PRINCIPALS' AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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Abstract

This explanatory mixed methods study focuses on the perceptions of principals and special education teachers about special education teachers' roles and responsibilities. An online survey was conducted with 11 principals and 41 special education teachers (Resource Specialists and Special Day Class teachers). Independent semi-structured interviews were completed with three principals and three special education teachers. Thirty-two Likert scale statements were presented on the survey along with closed and opened ended questions. The principal group and the special education teacher group showed a significant difference between the means on 11 of the 32 Likert scale items as revealed by independent samples *t* tests. Topics in which there tended to be varied responses included special education teacher challenges, compensation for special education teachers, special education teachers' feelings of isolation, principal and special education teacher leadership, special education teacher collaboration time with principals and general education teachers, the amount of time special education teachers spend on tasks, and Response to Intervention practices.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The field of special education has encountered numerous changes over the decades due to the introduction of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (also known as Public Law 94-142), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1990, 1991, & 1997), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, inclusion or mainstreaming initiatives, the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the Response to Intervention (RTI) movement. Prior to 1975, students who were deemed cognitively incapable, deaf, blind or who had behavioral issues were frequently not allowed to attend public schools as they were institutionalized or hospitalized. In brief, students with perceived special needs of any kind were denied the right to attend public school with peers because of their disability. On occasion, some students with special needs were allowed to attend public school yet often in segregated classrooms or buildings (LaNear & Frattura, 2007).

The civil rights movement was an important catalyst for change in public education. The *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling in 1954 deemed separate schools for blacks and whites as unconstitutional. This civil rights movement opened the door for parents to challenge the segregation and marginalization of children with special needs (LaNear & Frattura, 2007). The actions of parents of students with special needs resulted in the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. This act is also known as Public Law 94-142 and was later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1990 which is often referred to as IDEA. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 was developed because numerous students with special needs were still not allowed to be educated within public schools.

Critical information relevant to this study will be discussed in Chapter 1 including: the background, problem, purpose, significance, research questions, summary of methods, theoretical framework, delimitations, limitations and definitions of terms and phrases.

Background

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1990) requires federally funded public schools to provide a free and appropriate public education for students with special needs. It further requires that a student with special needs be placed in a least restrictive environment (LRE). Accordingly, a student with special needs is to be educated in a classroom with general education peers to the maximum extent possible. Students with special needs encompasses such challenges as blindness, deafness, other health impairments, behavior or emotional issues and learning disabilities which are defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) as:

> . . . a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Students are only to be placed in a more restrictive educational environment if they cannot receive any educational benefit within a general education classroom. (Pub. L. No. 108–446, 118 Stat. 2647)

Students with these aforementioned types of special needs must be instructed in the least restrictive environment commonly referred to as LRE. A more restrictive educational environment removes the student from the general education classroom so the student can receive instruction in a small group setting with other students who have special needs.

Providing instruction in a different setting restricts the student's learning environment because the student is removed from their general education classroom environment. Students with special needs are no longer with general education peers when they are removed from their general education classroom.

Consequently, students with special needs are not accessing the general education curriculum when they are in a different classroom which potentially limits how they learn or what they are learning. Removing a student from the general education classroom without proper merit could be considered a violation of FAPE (free appropriate public education) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 mandates a free appropriate public education to ensure that "students with disabilities and students without disabilities must be placed in the same setting, to the maximum extent appropriate to the education needs of the students with disabilities" (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The intent behind a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment is to ensure students with special needs remain in the general education classroom interacting with peers in general education for as much of the school day as possible.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 attempted to combat practices of segregation because the act required students with special needs to be educated in the same setting with students without special needs. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was amended in 1991, 1997 and in 2004. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was amended in 1991 to mandate the inclusion of special education services for children with disabilities from birth to age two. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was then reauthorized in 1997 to include a requirement that all teachers must be trained to work with students with special needs and that special education teachers must be knowledgeable about

general education curriculum and assessments (Buell, Hallam, & Gamel-McCormick, 1999; Dingle, M., Falvey, M.A., Givner, C.C., & Haager, D., 2004). The reauthorization in 1997 also required that students with special needs be included in "state and district assessments and provision of access to the general curriculum" (Wakeman, S.Y., Browder, D.M., Flowers, C., & Ahlgrim-Delzell, L., 2006, p. 154).

