995). Despite those observations, other facts continue to indicate that transitioning to the middle grades can have a significant impact on students and are an important consideration.

Middle School Transitioning for Students with Disabilities

SWD are at greater risk for experiencing the negative effects of school transitioning than typically developing peers (Carter et al., 2005; Loke & Lowe, 2014). One cannot assume special education services meet the needs of all students requiring additional educational supports as learning environments become more ability focused in the middle grades (Midgley & Urdan, 1992; Lane et al., 2015). Special education instructional settings, such as inclusion in the general classroom, differ between elementary and middle grades raising concerns about how lack of continuity across settings impacts students (Akos, et al., 2015; McLeskey, Lauenders, Williamson, & Hoppey, 2010).

School transitions create significant change for all children and families, but particularly SWD (Carter et al., 2005). New school environments, schedules, and peer groups can present unique challenges for SWD beyond those experienced by their peers (Carter et al., 2005). The transition can highlight or expose new attitudes or behaviors placing students at risk for failure or to create a context for declines in achievement (Lane et al., 2015). Less able or more academically challenged students may be confronted with work that highlights the impact of their disability (Topping, 2011). Students already struggling with disruptive behaviors or discipline issues tend to escalate in the middle grades and the need for specialized interventions may arise if it has not been previously recognized (Madjar & Cohen-Malaynev, 2016).

Literature reflects the fact that the needs of students vary, their response to interventions are not the same, and children develop at different rates (Billingsley, McLeskey, & Crockett,

2014). Students with special instructional needs benefit from universal and targeted supports during transition and throughout the first year in order to realize success in the new school environment (Lane et al., 2015). Secondary experiences may have less emphasis on, value for, or perceived ability to offer inclusion opportunities within general curriculum courses (Carter et al., 2005; Tarekegne, 2015) and may be less likely to believe SWD are capable of succeeding in a general education setting (Lynch, 2016). Often it appears the most negative attitudes about inclusion come from the middle grade level regardless of school size or class size (Larrivee & Cook, 1979). Lower achieving students are vulnerable in the middle grades as students are rewarded more for academic success and they feel more isolated, with less sense of belonging among peers without disabilities (Grolnick, Kurowski, Dunlap, & Hevey, 2000; Midgley & Urdan, 1992).

Despite these potentially negative differences, educators and families should work together to ensure smoother transition and positive academic opportunities for even the most vulnerable students (Carter et al., 2005). All students deserve to experience school feeling confident, prepared, and capable (Carter et al., 2005) and educators who view SWD positively tend to help all students succeed and thrive in the classroom (Lucas & Frazier, 2014). Inclusive practices have been shown to play a significant role in making students feel a sense of belonging as a valued part of the community as they transition into the middle grades (Francis, Hill, Blue-Banning, Turnbull, & Haines, 2016).

Special Education Services

Special education has evolved over many years from students being completely denied services to them having the opportunity to learn alongside non-disabled peers (Thompson, 2015). During the 19th century the United States began to recognize the need for the population to be

educated, but students who did not fit the norm or were intellectually weaker were excluded from educational opportunities (Williams, Pazez, Shelby, & Yates, 2013). If SWD were enrolled in schools, the educational settings were typically state operated or privately funded institutions that isolated the individuals with discrete problems such as deafness, blindness, and intellectual disabilities from the general community (Ball & Green, 2014; Dorn, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 1996). Individuals were harshly treated in institutions and segregated into basements and isolated hallways of schools as routine practice until activists such as Dorthea Dix exposed the neglect and abuse (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015).

Even as compulsory attendance laws were passed, not all children were enrolled and the US Supreme Court determined states could legally exclude children from public education (Hyatt & Filler, 2011; Spaulding & Pratt, 2015). Students with mild disabilities might have been enrolled in school, but children with more significant disabilities were not (Ball & Green, 2014). Court decisions and legislative action related to SWD have a history similar to that of racial desegregation (Hyatt & Filler, 2011). Individuals were segregated for many years on the basis of disability, poverty, color, and cultural differences with education used as a tool of oppression (Antony, 2012; Kirby, 2016). After the Supreme Court ruled on the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) attitudes about equal educational opportunities for all children became a more significant issue, including a developing belief that SWD should be educated in their neighborhood schools (Williams et al., 2013). *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) established the idea that “physically separate is inherently unequal” (Theoharis, Causton, & Tracy-Bronson, 2016, p. 5) allowing for the argument to be made for equal access for SWD and eventually policy regarding special education (Kirby, 2016).

In the late 1950s laws began to support the involvement of the federal government in supporting the development of leadership for special education and making training available for all areas of disability (Pazey & Yates, 2012). With the election of John F. Kennedy more attention was drawn to services for intellectual disabilities and training teachers when members of his family told the story of his sister Rosemary and lobbied on behalf of individuals with intellectual disabilities like Rosemary (Pazey & Yates, 2012; Spaulding & Pratt, 2015). According to Spaulding and Pratt (2015), Gunnar Dybwad was an advocate who supported parents fighting for their children's rights to education based on individual need, during the 1960s. This movement was based on the premise that all individuals with disabilities could learn. Despite such advocates, North Carolina passed legislation in 1969 making it a crime for parents to force school attendance after a child had been excluded from public education (Frost & Kersten, 2011).

Significant decisions and legislation were seen in the 1970s that would compel states to reform education of SWD. In 1972, the United States court systems made rulings leading to the establishment of free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for all students with any type of disability (Frost & Kersten, 2011). *Mills v. Board of Education* (1972) resulted in a precedent that students should be provided a public education (Kirby, 2016). The 1972 ruling from *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* recognized a student's right to be educated in the public school setting when possible (Etscheidt, 2012), establishing the original basis for individualized education (Frost & Kersten, 2011) and the inclusion practices of today.

In 1973 Congress passed Section 504 the Rehabilitation Act prohibiting exclusion of individuals based on disability (Hyatt & Filler, 2011). Federal legislation followed in 1975 that

began to address the needs of SWD throughout the United States being denied appropriate educational services and students not appropriately supported in order to benefit from public education programming (Antony, 2012; Frost & Kersten, 2011). The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA), also known as Public Law (PL) 94-142, began the official requirement for schools to provide access to free public educational services (FAPE) for all students in the least restrictive environment (LRE), regardless of category or severity of disability, in order to receive federal education funding (Antony, 2012; Ball & Green, 2014; Thompson, 2015). PL 94-142 has since been renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other laws have been passed, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), to provide states with mandates and guidelines for providing appropriate services to SWD (Ball & Green, 2014; McLeskey et al., 2010; Pullen, 2016). These acts have undergone multiple reauthorizations, however the purpose remains the same, to assure that every state takes responsibility for meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities, particularly providing for the unique instructional needs of SWD with specially designed instruction in the LRE (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013; Pullen, 2016). Under these mandates, states may provide more educational services and supports than required, but not less (Pullen, 2016). In 1982, *Board of Education v. Rowley* (1982) determined a child is receiving appropriate special education services if the instruction provides sufficient support for the child to receive educational benefit (Zigmond, Kloo, & Volonino, 2009). In 2017, *Andrew F. v. Douglas County School District* most recently upheld this standard (Weber, 2017). The word inclusion never appears in IDEA or any other legislation (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014).

Special education programming varies among states, divisions, and schools, but the fundamental expectation is for children to be active, full participants in the school community

and for schools to have a true understanding of the benefits of inclusive education for all students (Cobb, 2015; Thompson, 2015). Positive attitudes towards integration of SWD are greatly attributed to PL 94-142 (Chandler, 2016). Gradually special education has changed to focus on the welfare of the whole child and acceptance of differences as fundamental to the school community (Kirby, 2016; Mowat, 2015; Theoharis, Causton, & Woodfield, 2015). The broad view of inclusionary practices has become more positive, but attitudes about implementation and practicality continue to be more negative (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). Leaders have historically varied their support for inclusion in general education settings based on a student's level of disability and support needs (Ball & Green, 2014; Sailor & McCart, 2014). Some school leaders continue to struggle to understand how students with the most severe and profound disabilities can be included in general classrooms to benefit from accessible social and curricular opportunities without negatively impacting the learning environment for general education or students with less severe disabilities (Sailor & McCart, 2014). School leaders, principals and assistant principals, have tended to strive for class size reduction in order to accommodate inclusion or have chosen to continue pull out and separate service models (Cobb, 2015; Theoharis, et al., 2016).

Governmental actions, court rulings, and advocacy movements have supported and focused on inclusive education as the preferred means for providing effective instruction to SWD in environments that do not segregate or discriminate for any reason, including disability category (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Pace & Aiello, 2016; Yan & Sin, 2015). Inclusion became and remains a core issue for families, advocates, and organizations since PL 94-142 was passed (Cobb, 2015; Sailor & McCart, 2014). Prior to the passage of PL 94-142 more emphasis was placed on supports and services provided in separate schools and classrooms (Sailor &

McCart, 2014), then PL 94-142 established a legal commitment to educate SWD in general education classrooms to the greatest extent possible (Kirby, 2016). Actions have been documented worldwide to support inclusive, special education practices (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013). In particular, the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) drafted and passed the Salamanca Statement in 1994 affirming every child's right to educational services that meet individual needs within general school environments, indicating schools are to be inclusive and nondiscriminatory (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013, Yan & Sin, 2015).

Many relate the concept of LRE with the practices of inclusion or mainstreaming (Cobb, 2015). The concept of LRE is statute based and relates to a continuum of services that ranges from general classrooms with no supports to separate, specialized schools (Sailor & McCart, 2014) and placement is to be determined by an IEP team, (DeMatthews, 2015) not a generalized practice. Within the continuum, states and divisions are expected to provide instruction to SWD with peers without disabilities to the maximum extent possible with appropriate supports and services (Cobb, 2015; Sailor & McCart, 2014; Sumbera, Pazez, & Lashley, 2014). Many schools continue to be reluctant to educate all students in general classrooms, particularly those with the greatest support needs (Choi, Meisenheimer, McCart, & Sailor, 2016) and legislation never intended to force schools to educate all students in the regular classroom if educational needs cannot be met in the general education setting even with services, modification, and accommodations (Hyatt & Filler, 2011; Zigmond et al., 2009).

The concepts of LRE, continuum of services, and inclusion continue to challenge parents and educators as they determine appropriate placements (Cobb, 2015). They must ensure students have access to the general curriculum, ensure instruction from highly qualified teachers,

and provide justification for any removals from the general education setting (Hyatt & Filler, 2011; Olson, Leko, & Roberts, 2016; Zigmond et al., 2009). Court cases related to the issue continue to be heard with mixed outcomes. Some cases have resulted in partial or completely separate placement for students such as *Briggs v. Board of Education of Connecticut* (1989) and *Daniel R. R. v. State Board of Education* (1989). Other cases such as *Oberti v. Board of Education of Borough of Clementon School District* (1992/1993) and *Board of Education, Sacramento City Unified School District v. Holland* (1992/1994) have resulted in courts deciding in favor of parents demanding their children be educated in regular education classrooms (Murphy, 1996). These and other varying court decision demonstrate the fact that LRE and inclusion do not have consistent legal tests and courts have adopted varying standards for determining LRE (Hyatt & Filler, 2011). To date, no court has ruled inclusion to be a right of or requirement for all students with disabilities (DeMatthews, 2015).

School staff are typically aware of special education mandates and the related issues but continue to debate how and where to best provide systemic, intensive, individualized instruction (Ball & Green, 2014; Pullen, 2016). As admission to public schools became less of an issue, what started to matter more were outcomes (Antony, 2012). No Child Left Behind (NCLB) brought about important accountability for special education requiring adequate yearly progress for all students, including those with disabilities (Antony, 2012). The enactment of NCLB caused principals and assistant principals to become keenly aware of their professional accountability for the learning and success of all students, including SWD (Gosnell-Lamb, O'Reilly, & Matt, 2013; Sumbera et al., 2014). Based on NCLB, SWD must access the general curriculum and demonstrate progress on the same standardized tests taken by their non-disabled peers with the support of reasonable supports and accommodations (Danforth, 2016; Zigmond et

al., 2009). The legislation assumed schools would be forced to address outcomes and access for SWD if held accountable to their performance on high-stakes assessments (Zigmond et al., 2009). The actual results were quite different, resulting in teachers with inadequate training serving high needs students (Shoulders & Krei, 2016), increasing return to placement of students with special needs into separate classrooms or schools (Sailor & McCart, 2014), and punishment resulting from published scores on a single assessment (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013).

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) replaced NCLB in 2015. One of the primary goals of ESSA was to focus on equity among specific subgroups, including students with disabilities (Egalite, Fusarelli, & Fusarelli, 2017). By passing ESSA, the federal government indicated a commitment to continuous improvement of the quality of education for these students with unique needs (Egalite et al., 2017). Educational leadership and the development of individuals in those roles was indicated as essential to realizing the goals of ESSA (Egalite et al., 2017). ESSA has continued to support the need for quality instruction for all students while highlighting the need to remain cognizant of the unique needs of special subgroups. The legislation has drawn even more attention to the need for those in authority positions to carefully create conditions for shaping quality practices that promote learning for all (Egalite et al., 2017). This legislation indicates leadership as essential to creating equitable educational opportunities for all students and a culture of inclusive practice (Egalite et al., 2017).

Implementation of mandates typically requires changes in and high demand on resource allocation, training needs, and other division level matters (Ben-Porath, 2012). Special education has been underfunded since federal authorization, yet the numbers of SWD being served has almost doubled (Pazey & Cole, 2013). Inclusion has increased over the years, but the overall progress toward this agenda has not met expectations with just over one half of SWD receiving

all instruction in general classrooms (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015; Sailor & McCart, 2014). It should be noted that PL 94-142 authorized federal coverage of up to 40% of the average expenditure per-child, however the actual provision has always been substantially less at a rate of 16%, leaving coverage of more than 80% of special education funding to states and localities (Murphy, 1996; Pazey & Cole, 2013).

Opposing viewpoints among parents, advocates, organizations, and educators have emerged in the debate over where SWD, especially those with the most significant disabilities, should receive special education services (Sailor & McCart, 2014). Strict inclusionists, argue all students deserve opportunities to be educated in general classrooms, regardless of limitations, because students deserve the greatest contact possible with typically developing peers; “all means all” (Sailor & McCart, 2014, p. 55). This side of the debate interprets mandates for LRE to translate into full inclusion with access to the general curriculum, regardless of level of disability (Causton & Theoharis, 2014; Sailor & McCart, 2014). Among inclusionists there are varying degrees supported from full to moderate degrees of inclusion, recognizing some limiting aspects may be too complex for a full inclusion setting (Dorn et al., 1996; Gordon, 2013). Moderate inclusionists are more like, traditionalists who believe some SWD require specialized services provided in separate, protected or sheltered environments that a general classroom cannot provide, indicating inclusion is not an option for every SWD (Sailor & McCart, 2014). In contrast, traditionalists do not support maintaining a continuum of services (Zigmond et al., 2009). Despite debates and varied viewpoints grounded in the rights of students and ethics related to humanity and quality of life, special education services are primarily a function of laws and policy that result in concrete actions (Ben-Porath, 2012, Bon & Bigbee, 2011).

The reality of today's society is that every child is expected to receive an education (Frost & Kersten, 2011). Despite this reality, problems with inequality, misidentification, and poor achievement persist in today's schools, particularly for SWD (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). Outcomes for SWD continue to be disappointing (Copeland & Cosbey, 2008); ongoing examination of the issue is warranted.

Inclusion

The practice of inclusion has greatly increased with over half of the 13.7% of SWD spending more than 80% of their instructional time included in the regular classroom (Lucas & Frazier, 2014). Despite this increase, children with multiple disabilities tend to spend less than 39% of their instructional time in the regular classroom with 25% of those students educated in completely segregated placements (Sailor & McCart, 2014). More than ever before, the expectation is for schools to be inclusive environments that value all students as active participants, including SWD (McLeskey, Waldron, Spooner, & Algozzine, 2014). Quality inclusive environments provide supports for all students to participate in all aspects of the school experience (academic, social, and extra-curricular) which should lead to improved student outcomes during in school and post-school life (McLeskey et al., 2014).

Inclusion is defined in many different ways across literature, but typically refers to the integration of SWD into classrooms they would access if they did not have disabilities with typically developing peers, the regular classroom (Copeland & Cosbey, 2008; Demirdag, 2017; Murphy, 1996; Nilholm, & Göransson, 2017; Thompson, 2015). Those who identify as inclusionists support the elimination of separate classrooms entirely with full integration of all SWD into general education classrooms (Murphy, 1996). Actual implementation varies across schools and divisions and definitions appear to be connected more to the allocation of resources

than specific, consistent rules about what is fair (DeMatthews, 2015; Logan & Wimer, 2013). Though sometimes used interchangeably, inclusion is not the same practice as mainstreaming (Lalvani, 2013). Mainstreaming is a selective practice, integrating students into regular classrooms on a case-by-case basis considering course demands and student needs; while inclusion assumes all students will be included without exception or special considerations (Lalvani, 2013; Murphy, 1996). Research has found that building administrators vary widely in their definition of inclusion and inclusive practices (Lynch, 2016).

The philosophy of placing SWD in the regular classroom is based on the premise that they have a right to quality education including: high expectations, opportunities for achievement, participation, high quality instruction, rigorous curriculum, success, relationships, and sense of self-worth (An & Meaney, 2015; Lewis, 2016; Obiakor, Harris, Mutua, Rotatori, A., & Algozzine, 2012; Nichols & Sheffield, 2014; Shoulder & Krei, 2016; Thompson, 2015). Truly inclusive environments offer all students the same opportunities, regardless of support needs, eliminating the medical model of the past that viewed disabilities as deficits to be fixed before offering opportunity (Kirby, 2016). Inclusive classrooms allow all students to be educated together as valued members of the same classroom while receiving individualized supports needed to succeed (McLeskey et al., 2014; Thompson, 2015). Most discussion of inclusion creates assumptions that the definition is primarily about the location instruction will take place, however inclusion is intended to be much more about an ideal for quality instruction of SWD (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Lalvani, 2013; Thompson, 2015).

Quality inclusive environments provide the supports necessary for success in academic instruction, social interactions, and extra-curricular activities exclusively in the general education setting and the need for pullout or self-contained programs is nearly or entirely eliminated

(McLeskey et al., 2014; Murphy, 1996; Theoharis et al., 2015). In the inclusive setting educating SWD is not the sole responsibility of special education teachers but is a cooperative effort with content specialists in the regular education setting (Hyatt & Filler, 2011; Thompson, 2015). Inclusion takes different forms for different students such as: classrooms co-taught by a general education and a special education teacher, students attending a general education class with an aide or specific supplemental services, or SWD attending a general education class taught by only a general education teacher (Antony, 2012; Gordon, 2013; Shoulder & Krei, 2016).

With federal mandates calling for SWD to have access to and accountability for the general curriculum it is more important than ever for schools to accept inclusive education (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013). Inclusion with supports to access the general education curriculum for all courses has been and remains the highest standard for educating all SWD (Ball & Green, 2014). Research has demonstrated that instruction is not fundamentally different for most SWD and when teachers differentiate instruction and increase access to resources all students benefit (Causton & Theoharis, 2014; Demirdag, 2017; Lyons, Thompson, & Timmons, 2016). A school wide inclusion model presents the opportunity to reach diverse groups at risk for underachievement or overrepresentation in special education as well as difficulty meeting proficiency on standardized assessments such as specific minority groups or low socioeconomic classes (Katz et al., 2012; Lewis, 2016; Lynch, 2016; Obiakor et al., 2012). Other research has shown students have more success when the work is more rigorous and expectations are higher resulting in better performance in core content (Kirby, 2016; Theoharis et al., 2016; Thompson, 2015). Quality instruction and access to the curriculum is key to this success, simply being

present in the general education classroom will not result in an optimal placement with high achievement (Obiakor et al., 2012).

Despite the research, some students have lagged behind in reading, writing, and math in some inclusive schools (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015) leaving those school leaders wondering how inclusion can happen while still meeting the higher support and service needs of SWD (Sailor & McCart, 2014). Arguments have been made that all students may suffer as a result of inclusive educational settings since students with and without disabilities may be deprived of the level of instruction and support they require, but this is not supported by research (Dessementet, & Bless, 2013; Sailor & McCart, 2014).

Although inclusion presents opportunities for belonging and interconnectedness, students can be ignored or teased, therefore inclusion must be implemented with sensitivity since students with special needs are also at risk for bullying, isolation, victimization, poor self-image, and reduced aspirations (Fellner, Comesañas, Duperoy, & Duperoy, 2017; Katz et al., 2012; Meyer & Ostrosky, 2014). When SWD experience quality interactions with peers without disabilities positive results have been observed such as more improved attitudes towards school, fewer suspensions, good attendance, higher academic engagement, and better retention and achievement (Katz et al., 2012). High quality inclusive environments are safe and promote dignity, allow for self-advocacy, encourage self-determination, and are free from systems of restraint and seclusion (Pennington, Courtade, Jones Ault, & Delano, 2016).

Implementation of inclusive education requires significant schoolwide supports that challenge teams to change current systems to create school structures and practices with capacity to support students with and without disabilities in the same educational environments (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013; Sailor & McCart, 2014). The inclusion approach to educating

SWD must be done in a way that not only emphasizes education in inclusive settings, but also assures efficacy of those asked to implement the strategy (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015).

Successful, sustainable inclusion programs requires the commitment of school staff members to the core values, school structures, systems, and practices aimed at improved educational outcomes for every student (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; McLeskey & Waldron, 2015; Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013; Yan & Sin, 2015). For success, students must not be suddenly placed into general education classrooms without planning and collaboration to equip staff with resources an adequate knowledge base (LeDoux, Graves, & Burt, 2012; Pennington et al., 2016).

School Leadership for Inclusion

Historically principals and assistant principals, also known as building administration or leadership, were hired to focus on the management related to planning, organizing, controlling, and leading the school environment (Muse & Abrams, 2011). Building administrators were responsible for day-to-day operational issues related to special education classrooms, but responsibilities for decision making and programming was deferred to other division level staff members, a comfortable arrangement for principals and assistant principals (Lashley, 2007; Roderick & Jung, 2012). Today, the key individual impacting the learning environments of public schools are principals causing their job responsibilities to escalate to an all-time high (Lynch, 2012; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013, Muse & Abrams, 2011). With increasing accountability for student achievement building administrators continue to face managerial concerns while monitoring the achievement of all students as the key instructional leader for a school (Barton, 2013; Lashley, 2007). As primary, instructional leaders, building leaders are instrumental in protecting educational rights and opportunities for students in order to ensure quality education for all (Wagner & Katsiyannis, 2010). At the school level, principals are often

responsible for making decisions that impact discipline, climate, instruction, progress monitoring, working conditions, and the availability of professional development (Billingsley et al., 2014). Leadership at the building level is now a delicate balance of ethical responsibilities for maintaining an environment that is conducive to learning for all students while keeping those students safe from physical and mental harm (Bon, 2012; Williams et al., 2013).

Assistant principals, though less frequently researched and discussed, play a vital role in the success or failure of a school as well (Militello, Fusarelli, Mattingly, & Warren, 2015). Principals at the middle school level often bear more responsibility with less assistance, as compared to elementary and high school settings (Lynch, 2016), creating a situation where assistant principals can offer vital support. The role of the assistant has been often overlooked in research and educational literature, despite the key role they typically must play in structuring effective teaching and learning for instructional success in a school (Ball & Green, 2014; Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012; Petrides et al., 2014).

Existing research has shown that principals may not utilize assistant principals as instructional leaders even though working as a team would allow the school to benefit from the presence and awareness one person cannot provide (Barnett et al., 2012; Muse & Abrams, 2011; Petrides, Jimes, & Karaglani, 2014). The role of the assistant principal is typically ill defined, but this building position offers the principal an opportunity to grow and develop an additional leader in order to meet the goals of the school proactively (Barnett et al., 2012; Petrides et al., 2014). Other research has shown that principals with support of an assistant principal may report higher levels of knowledge in the area of special education, when surveyed (Frost & Kersten, 2011).

School leaders can have a great impact on student achievement through their influence on the staff and educational programming (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013). Effective building leaders use leadership to develop a schoolwide vision that commits to improving achievement for all students and empowers and stakeholders to engage and collaborate in order to achieve the common goal to help all students succeed (Cobb, 2015; Mendels, 2012; Sumbera et al., 2014). Recognizing the need for staff to genuinely trust their leadership, building leaders must use a breadth of leadership skills to create successful systemic change when necessary to ensure equitable practices and positive outcomes for all students, particularly those with disabilities (Barnett et al., 2012; DeMatthews, 2015; Francis et al., 2016, Lewis, 2016; McLeskey & Waldron, 2015; Petrides et al., 2014; Roderick & Jung, 2012). In order to lead effective change those in leadership positions must have the working knowledge, personal awareness of beliefs and biases, and practice of personal reflection that will allow them to model the change and lead-by-example (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013).

Building administrators play a large role in special education matters and it is important they can effectively demonstrate skills and knowledge in this particularly litigious category of educational services (Cobb, 2015). As the leaders who determine what matters most and how to prioritize at the building level, principals must be well informed or the job becomes more difficult (Angelle & Bilton, 2009; Muse & Abrams, 2011). The critical point is that building leaders are in a unique position to influence teachers through their demonstrated behaviors, values, and concern; that influence on teachers will affect students' achievement (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013). The building leader's commitment to the success and well-being of each student in the school is critical to meeting the needs of SWD (CCSSO, 2017).

Principals spend a lot of time involved with special education administration duties and have great responsibility as first line authorities to make decisions, interpret policy, and take action related to special education (Cobb, 2015). As they supervise instruction, attend Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, and oversee other special education departmental functions, it is critical that principals know the needs of SWD and communicate high expectations for all students (Billingsley et al., 2014; Lynch, 2012). Yet many principals are assigned to building leadership positions with limited opportunity for coursework, training, or personal and professional experiences in the area of special education (Ball & Green, 2014; Billingsley et al., 2014). Most building leaders do not possess an adequate understanding of inclusive practices or continuums of service and frequently engage in special education leadership activities without possessing adequate knowledge to effectively lead the implementation of special education programs to meet the needs of SWD (Ball & Green, 2014; Frost & Kersten, 2011). In order to serve as an administrator for programs that include services for SWD, building leaders must at least have a minimum of knowledge in the areas of law, practice, and policy for special education (Pazey & Cole, 2013).

As with all issues related to special education leadership at the building level, initiating and continuously supporting inclusive programming for SWD requires building leaders to have knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will allow them to do the work necessary (Lyons, 2016). Research has demonstrated that inclusion success directly relates to strong principal leadership, effective progress monitoring, and professional development aimed at improving instruction (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015). In successful inclusion settings, principals are pedagogical leaders who empower school staff to act by providing guidance, support, and resources without micromanaging or interfering with daily classroom instructional activity (Cobb, 2015). Effective

leaders of inclusive schools focus on what is effective for programmatic success and right for the education of every child in their schools (Gosnell-Lamb et al., 2013). Some make a case for distributed leadership, lessening the emphasis on principal leadership, and placing more emphasis on the leadership of other school personnel identified as special education leaders across organizations (Talbot, Mayrowetz, Maggin, & Tozer, 2016). As principals manage competing responsibilities, they may pass the responsibilities for special education duties to other personnel (Billingsley et al., 2014).

As vital to the successful implementation of inclusion programs as knowing what must be done and how to do it are the personal beliefs and attitudes of the leader (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Pazey, & Cole, 2013). Attitudes and leadership play a direct role in the success or failure of inclusion efforts (Yan & Sin, 2015). When building leaders have attitudes that do not support the inclusion of SWD in the general classroom, they tend to resist efforts to embrace inclusion, do not reflect values of social justice, and often take steps to make sure students have limited access to general classrooms or are purposefully segregated to more restrictive instructional settings (DeMatthews, 2015; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Yan & Sin, 2015). Positive attitudes produce drastically different results evidenced by building leaders communicating expectations for and the importance of inclusion as part of the school culture and a deep respect and high level of support for the teachers and staff implementing the practice (Fellner et al., 2017; Lyons, 2016). Research has demonstrated that the positive attitude of the principals is a significant factor in the successful implementation of inclusive practices (Nichols & Sheffield, 2014; Sumbera et al., 2014).

Principals must articulate the opinions and beliefs that all children can learn, which indicates that believing inclusion is possible and important for all SWD is critical to supporting a

school's successful implementation of inclusive practice across school levels (CCSSO, 2017). There has been research to indicate that attitudes are impacted by situational and personality variables, therefore impacting behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Doll & Ajzen, 1992; Fazio, 1986). There has been very little research completed about the characteristics of school leaders that may impact their attitudes about inclusion (Ball & Green, 2014). In studies conducted about inclusion related to any type of educator, the variables considered have included gender, age, experience, educational level, professional specialization, and experience in special education settings (Antonak, 1981; Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000).

Variables examined for correlation with attitudes about inclusion in past studies regarding teachers' attitudes include age, gender, role, teaching experience, education, area of certification, training, experience in special education settings, and school level (Avramidis et al., 2000; Romi & Leyser, 2006). For age, gender, and role most results are inconsistent, and the literature does not clearly indicate the presence or absence of a correlation to attitudes about inclusion (Antonak, 1981; Vaz et al., 2015). Some studies have shown teachers to have more negative attitudes about inclusion as their age increases (Vaz et al., 2015). One study indicated the attitudes of males were more negative towards inclusion (Vaz et al., 2015). Teaching experience was found to have statistical significance with predicting teacher intentions to implement a strategy, such as inclusion (Pace & Aiello, 2016). Formal education was correlated with teachers' attitudes about inclusion based on the amount of instruction received about inclusion and specific disabilities but holding a degree in special education was not necessarily indicated (Pace & Aiello, 2016; Vaz et al., 2015). Research related to the correlation of professional development and other forms of training to teachers' attitudes towards inclusion produced mixed results (Avramidis et al., 2000; Ball & Green, 2014; Barnett et al., 2012). There

was predictive validity related to teachers' attitudes about inclusion improving with increased direct experience with SWD (Avramidis et al., 2000; Romi & Leyser, 2006). Among elementary and middle school teachers, there was no significant difference in attitudes towards inclusion, though there was a difference in how teachers perceived their ability to implement the practice (Logan & Wimer, 2013).

Variables examined in studies related to principals and assistant principals included gender, certification, training, coursework, tenure, experience in teaching, experience in administration, percentage of minority students, percentage of students identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students with a disability (Hallinger, Dongyu, & Wang, 2016; Huff, Brockmeier, Leech, Martin, Pate, & Siegrist, 2011). Results of past studies were mixed about the correlation between gender and attitude (Logan, 2013; Romi & Leyser, 2006). It is notable that the number of women in administrative positions continues to increase, particularly at the secondary level, indicating data may change (Nichols & Nichols, 2014). Research about the impact of gender on other factors in education continues to indicate there are significant differences in leadership style and perceptions among men and women (Labby, Lunenburg, & Slate, 2013; Hallinger et al., 2016; Nichols & Nichols, 2014). Studies indicated a correlational relationship between a principal's certification and attitude toward education of SWD (Lynch, 2012). Building administrators who held a special education certification were found to have more positive attitudes and felt better prepared to lead special education programs (Frost & Kersten, 2011). The number of special education courses and the amount of special education training for administrators has been statically related to numerous outcomes (Angelle & Bilton, 2009; Ball & Green, 2014; Lynch, 2012). Experience as a factor yields varying results in educational studies about principals with some indicating it as a significant factor and other

finding experience to have no statistical significance (Angelle & Bilton, 2009; Ball & Green, 2014; Huff et al., 2011). Experience included time teaching, time serving as a building leader, and experiences with SWD. The lack of racial and ethnic diversity among administrators continues to be a huge factor in school leadership (Williams et al., 2013) that needs ongoing attention. Of the studies reviewed, one suggested the percentage of economically disadvantaged students, minority students and SWD in a school had statistical significance in the results (Huff et al., 2011).