The most important change to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act occurred in 2004 when it was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act or IDEIA. The major improvement to the act was the addition of the terminology "the least restrictive environment" which is often referred to as inclusion. The movement of inclusion or mainstreaming grew out of the societal demand to include students with special needs within general education classrooms. Inclusion involves placing a student with special needs within the least restrictive environment which is defined as "to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). Students with special needs are required participate in general education classrooms for as much of their school day as deemed appropriate according to the guidelines of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004).

Unfortunately, the movement of inclusion has perhaps unintentionally internally segregated students with special needs within schools (Ferri & Connor, 2005). Students who qualify for special education services often receive instruction outside of their general education classroom for part of their school day. For example, a student with special needs may go to another classroom and receive specialized academic instruction for one hour daily. The student with special needs receives this individualized instruction from a special education teacher. The student's daily departure from the general education classroom creates the perception that the

student is different. General education peers know that the student with special needs is leaving the classroom to obtain assistance from a different teacher.

Consequently, the stigma of having difficulty learning continues to attach itself to the student with special needs which creates a sense of separation between special education and general education students. Research indicates that general education teachers typically harbor negative feelings toward special education teachers and students with special needs which tends to contribute to the sense of separation these groups sometimes experience (Shoho, Katims, & Meza, 1998). It was found in a mixed methods study that surveyed and interviewed elementary general education teachers, special education teachers and administrators, that teachers often have negative feelings about students with special needs which can be a detriment to students when they are placed in these teachers' classrooms (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2000).

The segregation of students may also unintentionally generate a separation of special education teachers from general education teachers. Researcher Robert McQuat (2007) conducted a qualitative case study about the intention of special education programs. McQuat (2007) wanted to discover if such programs effectively serve students with special needs or instead serve the people who manage public education systems. During the researcher's open-ended interviews of 12 special education teachers, he uncovered that these special education teachers experienced neglect, isolation and marginality which the researcher referred to as a "deficit in social capital" (McQuat, 2007, p. 39). McQuat (2007) interpreted these findings as special education teachers lacking social support since supportive peer relationships were seldom fostered. He further explained that similar to students with special needs, special education teachers were also separated, isolated and less appreciated (McQuat, 2007).

Regrettably, these feelings of marginalization do not support strong professional and peer relationships which research indicates are key to retaining teachers. An important study

conducted by California State University (2007), uncovered that 69% (N = 270) of active special education teachers remain in the field because of their bond with other teachers and 67% (N = 270) remain because of support from their principal (Futernick, 2007). These survey participants answered "a lot" or "somewhat" to the following question: "How much did each of the factors below affect your decision to remain in the classroom" (Futernick, 2007, p. 97)? This finding indicates that the feeling of support and camaraderie is crucial to the retention of special education teachers. Of those special education teachers who had left the teaching profession, 70% indicated that they did so because they received inadequate support. Additionally, the researchers at California State University found that only 8% of special education teachers currently not teaching would return to teaching if their salary was increased. This information potentially discredits the common myth that teachers will remain in the profession if they are paid more (Futernick, 2007).