Past studies focus on leadership by principals for inclusive practices (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015). Few studies are found examining characteristics of assistant principals and none are specific to assistant principals as related to any aspect of special education (Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012; Petrides, et al., 2014). Most studies did not consider school level as a significant variable (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013; Yan & Sin, 2015). No studies were found considering any significant differences that may exist based on type of building leadership assignments or across school levels (elementary and middle schools). No studies were found examining building leaders and their impact on school transitioning for students.

Summary

Principals, as the leaders of individual school building communities, are charged with the responsibility of leading the creation and implementation of inclusive learning environments for SWD (Billingsley et al., 2014). Due to inadequate training to lead inclusion and instructional programming efforts for SWD, principals may not give adequate thought to the importance of special education leadership and may choose to disperse duties in this area to other leaders (Billingsley et al., 2014). If individuals feel unprepared to lead or have negative attitudes about

specific special education practices their supervision of existing inclusive educational settings or intent to implement inclusive education may be impacted (Azjen, 1991).

The theory of planned behavior is used in research related to general education and inclusive education (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Yan & Sin, 2015). Based on this theory, attitudes can be indicators for behavioral intent and future actions (Yan & Sin, 2015). The attitudes of school leaders are critical when considering how leaders will shape school programs and embrace practices (Ball & Green, 2014). If attitudes are observed to be more negative or ambivalent it is important to determine what factors may or may not influence attitudes beyond the core issue (Ball & Green, 2014), in this case inclusive practices. The theory of planned behavior provides a basis for examining not only the attitudes that indicate intent to implement inclusive practices, but the factors that may influence those attitudes as leaders set priorities and take action. In addition, the attitudes of principals and assistant principals are important to understand since their leadership roles put them in a position to influence the attitudes of others.

Principals and assistant principals are key leaders in providing the appropriate supports as students go through significant transitions, such as the transition from the elementary school to the middle school setting (Carter et al., 2005), including SWD. Understanding how opinions about inclusion may vary among principals and assistant principals at the elementary and middle school level may help to indicate needs for supports and professional development for administrators based on school level. Understanding of administrators' opinions about inclusive practices can be of importance as school divisions seek to support efforts to meet the expectations of free and appropriate education for all students; the gold standard is inclusion in the general classroom (Ball & Green, 2014). As more is understood about what influences principals and assistant principals as they fulfill their duties in the area of special education

services, there may be implications for how leadership teams interact, the types of educational and professional development supports they may require, and how to best define support needs of school leaders for more effective implementation of inclusive practices (Billingsley et al., 2014; Yan & Sin, 2015).

Decision making practices in the area of special education can challenge the status quo for many educators since they do not believe all SWD should be held to the same standards as nondisabled peers and not all should be included in general classrooms (Billingsley et al., 2014). If principals focus on individualistic, situational, and context-specific leadership practices that adjust to individual student's current and evolving needs, training specific to special education may not be as important as the leader's other attitudes, principles, qualities, and beliefs (CCSSO, 2017).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This chapter outlines the methodology for this study. Research design is addressed including a description of participants, setting for the study, instrumentation, and procedures for data collection. Finally, the data analysis is explained including data screening and assumption tests.

Design

This quantitative study used a predictive correlational design to determine the relationship between opinions related to the integration of students with special education needs among school administrators at the elementary and middle school levels and the characteristics of those of administrators and their professional assignments. Correlational designs allow for the examination of a statistical relationship between variables (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

The criterion variable was the overall score obtained by each participant on the Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) survey created by Antonak and Larrivee (1995). Predictor variables were administrative role, school level, administrative experience, special education endorsement, gender, percentage of minority students served, percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students served identified with a disability. Administrative assignment was defined as each participant's administrative assignment of principal or assistant principal. School level was defined as building level assignment, elementary or middle school, as identified by each participant. Experience was defined as zero to seven years or more than seven years working in the field of education at the time of demographic completion (Center, Ward, Parmenter, & Nash, 1985). Special education endorsement was defined as holding at least one special education

endorsement as defined by the Commonwealth of Virginia Licensure Regulations for School Personnel (8 VAC § 20-22). Gender was defined as male or female. Percentage of minority students served was defined as less than or greater than (includes equal to) 30%, using a percentage based on the portion of the overall Virginia population defined as minority by the US Census Bureau (Quick Facts Virginia, 2017). Percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged was defined as less than or greater than (includes equal to) 11%, using a percentage based on the portion of the overall Virginia population defined as living in poverty, by the US Census Bureau (Quick Facts Virginia, 2017). Percentage of students served identified with a disability was defined as less than or greater than (includes equal to) 7.8%, using a percentage based on the portion of the overall Virginia population defined as having a disability by the U.S. Census Bureau (Quick Facts Virginia, 2017).

Research Question

RQ1: How accurately does a linear combination of demographic factors predict administrators' opinions about inclusion?

Null Hypothesis

H₀1: There is no significant predictive relationship between the criterion variable (opinions about inclusion) and the linear combination of predictor variables (administrative role, school level, administrative experience, special education endorsement, gender, percentage of minority students served, percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students served identified with a disability) among elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals in Virginia.

Participants and Setting

Participants for this study were drawn from a convenience sample of elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals located throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia during the 2019-2020 academic school year. Virginia has 227 independent school divisions located within the eight superintendents' regions defined by the Virginia Department of Education (2018a). Of these divisions, 38 are in cities and towns with the remainder located in county jurisdictions. This study included participants across 26 Virginia school divisions with division leadership granting permission to invite employees to participate.

The equation $N \geq 104 + m$ (m = number of predictor variables) was examined to determine the sample size of individual predictor variables (Warner, 2013). The total of eight predictor variables included in study suggested that 112 participants should be included to meet the minimum standards at the $p < 0.05$ alpha level with a medium effect size. The number of valid participants for this study was slightly under the suggested minimum of 112 participants, with 104 participants providing complete responses.

Participation was solicited by email invitation to voluntarily participate in an internet-based survey. The population was drawn from a convenience sample of elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals located throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia during the 2019-2020 academic school year. This population chosen since the researcher works within the Commonwealth of Virginia and is familiar with the licensure and administrative structures within the state (Gall et al., 2007).

Based on permissions received from superintendents or their designees, the sample came from 26 school divisions. The sample consisted of 104 voluntary participants. More than half of the participants had the administrative assignment of building principal ($N = 67$) while the rest

were assigned the position of building assistant principal ($N = 37$). There were more participants from the elementary school level ($N = 74$) than the middle school level ($N = 30$). Demographic information gathered in the survey includes administrative assignment, school level, administrative experience, special education endorsement, gender, and school demographics (see Table 1).

Table 1

Demographics of Sample

Characteristic	Overall (N = 104)	Percentage
Administrative assignment		
Principal	67	64.4
Assistant principal	37	35.6
School level		
Elementary	74	71.2
Middle	30	28.8
Administrative experience		
0-7 yrs. experience	50	48.1
> 7 yrs. experience	54	51.9
Special ed. endorsement		
Endorsed	23	22.1
None	81	77.9
Gender		
Female	80	76.9
Male	24	23.1
School Population		
< 30% minority	48	46.2
≥ 30% minority	56	53.8
< 11% low SES	20	19.2
≥ 11% low SES	84	80.8
< 7.8% SWD	23	22.1
≥ 7.8% SWD	81	77.9

Instrumentation

This study used the survey instrument, the Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) developed by Antonak and Larrivee (1995). See Appendix A for a copy of the instrument. The purpose of this instrument is to measure the attitudes of individuals toward the integration of students with disabilities into general classrooms (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995). The ORI was used in this study to measure the opinions of school administrators assigned to the role of principal or assistant principal at the elementary or middle school level.

The ORI resulted from a revision of the Opinions Relative to Mainstreaming (ORM) which was developed and validated by Larrivee and Cook as part of their effort to investigate “teachers’ attitudes toward mainstreaming students with disabilities into general classrooms” (1979, p. 140). Using a Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient, the scale was found to have a split-half reliability of 0.92 (Larrivee & Cook, 1979). The ORM was again validated by Larrivee (1981) and was found to have a split-half reliability of 0.92 using a Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient. Antonak and Larrivee (1995) reported a Spearman-Brown corrected split-half reliability of 0.82 with a standard error measure of 5.98. The overall ORI was reported to have high internal consistency with Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.88$ (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995).

The ORM had a strong theoretical base and psychometric characteristics; however, the survey eventually needed significant modifications to update the structure and language of the survey to a more contemporary format (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995). The overall content of the original 30 item ORM was preserved while rewriting the items to use person first language and inclusive language when referring to the referent and the object of the referent (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995). Validity threats typically associate with summated rating scales were avoided by modifying the item-response format and item arrangement (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995). The

rating scale was changed to a 6-point continuum in order to avoid a mid-point-response-style threat that was present in the ORM. A 25-item revised version of the original 30 item ORM resulted from the changes and the survey became known as the ORI. The ORI has been recognized as a psychometrically sound instrument for measuring the attitudes toward integration of students with disabilities in general classrooms by a variety of published, peer reviewed studies (Jung, 2008; Lucas & Frazier, 2014; Miller, Gresham, & Fouts, 2011; Vaz, Wilson, Falkmer, Sim, Scott, Cordier, & Falkmer, 2015).

A factor analysis of respondent sociodemographic and experiential data compared with the Scale of Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons (SADP) (Antonak, 1982) supported the scale's construct validity (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995). The coefficient alpha internal consistency has a mean of 0.81. The validity of the subscales has not been analyzed (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995).

Survey participants are asked to respond to a series of 25 statements. The statements fit into one of four categories described by the developers as (a) benefits of inclusion, (b) inclusive classroom management, (c) perceived ability to teach students with disabilities, and (d) special education versus inclusive settings (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995). Responses are based on a 6-point, Likert-type rating scale including: -3, "I disagree very much"; -2, "I disagree pretty much"; -1 "I disagree a little"; +1, "I agree a little"; +2, "I agree pretty much"; and +3, "I agree very much." Statements are in random order with 13 statements intended to yield positive responses and the remaining 12 negative responses (Mulholland, 2011). The 12 statements intended to result in negative responses require reverse coding (Romi & Leyser, 2006). Scores are summed by the researcher and a constant score of 75 is added to each sum to eliminate negative score values. Overall scores range from 0 to 150, with a higher score indicating a more

positive opinion about integration of special education students in the general education classroom.

Prior to the beginning of the study, written permission to use the scale was received from the survey developer for a live study (see Appendix B). Participants completed the 25 survey questions in an online format through Google Forms®. The ORI required approximately five minutes for completion (Mulholland, 2011). Each negative response was reverse coded by the researcher. As described in the scoring directions, the scores on the survey were then be summed by the researcher and a constant score of 75 was added to each sum to eliminate negative scores. An alternate scorer was trained in the summing process and verified all ORI sums. Using the standardized scoring process provided with the survey ensured inter-rater reliability.

Procedures

An email communication was sent to all superintendents in Virginia school divisions. The Web Policies for the Virginia Department of Education (2018b) indicate the directories on the website may be used for non-commercial use without seeking written permission. The email communication requested superintendents or their designee to respond electronically to provide consent for recruitment of division personnel and their participation (see Appendix C). A link to the Informed Consent was attached to the email for the superintendent or designee to read prior to deciding whether to grant consent (see Appendix D). Email addresses for the superintendents were obtained using educational directory information that may be accessed on the website for the Virginia Department of Education (2016) and through individual school division websites.

The research study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Upon receipt of permission from a division superintendent, approval was obtained from the Liberty University

Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study (see Appendix E). The approved Liberty University Institutional Review Board reference number was 3674.093019.

After IRB approval was received, a recruitment letter was emailed to all elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals within a given division asking each to answer questions via a link to a survey in Google Forms® (see Appendix F). Email addresses for the elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals were obtained using the school division websites. A link to access an online consent and the survey was included in the emailed recruitment letter (see Appendix F). The ORI was entered into Google Forms by permission of the creator (see Appendix B). The Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) (see Appendix A) was followed by a demographic section (See Appendix F). The ORI and demographic questions were posted as a single, continuous survey.

The initial send date for each recruitment letter was monitored in a spreadsheet maintained on the researcher's hard drive and backed-up to the researcher's online doctoral OneDrive®. Two weeks after the initial recruitment letter was sent, a follow up letter was emailed acknowledging that some principals and assistant principals had already participated and making a second request for other potential candidates to participate (see Appendix G). The researcher did not know who had and had not participated, to protect the identity of the participant division, schools, and individuals. The follow up letter included a general note of thanks to individuals who have already completed the survey. Data collection continued for four weeks after the last recruitment letter is sent.

Access to the Google Forms® account was limited to the researcher and survey results were printed and filed in the researcher's secure file. All summary and individual data were downloaded from Google Forms®. The reports were stored in electronic format on the

researcher's Google Drive®, on the researcher's hard drive and backed-up to the researcher's online doctoral candidate webserver. Electronic files were password protected.

Each participant was assigned a participant number for organizational purposes. The ORI was scored, by the researcher and an additional scorer, according to the standard survey scoring protocol. Demographic data and total ORI scores were formatted in spreadsheet columns to facilitate transfer to the Statistical Package for the Social Science – Version 25.0 (SPSS-25.0). After data was edited, the electronic file was uploaded to SPSS for analysis. All printed documents were stored in the researcher's secured personal files and will be maintained for the required seven-year period.

Data Analysis

The researcher used Statistical Package for the Social Science – Version 25.0 (SPSS-25.0) software to conduct a multiple regression to determine the relationship among the criterion variable, opinions related to inclusion, and the predictor variables (administrative role, school level, administrative experience, special education endorsement, gender, percentage of minority students served, percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students served identified with a disability). Gall et al. (2007) indicate that multiple regression is widely used in educational research due to the ability to examine a combination of two or more predictor variables and determine the magnitude and statistical significance of the relationships between the variables in a study. The standard multiple regression analysis allows the predictive usefulness of each predictor variable to be measured while controlling for any possible linear associations with the other predictor variables in the study (Warner, 2013).

To determine the effect size in the correlational predictive study, the R and R^2 were used to examine the relationships between the predictor and the criterion variables. The researcher

chose to focus only on the relationship between variables and not the difference between variables. Due to this focus, a multiple regression was most relevant and dummy coding was necessary to analyze each categorical variable further (Warner, 2013). A standard multiple regression analysis was run to determine the relationship between the criterion variable and the predictor variables. The criterion variable, opinions related to inclusion, was measured at the continuous level using the score each participant received after completing the Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) survey created by Antonak and Larrivee (1995). The predictor variables were all categorical variables measured as two groups or levels. Predictor variables included: administrative assignment (coded 0 = principal, 1 = assistant principal), school level (coded 0 = elementary, 1 = middle), administrative experience (coded 0 = 0-7 years, 1 = > 10 years), special education endorsement (coded 0 = special education endorsed, 1 = no special education endorsement), gender (coded 0 = male, 1 = female), percentage of minority students served (coded 0 = <30%, 1 = \geq 30%), percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged (coded 0 = <11%, 1 = \geq 11%), and percentage of students served identified with a disability (coded 0 = <7.8%, 1 = \geq 7.8%). Dummy coding allows for the comparison of multiple, categorical groups through a multiple regression (Warner, 2013).