The current movement of Response to Intervention (RTI) further supports the need for special education and general education teachers to work more collaboratively to meet the needs of all students. In brief, Response to Intervention involves implementing educational interventions within the general education classroom prior to referring a student for special education services. Unfortunately, working together for the greater good by practicing Response to Intervention (RTI) with fidelity has yet to fully evolve despite the belief that collaboration is key to its success (Mahdavi & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2009). Special education teachers report time constraints as major impediments to collaborating with general education teachers. Additional constraints involve minimal or no time to plan, numerous time consuming, irrelevant meetings and too much paperwork to complete (Jacobson, 2007). A mixed methods study indicated that special education and general education teachers do not have the collaborative training necessary to properly instruct students with special needs (Daane et al., 2000). These teachers stated that

personal attitudes, lack of time to work together and minimal special educator time in the classrooms as obstacles to collaborating effectively (Daane et al., 2000).

A major contributing factor of teachers failing to consistently collaborate may stem from the lack of understanding about the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers. General education teachers may also not fully understand the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers. Special education teachers' actual roles and responsibilities may not be congruent with principals'/assistant principals' perceptions of special education teachers' roles and responsibilities. There may be a substantial breakdown in the expectations that principals/assistant principals and general education teachers hold of special education teachers. These misunderstandings may be perpetuating the feeling of isolation and segregation that special education teachers frequently encounter (Shoho et al., 1998).

Research indicates that special education teachers often feel a sense of isolation or separation from their school community which consists primarily of the principal and general education teachers (Shoho et al., 1998). In a mixed methods study about alienation, special education teachers indicated higher levels of isolation, normlessness and powerlessness than general education teachers. The researchers suggest that this high sense of alienation may contribute to the high attrition rate of special education teachers (Shoho et al., 1998). Ironically, the movement towards inclusion may be contributing to this sense of isolation.

Research on inclusion indicates that principals and teachers have conflicting ideas about inclusion (Daane et al., 2000). For example, a mixed methods study conducted with general education teachers, special education teachers and principals revealed that the perceptions of these three groups varied on certain topics relative to inclusion. Neither of the teacher groups viewed an inclusive learning environment as the optimal educational environment for students

with special needs. However, principals thought that an inclusive learning environment was the best option for students with special needs (Daane et al., 2000).

In addition, special education and general education teachers agreed that inclusion generated a more intense instructional load and increased classroom management issues. The principals concurred that the teaching workload was greater; however, the principals did not think that classroom management issues increased. Lastly, all three groups felt that special education teachers and general education teachers are not comfortable in the collaboration process needed to support inclusion. These differences in opinion regarding inclusion may support the contention that principals and special education teachers have different perceptions of special education teachers' roles and responsibilities (Daane et al., 2000).

Unfortunately, these circumstances can contribute to special education teachers leaving the teaching profession at a faster rate and more frequently than general education teachers. Gehrke and McCoy (2007) discovered that special education teachers are 2.5 more times likely to quit their jobs than general education teachers. In addition, most special education teachers leave their job within the first five years of teaching (Oliveraz, 2006). These statistics might be cause for concern for fellow teachers, principals, parents and students. Students with special needs often have a more difficult time dealing with change thus they need a consistent and effective teacher in order to thrive. Unfortunately, the loss or the constant changing of a special education teacher can detrimentally impact a student with special needs academically and socially (Billingsley, 2004). Exploring principals'/assistant principals' perceptions and special education teachers' perceptions of their own roles' and responsibilities may assist in finding a common ground or in balancing the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers. Effectively balancing roles and responsibilities could contribute to special education teachers remaining in

the field longer and could provide special education teachers with more time to actually teach their students.

Problem Statement

There is evidence that educators often treat students with special needs differently because the label of special education often leads to stigmatization (Lauchlan & Boyle, 2007). Lauchlan and Boyle (2007) found that teachers often focus on students with special needs deficits, exclude them and have lower expectations of them. In addition, labeling students as having special needs contributes to their sense of separation and isolation from their general education peers. There is also a growing body of research that suggests that special education teachers likewise feel separated from the mainstream of the school and often feel devalued by principals and other teachers (McQuat, 2007). Literature on inclusion often refers to how principals are out of touch with special education teachers and what these teachers are actually doing throughout the school day (Wakeman et al., 2006). This research highlights that most principals view themselves as supportive of special education teachers yet special education teachers do not agree (Valeo, 2008). Research further indicates that studies do not gather the attitudes of special education teachers as often as the attitudes of general education teachers (Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, 1999).