Data Screening

Data was screened for obvious omissions, errors, and inconsistencies; none were obvious in the specified data. A Box and Whisker plot was created for the criterion variable to examine data for extreme outliers (Warner, 2013). One case was designated an outlier when found to lie outside the outer fences of the boxplot (Warner, 2013). Examination of the Casewise Diagnostics table generated in SPSS revealed one outlier at the lower end of the scale with a value of less than 45. The identified case had a standardized residual of -3.024, a predicted value

of 98.77 compared to an observed ORI score of 45, which was an error in prediction (residual) of -53.774. This case was identified to be an outlier due to the standardized residual indicating more than three standard deviations. Reexamination of the data did not reveal errors in entry. Since data indicated this was an extreme score relative to the rest of the sample, judgement was made to remove the case from the study sample.

Assumption Testing

All assumption testing for a multiple regression analysis was completed. The researcher assumed participants individually completed and submitted the survey, so the researcher assumes that each score is independent from all others. Group sizes were compared and ideally the groups were expected to be approximately equal in size (Warner, 2013). Upon examination, the group sizes for administrative experience and the percentage of students in the school identified based on percentage of minorities were approximately equal. The other groups, though not approximately equal, had more than 10 cases in each (Warner, 2013). There was independence of residuals, as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.465. The data cannot be considered random since it was gathered from a convenience sample of voluntary participants within participating division.

The assumption of normality was met, as assessed by examination of a histogram (see Figure 1). Scores were distributed in an approximately normally shaped distribution shape, as is ideal (Warner, 2013). The assumption of normal distribution was tenable.

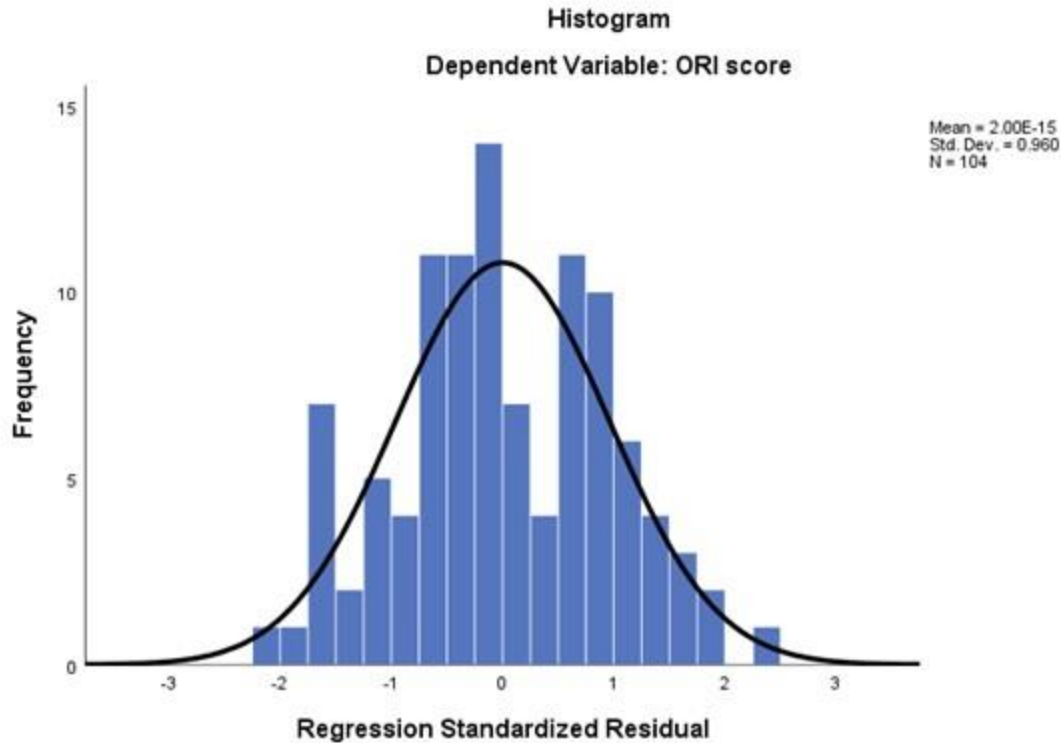


Figure 1. Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) score distribution.

Typically, a scatterplot with imposed trend lines is examined to check for linearity, multivariate normality, and homoscedasticity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Warner, 2013). If the scatterplot is “nearly rectangularly distributed with a concentration of scores along the center” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p. 127) then the assumptions of linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity are met. There was linearity as assessed by visual inspection of the partial regression plots and a plot of studentized residuals against the unstandardized predicted values (see Figure 2). There was homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of the same plot of studentized residuals versus unstandardized predicted values. Observed plots did not exhibit a distinct pattern and appeared to be approximately evenly spread (Laerd, 2018).

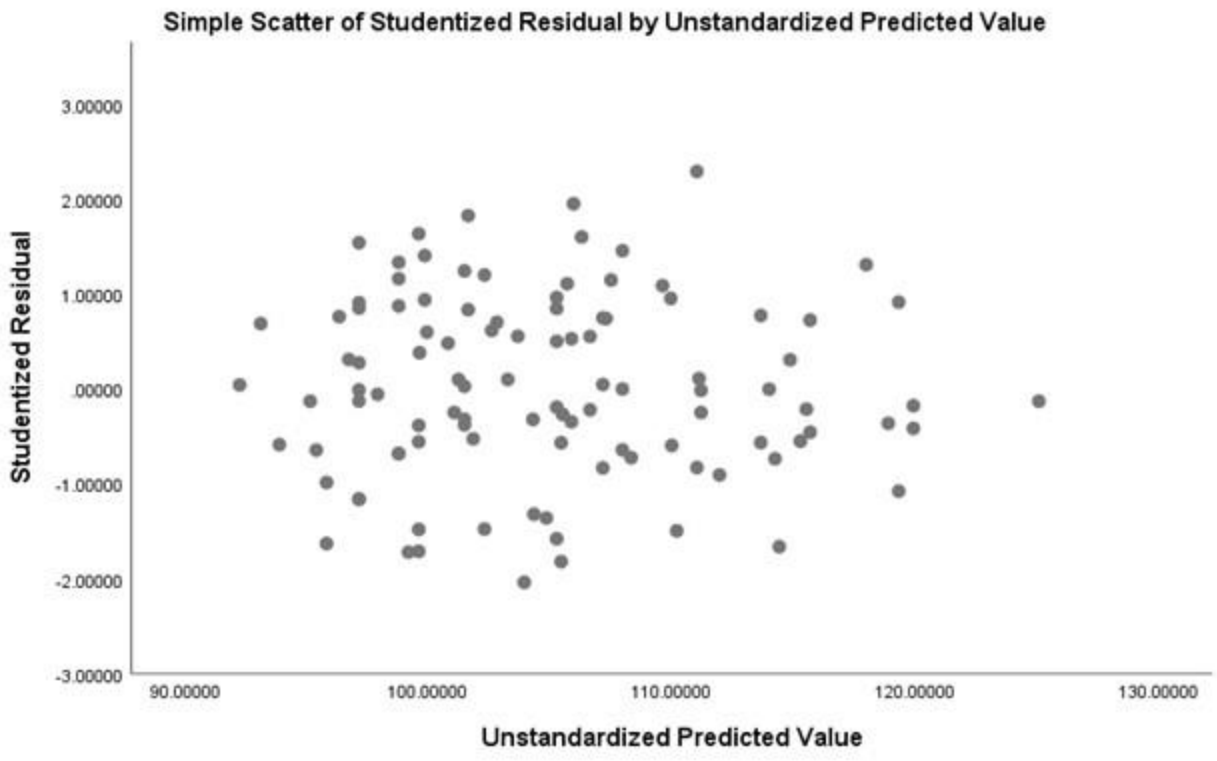


Figure 2: Scatterplot showing relationship between studentized residuals and predicted values.

There was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.1. There were no studentized deleted residuals greater than ± 3 standard deviations, no leverage values greater than 0.2, and no values for Cook’s distance above 1. The assumption of normality was met, as assessed by a Q-Q Plot (see Figure 3). Though not perfectly aligned to the diagonal line, the points were close enough to the line to indicate normality (Laerd Statistics, 2018).

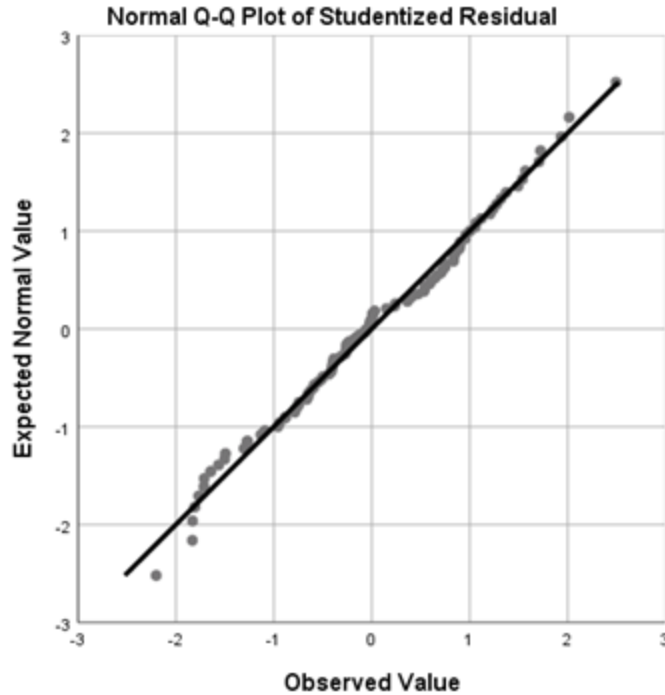


Figure 3: Normal Q-Q Plot of the studentized residuals

Correlation values were examined to check the absence of multicollinearity. To accurately determine statistical significance, predictor variables must be eliminated if more highly correlated to another predictor variable than to the dependent variable. The Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were between 1 and 2 for all predictor variables so the assumption of non-multicollinearity was met (see Table 2). Since no VIF was too high, it was assumed that no predictor variable (x) was highly correlated with another predictor variable (x) and each provided different information about the criterion variable (Warner, 2013). No predictor variable was eliminated while determining the overall significance of the model.

Table 2

Collinearity Statistics – Criterion Variable: Opinions about Inclusion

Administrator Data (<i>N</i> = 104)	Tolerance	VIF
Administrative Role	0.840	1.190
School Level	0.930	1.075
Years Administrative Experience	0.872	1.146
Holds SPED Endorsement	0.932	1.073
Gender	0.882	1.134
% Minority Served	0.888	1.126
% Low SES Served	0.855	1.170
% Disabled Served	0.887	1.128

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this predictive correlational study was to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship in perceptions related to the integration of students with special education needs among school administrators at the elementary and middle school levels. This chapter includes the research questions, null hypotheses, descriptive statistics, and results.

Research Question

RQ1: How accurately does a linear combination of demographic factors predict administrators' opinions about inclusion?

Null Hypothesis

H₀1: There is no significant predictive relationship between the criterion variable (opinions about inclusion) and the linear combination of predictor variables (administrative role, school level, administrative experience, special education endorsement, gender, percentage of minority students served, percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students served identified with a disability) among elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals in Virginia.

Descriptive Statistics

Based on permissions received from superintendents or their designees, the sample came from 26 school divisions. The sample consisted of 104 participants. More than half of the participants had the administrative assignment of building principal ($N=67$), while the rest were assigned the position of building assistant principal ($N=37$). There were more participants from the elementary school level ($N=74$) than the middle school level ($N=30$).

The number of samples N , sample mean M , and sample standard deviation SD , are described in Table 3 for the criterion variable. The sample mean and standard deviation were examined for each variable. There were a total of 104 participants in this study comparing opinions about inclusion with administrative role, school level, administrative experience, special education endorsement, gender, percentage of minority students served, percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students served identified with a disability. Only surveys completed in entirety were included in the analysis. One case was removed from the analysis.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics – Criterion Variable: Opinions about Inclusion

Administrator Data ($N = 104$)	Mean	SD
ORI Score	105.49	17.589

Results

Data Screening

Data was screened for obvious omissions, errors, and inconsistencies; none were obvious in the specified data. A Box and Whisker plot was created for the criterion variable to examine data for extreme outliers (Warner, 2013). One case was designated an outlier when found to lie outside the outer fences of the boxplot (Warner, 2013). Examination of the Casewise Diagnostics table generated in SPSS revealed one outlier at the lower end of the scale with a value of less than 45. The identified case had a standardized residual of -3.024, a predicted value of 98.77 compared to an observed ORI score of 45, which was an error in prediction (residual) of -53.774. This case was identified to be an outlier due to the standardized residual indicating more than three standard deviations. Reexamination of the data did not reveal errors in entry.

Since data indicated this was an extreme score relative to the rest of the sample, judgement was made to remove the case from the study sample.

Assumption Testing

All assumption testing for a multiple regression analysis was completed. The researcher assumed participants individually completed and submitted the survey so the researcher assumed that each score is independent from all others. Group sizes were compared and ideally the groups were expected to be approximately equal in size (Warner, 2013). Upon examination, the group sizes for administrative experience and the percentage of students in the school identified as minorities were approximately equal. The other groups, though not approximately equal, had more than 10 cases in each (Warner, 2013). There was independence of residuals, as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.465. The data cannot be considered random since it was gathered from a convenience sample of voluntary participants within participating division.

A scatterplot with imposed trend lines was examined to check for linearity, multivariate normality, and homoscedasticity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Warner, 2013). The assumptions of linearity, normality, and homoscedasticity are met if the scatterplot is “nearly rectangularly distributed with a concentration of scores along the center” (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p. 127). There was linearity was assessed by visual inspection of the partial regression plots and a plot of studentized residuals against the unstandardized predicted values (see Figure 1). The residuals roughly formed a horizontal band. There was homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of the same plot of studentized residuals versus unstandardized predicted values. Observed plots did not exhibit a distinct pattern and appeared to be approximately evenly spread (Laerd, 2018).

There was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.1. There were no studentized deleted residuals greater than ± 3 standard deviations, no leverage

values greater than 0.2, and no values for Cook's distance above 1. The assumption of normality was met, as assessed by a Q-Q Plot (see Figure 3). Though not perfectly aligned to the diagonal line, the points were close enough to the line to indicate normality (Laerd Statistics, 2018).

Correlation values were examined to check the absence of multicollinearity. To accurately determine statistical significance, predictor variables must be eliminated if more highly correlated to another predictor variable than to the dependent variable. The Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were between 1 and 2 for all predictor variables so the assumption of non-multicollinearity was met (see Table 2). Since no VIF was too high, it was assumed that no predictor variable (x) was highly correlated with another predictor variable (x) and each provided different information about the criterion variable (Warner, 2013). No predictor variable was eliminated while determining the overall significance of the model.

Data Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was run to predict the score on the ORI from the predictor variables in this study. The purpose of this multiple regression analysis was to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the overall score obtained by each participant on the Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) survey created by Antonak and Larrivee (1995) and the predictor variables (administrative role, school level, administrative experience, special education endorsement, gender, percentage of minority students served, percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students served identified with a disability).

The multiple regression model (see Table 4) did not significantly predict the ORI score, $F(8, 96) = 1.978$, $p = 0.057$, adj. $R^2 = 0.071$. Values were considered significant if $p < 0.05$. Since $p > 0.05$, the model indicated no values were found to individually make a significant, unique

contribution to explaining the criterion variable, the given sample (see Table 5). Based on analysis of data, administrative role, school level, administrative experience, special education endorsement, gender, percentage of minority students served, percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students served identified with a disability do not significantly predict the score on the ORI.

Table 4

Model Summary Table – Criterion Variable: Opinions about Inclusion

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin Watson
1	0.378 ^a	0.143	0.071	16.957	1.465

a. Predictors: (Constant), % Disabled Served, Admin Experience, School Level, % Minority Served, Holds SPED Endorsement, % Economically Disadvantaged, Administrative Role

Table 5

ANOVA Opinions about Inclusion - Criterion Variable: Opinions about Inclusion

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1	Regression	4549.089	8	568.636	1.978	0.057 ^a
	Residual	27314.901	95	287.525		
	Total	31863.990	103			

a. Predictors: (Constant), % Disabled Served, Admin Experience, School Level, % Minority Served, Holds SPED Endorsement, % Economically Disadvantaged, Administrative Role

Zero-order, part, and partial correlations of each predictor variable with opinion scores were computed in addition to default statistics in SPSS (Warner, 2013). The condition of holding an endorsement in special education or not was most strongly related to scores on the ORI; the zero-order correlation (0.271) was significant ($p = 0.002$) between this condition and scores on the ORI. All other predictor variables had a significance of $p > 0.05$, indicating all other predictors were not strongly related to scores on the ORI (see Table 6).

Table 6

Coefficients - Criterion Variable: Opinions about Inclusion

	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	Sig	95% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations		
	B	Std. Error			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part
(Constant)	123.771	7.126	17.368	0.000	109.623	137.918			
Admin Role	-2.892	3.789	-0.763	0.447	-10.413	4.630	-0.043	-0.078	-0.073
Gender	-8.279	4.203	-1.970	0.052	-16.622	0.065	-0.110	-0.198	-0.187
Admin Experience	-6.430	3.563	-1.805	0.074	-13.503	0.643	-0.104	-0.182	-0.171
School Level	1.611	3.805	0.423	0.673	-5.943	9.165	0.002	0.043	0.040
SPED Endorsed	-13.153	4.150	-3.170	0.002	-21.391	-4.914	-0.271	-0.309	-0.301
% Minority Served	-1.782	3.539	-0.504	0.616	-8.807	5.243	-0.086	-0.052	-0.048
% Economically Disadvantaged	5.498	4.563	1.205	0.231	-3.562	14.557	0.079	0.123	0.114
% Disabled Served	-1.600	4.255	-0.376	0.708	-10.047	6.847	0.008	-0.039	-0.036

Partial Pearson's r scores and zero-order Pearson's r scores were examined for possible interactions and suppression effects (Warner, 2013). The proportions of variance uniquely explaining the individual predictor variables were determined by squaring the partial correlations scores (Warner, 2013). Partialling out the effects of all other predictors leaves a correlation between the condition of holding a special education endorsement or not and scores on the ORI of -0.309, $p < 0.05$. The β for the condition of holding a special education endorsement or not was highest at -0.312, as shown in Table 6, indicating this predictor variable made a unique contribution to explaining the criterion variable.

The final regression equation was $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \beta_6X_6 + \beta_7X_7 + \beta_8X_8 + \epsilon$. For this equation Y was the value of the criterion variable, β_0 was a constant (y-intercept), β_1 was the slope for X_1 (administrative role), β_2 is the slope for X_2 (school level), β_3 was the slope for X_3 (years administrative experience), β_4 is the slope for X_4 (holds a special

education endorsement), β_5 was the slope for X_5 (gender), β_6 was the slope for X_6 (% minority served), β_7 was the slope for X_7 (% low SES served), and β_8 was the slope for X_8 (% special education served). Errors were represented by ϵ . The t ratios for each individual regression slope was examined to assess the contribution of each predictor variable (Warner, 2013). Using the standardized beta coefficients, the regression equation would be:

$$Y = 123.771 - 0.079X_1 + 0.042X_2 - 0.184X_3 - 0.312X_4 - 0.199X_5 - 0.051X_6 + 0.124X_7 - 0.038X_8 + 17.368$$

Based on the data analysis, the null hypothesis failed to be rejected. The data supports that there is no significant predictive relationship between the criterion variable (opinions about inclusion) and the linear combination of predictor variables (administrative assignment, school level, administrative experience, special education endorsement, gender, percentage of minority students served, percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students served identified with a disability) among elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals in Virginia.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

Chapter Five presents a review of the results of Chapter Four based on the theoretical framework and literature review. The chapter includes discussion of the findings, implications, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.

Discussion

The purpose of this predictive correlational study was to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship in perceptions related to the integration of students with special education needs among school administrators at the elementary and middle school levels. By adding to research about the attitudes and opinions of principals and assistant principals in elementary and middle schools regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in general classroom settings more information is available to support efforts to improve services for students with disabilities. Students in the public school setting must be provided appropriate educational services at all levels (Zirkle, 2013) and the expectation is that the instruction will be in settings that are as inclusive as possible with a placement on a continuum of least restrictive environments (Cobb, 2015; Sailor & McCart, 2014). Services and inclusion of students with disabilities occurs under the leadership of principals and assistant principals who must provide stable, effective leadership focused on the achievement of all students (Avci, 2015). Despite the abundance of literature about the many roles of principals, the literature related to the perceptions of building administrators about the inclusion of special education students in the general, public school setting was limited and a need for additional research was indicated.

Prior research had demonstrated that the success of inclusion directly related to strong principal leadership (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015) and positive attitudes of principals was a

significant factor in successful implementation of inclusive practices (Nichols & Sheffield, 2014; Sumbera, Pazez, & Lashley, 2014). Previous research indicated that attitudes are impacted by situational and personality variables, therefore impacting behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Doll & Ajzen, 1992; Fazio, 1986). There was minimal quantitative research completed about the factors influencing the opinions of elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals or about the characteristics of school leaders that may impact their attitudes about inclusion (Ball & Green, 2014). In previous studies conducted about inclusion related to any type of administrators, the variables examined included gender, certification, training, coursework, experience in teaching, experience in administration, percentage of minority students, percentage of students identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students with a disability (Hallinger, Dongyu, & Wang, 2016; Huff et al., 2011). Taking these studies into consideration, this study about the attitudes of principals and assistant principals at the elementary and middle school levels took similar variables into consideration. The null hypothesis for this study was there was no significant predictive relationship between the criterion variable (opinions about inclusion) and the linear combination of the following predictor variables among elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals in Virginia: administrative role, school level, administrative experience, special education endorsement, gender, percentage of minority students served, percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students served identified with a disability.

The Opinions Relative to the Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI), constructed by Antonak and Larrivee (1995), was used to measure the opinions of school administrators assigned to the role of principal or assistant principal at the elementary or middle school levels. The purpose of this instrument is to measure the attitudes of individuals toward the integration of

students with disabilities into general classrooms (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995). The scores obtained on the ORI and the demographic information provided by the voluntary participants were used to answer the question: How accurately does a linear combination of demographic factors predict administrators' opinions about inclusion?

Multiple regression was used to analyze the data in order to examine the combination of the predictor variables and determine the magnitude and statistical significance of the relationship to the scores on the ORI (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The standard multiple regression analysis allowed for the predictive usefulness of each predictor variable to be measured while controlling for any possible linear associations with the other predictor variables in the study (Warner, 2013). The criterion variable was the overall score obtained by each participant on the ORI. Predictor variables were administrative role, school level, administrative experience, special education endorsement, gender, percentage of minority students served, percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students served identified with a disability. The population for this study included ($N = 104$) a convenience sample of elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals located in 26 divisions across the Commonwealth of Virginia during the 2019-2020 academic school year.

Research Question

The research question asked if the combination of demographic characteristics for a building administrator could predict an administrator's opinion about inclusion in a statistically meaningful way. The researcher hypothesized that there would be a significant predictive relationship between the criterion variable (opinions about inclusion) and the linear combination of predictor variables (administrative role, school level, administrative experience, special

education endorsement, gender, percentage of minority students served, percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students served identified with a disability) among elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals in Virginia. The results of the multiple regression analysis did not confirm this hypothesis because the regression equation with all eight predictors was not significantly related to the ORI, $R^2 = 0.145$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.073$, $F(8, 96) = 2.029$, $p > 0.05$. The sample multiple correlation coefficient was 0.38, which indicates approximately 14.5% of the variance of the ORI can be accounted for by the linear combination of the predictor variables. R^2 for the overall model was 14.5% with an adjusted R^2 of 7.3%, a small size effect according to Cohen (1988). Since $p > 0.05$ the findings could not be considered significant. The overall findings failed to reject the null hypothesis.

The results of this study indicated a combination of predictor variables (administrative role, school level, administrative experience, special education endorsement, gender, percentage of minority students served, percentage of students served identified as economically disadvantaged, and percentage of students served identified with a disability) did not significantly account for the opinions of the administrators who completed the survey. An examination of individual characteristics revealed that holding a special education endorsement or not did make a unique, statistically significant contribution to explaining the differences in opinions about inclusion among these administrators. Partialling out the effects of all other predictors left a correlation between the condition of holding a special education endorsement or not and scores on the ORI of -0.309 , $p < 0.05$. The condition of holding a special education endorsement or not was highest at -0.312 , indicating this predictor variable made a unique contribution to explaining the criterion variable. Data for the surveyed population indicated that

not holding a special education endorsement negatively impacted the overall score obtained on the ORI, these participants had a less positive view of inclusion than those who held special education endorsements. Examination of the population also revealed that the number of participants who were endorsed in at least one area of special education accounted for less than one quarter of all participants ($N = 23$) as opposed to those who did not hold special education endorsements ($N = 81$).

Research indicated that most building leaders are involved in special education leadership activities, yet they have an underdeveloped understanding of inclusive practices, continuums of services, or the needs of students with disabilities (SWD) (Ball & Green, 2014; Frost & Kersten, 2011). Past studies have shown that educators' attitudes change as age increases or based on gender (Vaz et al., 2015). Other studies indicated that taking courses in special education or holding an endorsement in special education may have impact on an administrator's attitude about inclusion (Angelle & Bilton, 2009; Ball & Green, 2014; Lynch, 2012). Prior research indicated no significant difference in attitudes toward inclusion based on whether an educator was providing instruction at the elementary or middle school level (Logan & Wimer, 2013), but no results were specific to administrators. Experience demonstrated varying impact in past studies with some studies revealing the factor to be highly significant and others indicating no statistical significance (Angelle & Bilton, 2009; Huff et al., 2011). One student suggested socioeconomic status, minority status, and the percentage of SWD in schools could impact research results in a statistically significant manner (Huff et al., 2011). This study focused on these factors as related specifically to principals and assistant principals at specific school levels. Results of this study indicated that only one factor, holding a special education endorsement or not, was statistically significant.

Literature showed that the transition from elementary school is during a time of developmental changes for students that occur at different times for different children creating varying rates of cognitive, emotional, psychosocial, and behavioral changes for each student (Bandura, 1969; Madjar & Cohen-Malayev, 2016; Proctor & Choi, 1994). When moving from elementary to middle school, students find that environments and expectations change greatly (Anderman, Maehr, & Midgley, 1999). Student move from primary educational programs that tend to emphasize nurture and caring to secondary settings that often become less personal more focused on subject-oriented instruction with less care and nurturing (Carter, Clark, Cushing, & Kennedy, 2005; Loke & Lowe, 2014; Proctor & Choi, 1994; Pullen, 2016; Tarekegne, 2015).

SWD are at greater risk school during transitioning than typically developing peers since lack of continuity across settings will create negative impacts that special education services may need to address (Carter et al., 2005; Loke & Lowe, 2014; McLeskey, Lauenders, Williamson, & Hoppey, 2010). As SWD access education at all levels inclusion with supports in order to access the general education curriculum for all courses remains the highest standard for meeting the federal mandates that require SWD to have access to and accountability for the same curriculum as their non-disabled peers (Ball & Green, 2014; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013).

Considering the significance of transitioning from elementary school to middle school and the difference in the settings, one might expect differences between the school levels to impact other aspects of education. No research was found to focus on the impact of school level, an administrator's role, or how well a combination of factors might predict the opinions of administrators about inclusion. This study examined a variety of factors as related to administrators in the elementary and middle school levels, however, no statistically significant

data was revealed. School level, role, or a combination these with other factors were not found to predict opinions about inclusion with significance.

One past study suggested the percentage of economically disadvantaged students, minority students and SWD in a school had statistical significance in the results (Huff et al., 2011). In this study, factors related to the school population also did not have significant impact on the administrators' opinions about inclusion, including the percentage of minority students served, percentage of students with low socioeconomic status served, and the percentage of students with a disability served.

Past research related to experience as a building leader and working with SWD yielded varying results in educational studies about principals (Angelle & Bilton, 2009; Ball & Green, 2014; Huff et al., 2011). Experience of principals, as a predictive variable, yields varying results in educational with some indicating it as a significant factor and other finding experience to have no statistical significance (Angelle & Bilton, 2009; Ball & Green, 2014; Huff et al., 2011).

Past studies indicated a correlational relationship between a principal's certification and attitude toward education of SWD (Lynch, 2012). Research indicated that building leaders received limited opportunity for coursework, training, or personal and professional experiences in the area of special education (Ball & Green, 2014; Billingsley, McLeskey, & Crockett, 2014). The building administrators who held a special education certification were found to have more positive attitudes and felt better prepared to lead special education programs (Frost & Kersten, 2011). In the current study the one factor of holding a special education endorsement or not, was statistically significant. The results of this study support the findings of past studies.

Implications

The theory of planned behavior suggests that attitudes are constructs that can mediate behaviors (Bentler & Speckart, 1979) and if factors such as attitudes are considered, behaviors may be predictable (Conner & Abraham, 2001). Factors such as experiences and knowledge can influence attitudes towards behaviors (Ball & Green, 2014). Based on this theory, it may be possible to understand how hard a person is willing to try or how much effort they might exert in order to complete a task (Ajzen, 1991), such as working to implement inclusion. If factors influencing attitudes that impact behaviors are conditions that can change or not, then it stands to reason that it becomes possible to consider changing the behavioral intent of individuals, over time, by influencing the more malleable factors (Ajzen, 1991, Pace & Aiello, 2016). The results of this study indicated that many individual factors did not make a unique impact on explaining the score on the ORI which reflect an individual's opinion about inclusion. The factor of holding a special education endorsement, a factor that can be changed about an individual, did make a unique contribution to explaining the score obtained on the ORI. This would indicate that by changing endorsement status of a principal or assistant principal by having them earn an endorsement in special education or participate in the classes required for endorsement, it may be possible to influence the individual's attitudes about inclusion.

Based on the theory of planned behavior, if a factor that influences attitude is changed, then the individual's willingness to try or intent to put effort into inclusion practices at the school level may also change. The leaders at the building level have influence on the staff and educational programming (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013). Leadership at the building level becomes a delicate balance of decision making (Billingsley et al., 2014). The attitudes and actions of the leaders set the tone that impacts the climate for staff to be empowered and all

students to achieve (Cobb, 2015; Mendels, 2012; Sumbera et al., 2014). Awareness of any factor that may improve leaders' attitudes about inclusion in school has the potential to improve implementation efforts within the school and results for students with disabilities. By z.

This study sought to determine if the characteristics of administrators could help to predict their opinions related to the inclusion of students with special education needs in the general education setting. If the researcher determined that there was a statistically significant relationship between a combination of the characteristics or any of the individual characteristics, when partialling out the effects of all other predictors, then perhaps the result would indicate ways to support administrators to have more positive attitudes about inclusion and improve their willingness to support and implement inclusion efforts. The present study found a statistically significant correlation between the opinions about inclusion as measured by the ORI and one of the predictive factors examined. The results determined that holding an endorsement in special education was correlated to holding a more positive opinion about inclusion. Other factors such as gender, role, experience, school level, and school population characteristics did not have a significant correlation to an administrator's opinion about inclusion in the school where they lead.

Specific implications can be determined from the significant relationship between special education endorsement and scores on the ORI. The results of the study would indicate that hiring administrators with special education endorsement or providing opportunities to earn an endorsement or take the classes leading to endorsement may positively influence administrators' attitudes related to inclusion. Past research has demonstrated that many building leaders assume their roles without adequate experience and knowledge in the area of special education in order to lead the implementation of special education programming that meets the needs of SWD

(Ball & Green, 2014; Billingsley et al., 2014; Frost & Kersten, 2011). The results of this study are important because there is additional support for school leaders to have an increased level of knowledge, including endorsement, in the area of special education.

Another implication that can be drawn from the results of the study is that the factors that cannot be as easily controlled, if at all, such as gender, amount of experience, and make up of a school population, do not have a statistical impact on the opinions of building administrators regarding inclusion. While past research may have shown that some of these factors may have had statistically significant correlation, this study did not yield similar results. The results from this study are important because the information indicates factors that cannot be easily controlled do not predict an administrator's opinion about inclusion in a statistically significant way, while a factor that can be changed does have the potential to predict an administrator's opinion. This information would indicate that the opinions of administrators are less impacted by factors that cannot be easily changed, if at all, than a factor that can be changed. Therefore, school divisions can consider implementation of strategies that may improve administrator's opinions about inclusion in the buildings where they lead.

Limitations

Various factors were noted that limit the generalizability of findings from this study. Factors related to the population were the first notable limitation. The findings cannot be generalized to populations outside of Virginia or to Virginia as a whole, since the convenience sample cannot be considered a representative sample of a larger population. The study utilized a convenience sample (N = 104) within only 26 of 227 possible school divisions within Virginia. The minimum, desired population of 112 participants for the study was not achieved, therefore the statistical quality of the study was impacted. The study included a limited number of

participants. The population lacked diversity in many areas, for example 74% were working at the elementary level, 80% identified as female, and 67% were assigned the role of principal.

Factors related to the administration of the survey indicated possible limitations the generalizability of the information gathered. The study assumed that each participant had the same basic understanding of each statement that was part of the Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) as developed by Antonak and Larrivee (1995). However, this may not be an accurate assumption and some participants may have differing understandings or confusion about some of the statements in the ORI. The study was voluntary, and participants completed surveys online on their personal computers. The researcher did not interact with participants and was not able to determine if participants had difficulty with the survey, asked for assistance of any type, or collaborated with others while completing the questions. Some divisions did not allow the researcher to send information directly to potential participants. Two divisions agreed to invite staff to participate but required the researcher to provide recruitment and follow up letters to a designee who then sent letters to potential participants. This variation on the process could have had unintended influence on the quality of responses, if participants felt pressure to participate in the survey by their division and participation in the survey was no longer truly voluntary.

The way responses were received was also noted as a limitation that must be considered. The researcher received responses in a manner that did not allow for the identification of individual participants. The design of the study did not allow for the researcher to know how many participants each division contributed. In addition, some divisions offered much larger pools of potential participants than other divisions. Based on these facts specific sample populations, such as same divisions or schools, may be overrepresented.

The examination of group sizes revealed another limitation of the study. When compared the groups were expected to be approximately equal in size (Warner, 2013). Upon examination, the group sizes for administrative experience and the percentage of students in the school identified as minorities were approximately equal. The other groups, though not approximately equal, had more than 10 cases in each (Warner, 2013). Each group had enough participants to proceed with the study, but the fact that groups were not approximately equal in size presents should be considered a limitation of this study.

Recommendations for Future

Upon reflection, there are some recommendations for future research, based on the results of the outcomes of this study. First, the same study should be replicated with the participation of additional Virginia divisions. Multiple divisions were unable to participate in the given study based on time constraints or situations occurring at the time the study was occurring. With expanded participation, the significance of the results may increase. The same study should also be conducted with the participation of divisions and schools from other states. The consideration of perspectives from other states, again could expand the population and the possible significance of the results.

To expand the information yielded by the study, consideration should be given to expanding the scope of the study. This would include conducting a qualitative study that would allow for the collection of data at more than two levels for specific predictor values. Collection of data in this way would allow for the examination of more specific descriptors for categories such as endorsements, disabilities served, and administrative experience. A research could also consider conducting a qualitative or mixed methods study that would provide reflective data to

provide possible insight and explanation for why opinions vary related to the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting.

This study focused on a specific group of educators assigned to a specific role. In addition, this study was based on specific construct and instrumentation. Future research should consider examining educators from additional educational roles. Future research may also consider the inclusion of additional instrumentation or theoretical constructs to further frame the examination of opinions about inclusion.

Recommendations for future research should be thought of as ways to further increase knowledge in the field of study. Future study should continue research efforts while being mindful of limitations that have been noted by this researcher.

REFERENCES

- Ajzen, I. (1985). From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior. In J. Kuhl & J. Beckman (Eds.), *Action-control: From cognition to behavior* (pp. 11-39). Heidelberg: Springer. doi: 10.1007/978-3-642-69746-3_2
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(91\)90020-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T)
- Ajzen, I. (2005). *Attitudes, personality and behavior* (2nd Ed.). New York: Open University Press.
- Ajzen, I. (2011). The theory of planned behaviour: Reactions and reflections. *Psychology & Health*, 26(9), 1113–1127. doi:10.1080/08870446.2011.613995
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1969). The prediction of behavioral intentions in a choice situation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 5, 400-416. doi:10.1016/0022-1031(69)90033-x
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1972). Attitudes and normative beliefs as factors influencing behavioral intentions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 21(1), 1-9. doi:10.1037/h0031930
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1977). Attitude-behavior relations: A theoretical analysis and review of empirical research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 84(5), 888-918. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.84.5.888
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

- Ajzen, I., & Madden, T. J. (1986). Prediction of goal-directed behavior: Attitudes, intentions, and perceived behavioral control. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 22*(5), 453-474. doi:10.1016/0022-1031(86)90045-4
- Akos, P., Rose, R. A., & Orthner, D. (2015). Sociodemographic moderators of middle school transition effects on academic achievement. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 35*(2), 170-198. doi:10.1177/0272431614529367
- An, J., & Meaney, K. S. (2015). Inclusion practices in elementary physical education: A social-cognitive perspective. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 62*(2), 143–157. doi:10.1080/1034912x.2014.998176
- Anderman, E. M., Maehr, M. L., & Midgley, C. (1999). Declining motivation after the transition to middle school: Schools can make a difference. *Journal of Research & Development in Education, 32*(3), 131-147. Retrieved from <http://psycnet.apa.org/record/1999-05484-001>
- Angelle, P., & Bilton, L. M. (2009). Confronting the unknown: Principal preparation training in issues related to special education. *AASA Journal of Scholarship & Practice, 5*(4), 5-9. Retrieved from http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Publications/Journals/AASA_Journal_of_Scholarship_and_Practice/Winter09FINAL.pdf
- Antonak, R. F. (1981). Prediction of attitudes toward disabled persons: A multivariate analysis. *The Journal of General Psychology, 104*(1), 119-123. doi:10.1080/00221309.1981.9921026

- Antonak, R. F. (1982). Development and psychometric analysis of the Scale of Attitudes toward Disabled Persons. *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling, 13*(2), 22-29. doi: 10.1891/0047-2220.13.2.22
- Antonak, R. F., & Larrivee, B. (1995). Psychometric analysis and revision of the opinions relative to mainstreaming scale. *Exceptional Children, 62*(2), 139-149. doi:10.1177/001440299506200204
- Antony, P. J. (2012). Understanding the history, current status & future of special education in the United States. *Loyola Journal of Social Sciences, 26*(2), 251-265. Retrieved from <http://loyolajournal.loyolacollegekerala.edu.in/>
- Agran, M., Jackson, L., Kurth, J. A., Ryndak, D., Burnette, K., Jameson, M., Zagona, A., Fitzpatrick, H., & Wehmeyer, M. (2020). Why aren't students with severe disabilities being placed in general education classrooms: Examining the relations among classroom placement, learner outcomes, and other factors. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 45*(1), 4-13. doi: 10.1177/1540796919878134
- Armitage, C. J., & Christian, J. (2003). From attitudes to behaviour: Basic and applied research on the theory of planned behaviour. *Current Psychology, 22*(3), 187-195. doi:10.1007/s12144-003-1015-5
- Armitage, C. J., & Conner, M. (1999). Predictive validity of the theory of planned behaviour: The role of questionnaire format and social desirability. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 9*(4), 261-272. doi:10.1002/(sici)1099-1298(199907/08)9:4<261::aid-casp503>3.0.co;2-5

- Avramidis, E., Bayliss, P., & Burden, R. (2000). A survey into mainstream teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in the ordinary school in one local education authority. *Educational Psychology, 20*(2), 191-211.
doi:10.1080/01443410050027973
- Avci, A. (2015). Investigation of transformational and transactional leadership styles of school principals, and evaluation of them in terms of educational administration. *Educational Research and Reviews, 10*(20), 2758-2767. doi:10.5897/ERR2015.2483
- Bailey, G., Giles, R. M., & Rogers, S. E. (2015). An investigation of the concerns of fifth graders transitioning to middle school. *RMLE Online: Research in Middle Level Education, 38*(5), 1-12. doi:10.1080/19404476.2015.11462118
- Ball, K., & Green, R. L. (2014). An investigation of the attitudes of school leaders toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting. In *National Forum of Applied Educational Research Journal, 27*. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalforum.com/Journals/NFAERJ/NFAERJ.htm>
- Bandura, A. (1969). Social learning of moral judgments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 11*(3), 275–279. doi:10.1037/h0026998
- Barnett, B. G., Shoho, A. R., & Oleszewski, A. M. (2012). The job realities of beginning and experienced assistant principals. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 11*(1), 92.
doi:10.1080/15700763.2011.611924
- Barton, L. T. (2013). Knowledge of effective educational leadership practices. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, 8*(1), 93-102. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1012992.pdf>

- Ben-Porath, S. (2012). Defending rights in (special) education. *Educational Theory*, 62(1), 25-39. doi:10.1111/j.1741-5446.2011.00433.x
- Bentler, P. M., & Speckart, G. (1979). Models of attitude-behavior relations. *Psychological Review*, 86(5), 452–464. doi:10.1037/0033-295x.86.5.452
- Berndt, T. J., & Mekos, D. (1995). Adolescents' perceptions of the stressful and desirable aspects of the transition to junior high school. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 5(1), 123-45. doi:10.1207/s15327795jra0501_6
- Billingsley, B., McLeskey, J., & Crockett, J.B. (2014). Principal leadership: Moving toward inclusive and high-achieving schools for students with disabilities (Document No. IC-8). University of Florida, Collaboration for Effective Educator, Development, Accountability, and Reform Center. Retrieved from <http://cedar.education.ufl.edu/tools/innovation-configurations>
- Board of Education of the Hendrick Hudson School District v. Rowley, 458 U.S. 176 (1982).
- Board of Education, Sacramento City Unified School District v. Holland, 786 F. Supp. 874, 73 Ed. Law Rep. 969 (E.D. Cal. 1992); affirmed sub nom. Sacramento City Unified School District, Board of Education v. Rachel H., 14 F.3d 1398, 89 Ed. Law Rep. 57 (9th Cir. 1994).
- Bon, S. C. (2012). Examining the crossroads of law, ethics, and education leadership. *Journal of School Leadership*, 22(2), 285-308. doi: 10.1177/105268461202200203
- Bon, S. C., & Bigbee, A. J. (2011). Special education leadership: Integrating professional and personal codes of ethics to serve the best interests of the child. *Journal of School Leadership*, 21(3), 324-357. doi: 10.1177/105268461102100302
- Briggs v. Board of Education of Connecticut, 882 F.2d 688, 55 Ed. Law Rep. 423 (2d Cir. 1989).

- Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
- Campbell, M. (2010). An application of the theory of planned behavior to examine the impact of classroom inclusion on elementary school students. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 7(3), 235-250. doi:10.1080/15433710903126554
- Carter, E. W., Clark, N. M., Cushing, L. S., & Kennedy, C. H. (2005). Moving from elementary to middle school: Supporting a smooth transition for students with severe disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 37(3), 8. doi:10.1177/004005990503700301
- Causton, J., & Theoharis, G. (2014). How do schools become effective and inclusive? *Handbook of effective inclusive schools: Research and practice*, 30-42. doi:10.4324/9780203102930.ch3
- Center, Y., Ward, J., Parmenter, T., & Nash, R. (1985). Principals' attitudes toward the integration of disabled children into regular school. *Exceptional Child*, 32(3), 149-61. doi:10.1080/0156655850320303
- Chandler, R. (2016). Attitudes of teachers and students towards mainstreaming. *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, 7(1), 101. Retrieved from <http://iahrw.com/journal.php?numb=1>
- Choi, J. H., Meisenheimer, J. M., McCart, A. B., & Sailor, W. (2016). Improving learning for all students through equity-based inclusive reform practices. *Remedial and Special Education*, 38(1), 28–41. doi:10.1177/0741932516644054
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). (2017). *PSEL 2015 and Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities*. Washington, DC: CCSSO.

- Cobb, C. (2015). Principals play many parts: a review of the research on school principals as special education leaders 2001–2011. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 19(3), 213-234. doi:10.1080/13603116.2014.916354
- Conner, M., & Abraham, C. (2001). Conscientiousness and the theory of planned behavior: Toward a more complete model of the antecedents of intentions and behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27(11), 1547-1561. doi:10.1177/01461672012711014
- Copeland, S. R., & Cosbey, J. (2008). Making progress in the general curriculum: Rethinking effective instructional practices. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 33/34(4-1), 214-227. doi:10.2511/rpsd.33.4.214
- Danforth, S. (2016). Social justice and technocracy: Tracing the narratives of inclusive education in the USA. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 37(4), 582-599. doi: 10.1080/01596306.2015.1073022
- Daniel R. R. v. State Board of Education, 874 F.2d 1036, 53 Ed. Law Rep. 824 (5th Cir. 1989).
- DeMatthews, D. (2015). Clearing a path for inclusion. *Journal of School Leadership*, 25(6), 1000-1038. doi: 10.1177/105268461502500601
- DeMatthews, D. (2020). Undoing systems of exclusion: exploring inclusive leadership and systems thinking in two inclusive elementary schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 59(1), 5-21. doi: 10.1108/JEA-02-2020-0044
- DeMatthews, D., Billingsley, B., McLeskey, J., & Sharma, U. (2020a). Principal leadership for students with disabilities in effective inclusive schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 58(5), 539-554. doi: 10.1108/JEA-10-2019-0177

- DeMatthews, D. E., Kotok, S., & Serafini, A. (2020b). Leadership preparation for special education and inclusive schools: Beliefs and recommendations from successful principals. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 15(4), 303-329. doi: 10.1177/1942775119838308
- DeMatthews, D., & Mawhinney, H. (2014). Social justice leadership and inclusion: Exploring challenges in an urban district struggling to address inequities. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 50(5), 844-881. doi:10.1177/0013161x13514440
- DeMatthews, D., Serafini, A., & Watson, T. (2021). Leading Inclusive Schools: Principal Perceptions, Practices, and Challenges to Meaningful Change. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 57(1), 3 - 48. Retrieved from <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/doi/full/10.1177/0013161X20913897>
- Demirdag, S. (2017). What instructional leaders need to know about the effects of inclusion? *European Journal of Educational Research*, 6(2), 175-186. doi:10.12973/eu-jer.6.2.175
- Dessemontet, R., & Bless, G. (2013). The impact of including children with intellectual disability in general education classrooms on the academic achievement of their low-, average-, and high-achieving peers. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability*, 38(1), 23–30. doi:10.3109/13668250.2012.757589
- Dhuey, E., & Smith, J. (2014). How important are school principals in the production of student achievement? *Canadian Journal of Economics*, 47(2), 634-663. doi:10.1111/caje.12086
- Doll, J., & Ajzen, I. (1992). Accessibility and stability of predictors in the theory of planned behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63(5), 754–765. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.63.5.754

- Dorn, S., Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. S. (1996). A historical perspective on special education reform. *Theory into Practice*, 35(1), 12–19. doi:10.1080/00405849609543696
- Egalite, A. J., Fusarelli, L. D., & Fusarelli, B. C. (2017). Will decentralization affect educational inequity? The every student succeeds act. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 53(5), 757-781. doi:10.1177/0013161X17735869
- Andrew F. ex rel. Joseph F. v. Douglas Cty. Sch. Dist. RE-1, 137 S.Ct. 988, 997 (2017).
- Etscheidt, S. (2012). Complacency with access and the aggregate? Affirming an individual determination of educational benefit under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 22(4), 195-207.
doi:10.1177/1044207311410423
- Every Student Succeeds Act, Pub. L. No. 114-95 (2015).
- Fazio, R. H. (1986). How do attitudes guide behavior? In Sorrentino, R. M., & Higgins, E. T. E. (Eds.), *Handbook of Motivation and Cognition: Foundations of Social Behavior*, (pp. 204-243). Guilford Press.
- Fazio, R. H., & Zanna, M. P. (1978). Attitudinal qualities relating to the strength of the attitude-behavior relationship. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 14(4), 398–408.
doi:10.1016/0022-1031(78)90035-5
- Fellner, G., Comesañas, M., Duperoy, L., & Duperoy, Y. (2017). What it means to be special: Two sisters discuss their experiences. *Disability & Society*, 32(3), 323–343.
doi:10.1080/09687599.2017.1296817
- Fishbein, M. & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behaviour: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

- Francis, G. L., Hill, C., Blue-Banning, M., Turnbull, A. P., & Haines, S. J. (2016). Culture in inclusive schools: Parental perspectives on trusting family-professional partnerships. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 51*(3), 281. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/pattye/Downloads/CultureinInclusiveSchools%209.23.15.pdf
- Fredricks, A. J., & Dossett, D. L. (1983). Attitude-behavior relations: A comparison of the Fishbein-Ajzen and the Bentler-Speckart models. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 45*(3), 501–512. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.45.3.501
- Frost, L. A., & Kersten, T. (2011). The role of the elementary principal in the instructional leadership of special education. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, 6*(2), 1-21. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ973829.pdf>
- Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2007). *Educational research* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Pearson.
- Gordon, J. (2013). Is inclusive education a human right? *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics, 41*(4), 754-767. doi:10.1111/jlme.12087
- Gosnell-Lamb, J., O'Reilly, F. L., & Matt, J. J. (2013). Has no child left behind changed the face of leadership in public schools? *Journal of Education and Training Studies, 1*(2), 211-216. doi:10.11114/jets.v1i2.183
- Grills-Taquechel, A. E., Norton, P., & Ollendick, T. H. (2010). A longitudinal examination of factors predicting anxiety during the transition to middle school. *Anxiety, Stress, and Coping, 23*(5), 493-513. doi:10.1080/10615800903494127
- Grolnick, W. S., Kurowski, C. O., Dunlap, K. G., & Hevey, C. (2000). Parental resources and the transition to junior high. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 10*(4), 465–488. doi:10.1207/sjra1004_05

- Hallinger, P., Dongyu, L., & Wang, W.-C. (2016). Gender differences in instructional leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 52(4), 567–601. doi:10.1177/0013161x16638430
- Hitt, D. H., & Tucker, P. D. (2016). Systematic review of key leader practices found to influence student achievement: A unified framework. *Review of educational research*, 86(2), 531-569. doi: 10.3102/0034654315614911
- Houchens, G., Niu, C., Zhang, J., Miller, S. K., & Norman, A. D. (2018). Do differences in high school principal and assistant principal perceptions predict student achievement outcomes? *NASSP Bulletin*, 102(1), 38-57. doi: 10.1177/0192636518763105
- 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. doi:10.1177/0022466910390507
- Huff, T. S., Brockmeier, L. L., Leech, D. W., Martin, E. P., Pate, J. L., & Siegrist, G. (2011). Principal and school-level effects on student achievement. *National Teacher Education Journal*, 4(2), 67-79. Retrieved from <https://ntejournal.com/>
- Hyatt, K. J., & Filler, J. (2011). LRE re-examined: Misinterpretations and unintended consequences. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15(9), 1031–1045. doi:10.1080/13603116.2010.484509
- Johnson, R. E., Chang, C. H., & Lord, R. G. (2006). Moving from cognition to behavior: What the research says. *Psychological Bulletin*, 132(3), 381-415. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.132.3.381

- Jung, W. S. (2008). Preservice teacher training for successful inclusion. *Education*, 128, 106-113. Retrieved from <https://web-b-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=6b765881-1ae6-4fa9-80b1-459a65f944d5%40pdc-v-sessmgr03>
- Katz, J., Porath, M., Bendu, C., & Epp, B. (2012). Diverse voices: Middle years students' insights into life in inclusive classrooms. *Exceptionality Education International*, 22(1), 2-16. Retrieved from <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/eei/>
- Kingery, J. N., & Erdley, C. A. (2007). Peer experience as predictors of adjustment across the middle school transition. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 30(2), 73–88.
doi:10.1353/etc.2007.0007
- Kirby, M. (2016). Implicit assumptions in special education policy: Promoting full inclusion for students with learning disabilities. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 46(2), 175–191.
doi:10.1007/s10566-016-9382-x
- Labby, S., Lunenburg, F. C., & Slate, J. R. (2013). Emotional intelligence skills and principal characteristics. *Journal of Education Research*, 7(4), 257-268. Retrieved from http://www.novapublishers.org/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=47856
- Laerd Statistics (2018). Multiple regression using SPSS Statistics. Statistical tutorials and software guides. Retrieved from <https://statistics.laerd.com/>
- Lalvani, P. (2013). Privilege, compromise, or social justice: Teachers' conceptualizations of inclusive education. *Disability & Society*, 28(1), 14–27.
doi:10.1080/09687599.2012.692028

- Lane, K. L., Oakes, W. P., Carter, E. W., & Messenger, M. (2015). Examining behavioral risk and academic performance for students transitioning from elementary to middle school. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 17*(1), 39-49.
doi:10.1177/1098300714524825
- Larrivee, B. (1981). Effect of inservice training intensity on teachers' attitudes toward mainstreaming. *Exceptional Children, 48*, 34-39. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/001440298104800105>
- Larrivee, B., & Antonak, R. F. (1994). Opinions relative to the integration of students with disabilities. Available from the first author at Special Education CSU at San Bernardino, San Bernardino, CA, 92407.
- Larrivee, B., & Cook, L. (1979). Mainstreaming: A study of the variables affecting teacher attitude. *Journal of Special Education, 13*, 315-324. doi:10.1177/002246697901300310
- Lashley, C. (2007). Principal leadership for special education: An ethical framework. *Exceptionality, 15*(3), 177-187. doi:10.1080/09362830701503511
- LeDoux, C., Graves, S. L., & Burt, W. (2012). Meeting the needs of special education students in inclusion classrooms. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals, 20*-34. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1135732.pdf>
- Lewis, K. (2016). Social justice leadership and inclusion: A genealogy. *Journal of Educational Administration and History, 48*(4), 324-341. doi:10.1080/00220620.2016.1210589
- Logan, B. E., & Wimer, G. (2013). Tracing Inclusion: Determining teacher attitudes. *Research in Higher Education Journal, 20*. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1064663.pdf>

- Lohaus, A., Elben, C., Ball, J., & Klein-Hessling, J. (2004). School transition from elementary to secondary school: Changes in psychological adjustment. *Educational Psychology, 24*(2), 161–173. doi:10.1080/0144341032000160128
- Loke, S. W., & Lowe, P. (2014). Development and validation of the interpersonal school transition anxiety scale for use among fourth- to sixth-grade students. *Social Work Research, 38*(4), 211–221. doi:10.1093/swr/svu025
- Lucas, D., & Frazier, B. (2014). The effects of a service-learning introductory diversity course on pre-service teachers' attitudes toward teaching diverse student populations. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, 18*(2), 91-124. Retrieved from <https://www.abacademies.org/journals/academy-of-educational-leadership-journal-home.html>
- 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. doi:10.1177/875687051203100205
- Lynch, J. M. (2016). Effective instruction for students with disabilities: Perceptions of rural middle school principals. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 35*(4), 26-36. doi:10.1177/875687051603500404
- Lyons, W. (2016). Principal preservice education for leadership in inclusive schools. *Canadian Journal of Action Research, 17*(1), 36-50. Retrieved from <https://journals.nipissingu.ca/index.php/cjar/article/view/242>

- Lyons, W. E., Thompson, S. A., & Timmons, V. (2016). "We are inclusive. We are a team. Let's just do it": Commitment, collective efficacy, and agency in four inclusive schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 20(8), 889-907. doi:0.1080/13603116.2015.1122841
- MacFarlane, K., & Woolfson, L. M. (2013). Teacher attitudes and behavior toward the inclusion of children with social, emotional and behavioral difficulties in mainstream schools: An application of the theory of planned behavior. *Teaching and teacher education*, 29, 46-52. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2012.08.006
- Madjar, N., & Chohat, R. (2017). Will I succeed in middle school? A longitudinal analysis of self-efficacy in school transitions in relation to goal structures and engagement. *Educational Psychology*, 37(6), 680-694. doi:10.1080/01443410.2016.1179265
- Madjar, N., & Cohen-Malayev, M. (2016). Perceived school climate across the transition from elementary to middle school. *School Psychology Quarterly: The Official Journal of the Division of School Psychology, American Psychological Association*, 31(2), 270-288. doi:10.1037/spq0000129
- McLeskey, J., Landers, E., Williamson, P., & Hoppey, D. (2010). Are we moving toward educating students with disabilities in less restrictive settings? *The Journal of Special Education*, 46(3), 131-140. doi:10.1177/0022466910376670
- McLeskey, J., Waldron, N. L., Spooner, F., & Algozzine, B. (2014). What are effective inclusive schools and why are they important? *Handbook of effective inclusive schools*, 3-16. doi: 10.4324/9780203102930.ch1
- McLeskey, J., & Waldron, N. L. (2015). Effective leadership makes schools truly inclusive. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 96(5), 68-73. doi:10.1177/0031721715569474

- Mendels, P. (2012). The effective principal. *Journal of Staff Development*, 33(1), 54-58.
Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/The-Effective-Principal.pdf>
- Meyer, L. E., & Ostrosky, M. M. (2014). Measuring the friendships of young children with disabilities: A review of the literature. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 34(3), 186-196. doi:10.1177/0271121413513038
- Midgley, C., & Urdan, T. (1992). The transition to middle level schools: Making it a good experience for all students. *Middle School Journal*, 24(2), 5–14.
doi:10.1080/00940771.1992.11495161
- Militello, M. M., Fusarelli, B. C., Mattingly, A., & Warren, T. (2015). "We do what we're told": How current assistant principals practice leadership and how they wish they could. *Journal of School Leadership*, 25(2), 194-222. Retrieved from <https://rowman.com/page/JSL>
- Miller, M., Gresham, P., & Fouts, B. (2011). Remembering memories about students with disabilities. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 38(3), 173-180. Retrieved from <https://www.questia.com/library/p6137/journal-of-instructional-psychology>
- Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia, 348 F. Supp. 866 (D.D.C. 1972).
- Morgan, T. L. (2018). Assistant principals' perceptions of the principalship. *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership*, 13(10), n10. doi: 10.22230/ijep.2018v13n10a743
- Mowat, J. G. (2015). 'Inclusion--that word!' examining some of the tensions in supporting pupils experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties/needs. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 20(2), 153-172. doi:10.1080/13632752.2014.927965

- Mulholland, S. M. (2011). *The factors that influence the attitudes of teachers and administrators affiliated with the national association of independent schools (NAIS) regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/883387066>
- Mullins, E. R., & Irvin, J. L. (2000). Transition into middle school. *Middle School Journal*, 31(3), 57–60. doi:10.1080/00940771.2000.11494629
- Murphy, C. R. (2018). Transforming inclusive education: Nine tips to enhance school leaders' ability to effectively lead inclusive special education programs. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 8(1).
- Murphy, D. M. (1996). Implications of inclusion for general and special education. *The Elementary School Journal*, 96(5), 469–493. doi:10.1086/461840
- Muse, M. D., & Abrams, L. M. (2011). An investigation of school leadership priorities. *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin International Journal for Professional Educators*, 77(4), 49-58. Retrieved from <http://www.deltakappagamma.org/NH/DKGBulletinsummer2011.PDF#page=50>
- Naraian, S., Chacko, M. A., Feldman, C., & Schwitzman-Gerst, T. (2020). Emergent concepts of inclusion in the context of committed school leadership. *Education and Urban Society*, 52(8), 1238-1263. doi: 10.1177/0013124519896833
- Nichols, J. D., & Nichols, G. W. (2014). Perceptions of school leaders: exploring school climate data based on principal gender and student achievement. *Advancing Women in Leadership*, 3427-3437. Retrieved from <https://awl-ojs-tamu.tdl.org/awl/index.php/awl/article/viewFile/119/105>

- Nichols, S. C., & Sheffield, A. N. (2014). Is there an elephant in the room? Considerations that administrators tend to forget when facilitating inclusive practices among general and special education teachers. *National Forum of Applied Educational Research Journal*, 27(1/2), 31-44. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalforum.com/Journals/NFAERJ/NFAERJ.htm>
- Nilholm, C., & Göransson, K. (2017). What is meant by inclusion? An analysis of European and North American journal articles with high impact. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 32(3), 437-451. doi:10.1080/08856257.2017.1295638
- Oberti v. Board of Education of the Borough of Clementon School District, 789 F. Supp. 1322, 75 Ed.Law Rep. 258, (D.N.J. 1992); 801 F. Supp. 1393 (D.N.J. 1992); affirmed 995 F.2d 1204, 83 Ed.Law Rep. 1009 (3d Cir. 1993).
- Obiakor, F. E., Harris, M., Mutua, K., Rotatori, A., & Algozzine, B. (2012). Making inclusion work in general education classrooms. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 35(3), 477–490. doi:10.1353/etc.2012.0020
- Odegaard, S. L., & Heath, J. A. (1992). Assisting the elementary school student in the transition to a middle level school. *Middle School Journal*, 24(2), 21–25. doi:10.1080/00940771.1992.11495163
- Olson, A., Leko, M. M., & Roberts, C. A. (2016). Providing students with severe disabilities access to the general education curriculum. *Research and Practice For Persons With Severe Disabilities*, 41(3), 143-157. doi:10.1177/1540796916651975
- Pace, E. M., & Aiello, P. (2016). Deciding to act: Teachers' willingness to implement inclusive practices. *Education Sciences & Society-Open Access Journal*, (1). doi:10.3280/ess1-2016oa3502

- 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.
doi:10.1177/0013161x12463934
- Pazey, B. L., & Yates, J. R. (2012). Conceptual and historical foundations of special education administration. In J. B. Crocket, B. S. Billingsley, & M. R. Boscardin (Eds.). *Leadership and administration for special education* (pp. 17-37). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 334 F. Supp 1257 (E.D. Pa. 1971), 343 F. Supp. 279 (E.D. Pa. 1972).
- Pennington, R., Courtade, G., Jones Ault, M., & Delano, M. (2016). Five essential features of quality educational programs for students with moderate and severe intellectual disability: A guide for administrators. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 51(3), 294-306. Retrieved from http://daddcec.org/Portals/0/CEC/Autism_Disabilities/Research/Publications/Education_Training_Development_Disabilities/etadd_2016/Pennington.PDF
- Petrides, L., Jimes, C., & Karaglani, A. (2014). Assistant principal leadership development: A narrative capture study. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 52(2), 173-192.
doi:10.1108/JEA-01-2012-0017
- Poon-McBrayer, K. F., & Wong, P. M. (2013). Inclusive education services for children and youth with disabilities: Values, roles and challenges of school leaders. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(9), 1520-1525. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.06.009

- Pregot, M. V. (2021). Principals' Depth of Perception of Knowledge on Special Education Programs: How Much Do They Really Know? *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 30(1), 3-20. doi: 10.1177/1056787920967114
- Proctor, T. B., & Choi, H. (1994). Effects of transition from elementary school to junior high school on early adolescents. *Psychology in the Schools*, 31(4), 319. doi:10.1002/1520-6807(199410)31:4<319::aid-pits2310310411>3.0.co;2-3
- Pullen, P. C. (2016). Historical and current perspectives on learning disabilities in the United States. *Learning Disabilities: A Contemporary Journal*, 14(1), 25-37. Retrieved from <http://psycnet.apa.org/record/2016-58418-003>
- Quick Facts Virginia. (2017, July 1). Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/VA>
- Regan, D. T., & Fazio, R. (1977). On the consistency between attitudes and behavior: Look to the method of attitude formation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 13(1), 28-45. doi:10.1016/0022-1031(77)90011-7
- Rise, J., Sheeran, P., & Hukkelberg, S. (2010). The role of self-identity in the theory of planned behavior: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 40(5), 1085-1105. doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.2010.00611.x
- Rivis, A., Sheeran, P., & Armitage, C. J. (2009). Expanding the affective and normative components of the theory of planned behavior: A meta-analysis of anticipated affect and moral norms. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 39(12), 2985-3019. doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.2009.00558.x
- Roberts, C. A., Ruppard, A. L., & Olson, A. J. (2018). Perceptions matter: Administrators' vision of instruction for students with severe disabilities. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 43(1), 3-19. doi: 10.1177/1540796917743931

- Roderick, E., & Jung, A. W. (2012). Perceptions of supportive leadership behaviors of school site administrators for secondary special education teachers. *Journal of Special Education Apprenticeship, 1*(2). Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1127911.pdf>
- Romi, S., & Leyser, Y. (2006). Exploring inclusion preservice training needs: A study of variables associated with attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 21*(1), 85-105. doi:10.1080/08856250500491880
- Ryan, A. M., Shim, S. S., & Makara, K. A. (2013). Changes in academic adjustment and relational self-worth across the transition to middle school. *Journal of Youth And Adolescence, 42*(9), 1372-1384. doi:10.1007/s10964-013-9984-7
- Sailor, W. S., & McCart, A. B. (2014). Stars in alignment. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 39*(1), 55-64. doi:10.1177/1540796914534622
- Schulze, R., & Boscardin, M. L. (2018). Leadership perceptions of principals with and without special education backgrounds. *Journal of school Leadership, 28*(1), 4-30. doi:10.1177/105268461802800101
- Sheeran, P., Trafimow, D., & Armitage, C. J. (2003). Predicting behaviour from perceived behavioural control: Tests of the accuracy assumption of the theory of planned behaviour. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 42*(3), 393-410. doi:10.1348/014466603322438224
- Shoulders, T. L., & Scott Krei, M. (2016). Rural secondary educators' perceptions of their efficacy in the inclusive classroom. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 35*(1), 23-30. doi:10.1177/875687051603500104

- Spaulding, L. S., & Pratt, S. M. (2015). A review and analysis of the history of special education and disability advocacy in the United States. *American Educational History Journal*, 42(1), 91-109. Retrieved from www.infoagepub.com/products/American-Educational-History-Journal-Vol-42
- Sumbera, M. J., Pazey, B. L., & Lashley, C. (2014). How building principals made sense of free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 13(3), 297–333. doi:10.1080/15700763.2014.922995
- Sun, A. Q., & Xin, J. F. (2020). School principals' opinions about special education services. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 64(2), 106-115. doi: 10.1080/1045988X.2019.1681354
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Tarekegne, W. M. (2015). Challenges students' face in their transition from primary to secondary school and the interventions schools take to ease the transition. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 10(5), 622. doi:10.5897/ERR2014.2055
- Talbott, E., Mayrowetz, D., Maggin, D. M., & Tozer, S. E. (2016). A Distributed Model of Special Education Leadership for Individualized Education Program Teams. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 29(1), 23-31. Retrieved from <http://www.casecec.org/resources/jsel.asp>
- Theoharis, G., Causton, J., & Tracy-Bronson, C. P. (2016). Inclusive reform as a response to high-stakes pressure? Leading toward inclusion in the age of accountability. *Teachers College Record*, 118(14), 1-30.

- Theoharis, G., Causton, J., & Woodfield, C. (2015). Inclusive leadership and disability. In *Leadership for increasingly diverse schools*, 13-38. Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9781315767574
- Thompson, C. (2015). The principals' impact on the implementation of inclusion. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 136, 141.
- Topping, K. (2011). Primary–secondary transition: Differences between teachers' and children's perceptions. *Improving Schools*, 14(3), 268–285. doi:10.1177/1365480211419587
- Vanlaar, G., Reardon, S. F., & Kalogrides, D. (2014). *How does transition from elementary to middle school affect the racial achievement gap?* Evanston, IL: Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness.
- Vaz, S., Wilson, N., Falkmer, M., Sim, A., Scott, M., Cordier, R., & Falkmer, T. (2015). Factors associated with primary school teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities. *PLoS One*, 10(8). doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0137002
- Virginia Department of Education. (2010). *A Parent's Guide to Special Education*. Retrieved from http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/parents/parents_guide.pdf
- Virginia Department of Education. (2014). *Virginia's Guidelines for Educating Students with Specific Learning Disabilities*. Retrieved from http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/disabilities/learning_disability/learning_disabilities_guidelines.pdf
- Virginia Department of Education. (2016, October 14). 2016-2017 PART B, Section 611, flow-through sub grant awards (CFDA #84.027A). Retrieved from http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2016/262-16a.pdf

- Virginia Department of Education. (2017). Indicator 6: educational environments for children birth - five questions and answers. Retrieved from http://www.doe.virginia.gov/info_management/data_collection/special_education/child_count/questions-and-answers-early-childhood-educational-environments.pdf
- Virginia Department of Education. (2018a). *Education directory: Virginia public school division superintendents* [Data File]. Retrieved from: <http://www.vadoeapp.com/SuperintendentBySchoolDivisions.aspx?w=true>
- Virginia Department of Education. (2018b). *Web policies*. Retrieved from: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/home_files/web_policy.shtml
- Virginia Register of Regulations*, 8 Va. Admin. Code § 20-22 (2007).
- Wagner, J. Y., & Katsiyannis, A. (2010). Special education litigation update: Implications for school administrators. *NASSP Bulletin*, 94(1), 40-52. doi:10.1177/0192636510372251
- Warner, R. (2013). *Applied statistics: From bivariate through multivariate techniques* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Weber, M. C. (2017). Foreword: The special education cases of 2017. *Journal of Law and Education*, 46(4), 425-441. Retrieved from <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/jle46&div=1&src=home>
- Williams, J. L., Pazey, B., Shelby, L., & Yates, J. R. (2013). The enemy among us: Do school administrators perceive students with disabilities as a threat? *NASSP Bulletin*, 97(2), 139. doi:10.1177/0192636512473507
- World Health Organization. (2013). *Maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health*. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/topics/adolescence/dev/en/

Yan, Z., & Sin, K. F. (2015). Exploring the intentions and practices of principals regarding inclusive education: an application of the theory of planned behaviour. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 45(2), 205-221. doi:10.1080/0305764X.2014.934203

Zigmond, N., Kloo, A., & Volonino, V. (2009). What, where, and how? Special education in the climate of full inclusion. *Exceptionality*, 17(4), 189-204.
doi:10.1080/09362830903231986

Zirkle, P.A. (2013). Is it time for elevating the standard for FAPE under IDEA? *Exceptional Children*, 79(4), 497-508. doi:10.1177/001440291307900407

APPENDIX A**Opinions Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI)**

Removed to comply with copyright.

APPENDIX B

ORI Permission to Use

Statement of Permission to Use

Opinions Relative to the Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI)

I, Barbara Larrivee, hereby grant permission to use the Opinions Relative to the *Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI)*, to:

Name: Pattye K. Leslie

Institution: Liberty University

Address: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Phone no.: [REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]

This permission is granted for research purposes only. If changes are made to the ORI, the citation must say “adapted from.”

There is no charge to use the survey. I am requesting that you send the results of the research in order to pool data to conduct further research on the ORI.

The above named also agrees to provide a written summary of findings including a by-item analysis. This report should be sent within 30 days of completion of the research via e-mail to [REDACTED]. Or, if sent via mail, please send to my home address:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I agree to these terms to use the ORI.

Pattye K. Leslie

June 16, 2017

ORI User

Date

APPENDIX C

Email Request to Include Division Personnel in Doctoral Research

Dear Division Superintendent or Division Designee,

My name is Pattye Keeling Leslie and I am a graduate student in the Education Department at Liberty University. I am conducting research for a dissertation as part of the requirements for completion of an Ed.D.

The research focuses on the attitude regarding inclusion among principals and assistant principals at the elementary and middle school levels. In order to compare attitudes among these administrators, I will administer a survey to measure opinions regarding inclusion and correlating demographic factors. Completion of the survey should require about five minutes. Data will be collected in a manner that will allow participants to remain anonymous. Participant divisions, including the names of staff and schools, will not be identified in drafts of final reports of the study. I am writing to request your permission to recruit administrators within your school division.

Should you grant permission for me to administer this survey to elementary and middle school building administrators in your division, I will access email addresses for each person using resources from your division website and the Virginia Department of Education. I ask that you please respond to this request indicating whether you grant permission for me to include employees from your division in my research.

Attached you will find a copy of the proposal for my study. The appendix includes the Conditional Approval from the Institutional Review Board, the Informed Consent for all participants, and the survey questions.

If you have questions, you are encouraged to contact the researcher, Pattye Keeling Leslie. You may contact her at [REDACTED] or email address: [REDACTED]. You may also contact the dissertation chair, Dr. Jeff Rector, by email at: [REDACTED].

If you have questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to some other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB), 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at irb@liberty.edu

I ask that you please respond to this email request indicating whether you grant permission for me to include employees from your division in my research. If you would like to receive a copy of the final results, please include that request in your response and a copy will be provided at the completion of the study.

Thank you for your time and consideration of supporting research that will allow school divisions to better understand how administrative attitudes may impact services provided to students with disabilities. The input of personnel in your division will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Pattye Keeling Leslie

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent

An Analysis of Opinions About Special Education Inclusion Among Virginia Elementary and Middle School Administrators

Pattye Keeling Leslie

Liberty University

Ed.D. Candidate, School of Education

You are invited to participate in a research study of how opinions about special education inclusion correlate to demographic data among elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals in Virginia school divisions. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a principal or an assistant principal at the elementary or middle school level, I ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Pattye Keeling Leslie, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University.

Background Information: The purpose of this correlational study is to analyze how opinions about special education inclusion correlate to demographic data among elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals in Virginia school divisions.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following: Complete the Opinions Relative to the Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) survey and related demographic questions. It should take approximately 5 minutes to complete the survey.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. The benefits of the study are the collection of additional data regarding attitudes towards inclusion and factors that can impact such attitudes. Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of the study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Participant responses will remain anonymous. Data will be stored in password protected online accounts and locked physical locations and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in the study is voluntary and your decision whether or not to participate will not affect current or future relations with Liberty University.

You are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time, prior to submitting the survey, without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Pattye Keeling Leslie. If you have questions, you are encouraged to contact her at [REDACTED] or email address: [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Jeff Rector, by email at: [REDACTED].

If you have questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall Suite 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

- I have read the informed consent and wish to proceed to the survey and participate in the described study.
- I do NOT wish to participate in the study

APPENDIX E**Liberty University Institutional Review Board Approval****LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 30, 2019

Pattye K. Leslie IRB Exemption 3674.093019: An Analysis of Opinions about Special Education Inclusion among Virginia Elementary and Middle School Administrators

Dear Pattye K. Leslie,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

- (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY.

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971

APPENDIX F

Online Participant Recruitment Letter and Survey

Survey for the Doctoral Study: An Analysis of Opinions about Special Education Inclusion Among Virginia Elementary and Middle School Administrators

My name is Pattye Keeling Leslie and I am a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University. I am conducting research for a dissertation as part of the requirements for completion of a Doctor of Education degree. My research focuses on the attitude regarding Special Education inclusion among principals and assistant principals at the elementary and middle school levels.

If you are an elementary or middle school principal or assistant principal, and agree to participate, you will be asked to complete the Opinions Relative to the Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) survey and related demographic questions. Completion of the survey should require about five minutes. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, click on the survey link to complete the survey.

[REDACTED]

An informed consent document is provided at the beginning of the survey. The informed consent will provide additional information about my research including more detailed information about research procedures and participation. Please click on the survey link at the end of the consent information to indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

If you have questions, you are encouraged to contact the researcher, Pattye Keeling Leslie. You may contact her at [REDACTED] or email address: [REDACTED]. You may also contact the dissertation chair, Dr. Jeff Rector, by email at: [REDACTED].

Your input is very important to learning more about how outcomes for students with disabilities may be improved and your participation will be greatly appreciated.

Pattye Keeling Leslie
Liberty University
Ed.D. Candidate, School of Education

KEY: -3 = I disagree very much -2 = I disagree pretty much -1 = I disagree a little +1 = I agree a little +2 = I agree pretty much +3 = I agree very much

	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3
[REDACTED]						
[REDACTED]						
[REDACTED]						
[REDACTED]						
[REDACTED]						
[REDACTED]						
[REDACTED]						
[REDACTED]						
[REDACTED]						

© ORI 1995

Barbara Larrivee, Linda Cook, and Richard Antonak

Related Demographic Questions

Please answer the following questions to assist with the research process. No information will be personally identifiable. Base all information regarding school demographics on the most recently information reported to the public.

Which category best describes your current position in your division?

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Other

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Which category includes your years of administrative experience?

- 0-7 years
- more than 7 years
- I have never served as an administrator

Which category describes the level of the school where you work? *

- Elementary
- Middle
- Other

Which category best describes you?

- I hold at least one special education endorsement as part of my teaching licensure
- I hold NO special education endorsement as part of my teaching licensure
- I am not a licensed educator

Which category best describes the minority population served by your school division?

- < 30% minority served
- ≥ 30% minority served

Which category best describes population served by your school division qualifying for free and reduced lunch?

- < 11% qualify for free and reduced lunch
- ≥ 11% qualify for free and reduced lunch

Which category best describes the population of students with disabilities served by your school division?

- < 7.8% SWD served
- ≥ 7.8% SWD served

APPENDIX G

Follow up Participant Letter

Dear Building Administrator,

Two weeks ago, you were contacted with an invitation to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is a reminder for you to take part in this survey if you wish to participate and have not already done so. My name is Pattye Keeling Leslie and I am a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University. I am conducting research for a dissertation as part of the requirements for completion of an Ed.D. If you have participated, I greatly appreciate your time. If you have not yet participated, your participation in this study is valuable to improving the quality of the results.

The research focuses on the attitudes regarding Special Education inclusion among principals and assistant principals at the elementary and middle school levels. By participating in this survey, you have the opportunity to provide information that may continue research efforts to understand how educators might continue to improve the support offered to students with identified, special education needs.

The survey includes the Opinions Relative to the Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) and related demographic questions and should take approximately 5 minutes to complete. The deadline to participate in the survey is [date]. Participation will be completely anonymous.

To participate, click on the survey link to complete the survey.

██

An informed consent document is provided at the beginning of the survey and will provide additional information about my research including more detailed information about research procedures and participation. Please click on the survey link at the end of the consent to indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

If you have questions, you are encouraged to contact the researcher, Pattye Keeling Leslie. You may contact her at ████████████████████ or email address: ████████████████████. You may also contact the dissertation chair, Dr. Jeff Rector, by email at: ████████████████████.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Your input is very important and your participation will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Pattye Keeling Leslie