Based in research, special education teachers are often not treated in a manner that is comparable to general education teachers (McQuat, 2007). Wakeman, Browder, Flowers, and Ahlgrim-Delzell (2006) indicate that principals tend to receive little or no training about special education during their college classes or principal license programs. This lack of special education knowledge may contribute to differential treatment of special education teachers because principals may not be a familiar with special education teachers' roles and responsibilities. Researchers Franz, Vannest, Parker, Hasbrouck, Dyer, and Davis (2008) suggest that "administrators are disconnected from the tasks in which teachers routinely engage"

(p. 567) and Valeo (2008) further suggested in her study on inclusion "that principals were not on top of the special education program and what the special education teacher was doing" (p. 12). This lack of knowledge may also contribute to special education teachers leaving the profession at a much earlier rate and higher percentage than general education teachers (Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005). Special education teachers are 2.5 more times likely to quit their jobs than general education teachers (Gehrke & McCoy, 2007). Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education published in March 2011 has listed special education teachers on their Teacher Shortage Areas Nationwide Listing for California consecutively since 1993.

Purpose Statement

The primary purpose of this mixed methods study is to identify principals'/assistant principals' perceptions of the roles, responsibilities and expectations of special education teachers. The secondary purpose is to ascertain the experiences of special education teachers relative to their roles, responsibilities and imposed principal expectations. This study will focus on principals/assistant principals and special education teachers within one school district located in Northern California. From these data, it may be possible to uncover what are the differences and similarities in how principals/assistant principals and special education teachers view special education teachers' roles and responsibilities. To help further understand the discrepancy between principal and special education teachers' perceptions, there is a need to better understand principals'/assistant principals perceptions of the roles, responsibilities and expectations of special education teachers and how they are similar and different from special education teachers' perceptions of their own roles and responsibilities.

Summary of Methods

This study will employ a mixed methods study as qualitative and quantitative data will be collected concurrently during administration of the researcher developed survey. This study will be conducted using mixed methods in order to glisten the benefits from each method and to minimize the weaknesses of each method. The overarching goal of this study is to quantify, explain and compare principals'/assistant principals' and special education teachers' perceptions, expectations, roles and responsibilities of special education teachers. The research questions addressed in this study will be:

1. What are principals' and assistant principals' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers?
2. What do special education teachers perceive as their roles and responsibilities?
3. How do the responses by principals and assistant principals compare with those of special education teachers?

Significance

This study will contribute to the literature by providing current perceptions of special education teachers relative to their own roles and responsibilities. Special education teachers' opinions are seldom gathered in studies as compared to general education teachers' opinions. Furthermore, most studies focus on inclusion and the perceptions of its effectiveness without a critical focus on the special education teachers' roles and responsibilities. The possible disparity between special education teachers' and principals'/assistant principals' perceptions of a special education teacher's roles and responsibilities has not been specifically addressed throughout the literature.

It is critical to build on shared perceptions and to minimize differences in perceptions in order to reduced isolation and segregation amongst special education teachers. Developing reasonable roles, responsibilities and expectations to more closely align perceptions if need be is crucial.

Reducing responsibilities or providing proper support to accomplish mandated tasks could impact job satisfaction among special education teachers. Maintaining reasonable duties could further allow special education teachers to better serve their students.

Lastly, the findings of this study may be utilized to assist superintendents, principals and assistant principals in leading their team of special education teachers. Thoroughly understanding special education teachers' roles and responsibilities may lead to insight into how these teachers' needs could be better met and how their principals/assistant principals can more effectively support them. As previous studies have indicated, principals may think they are providing adequate support but the teachers may not feel that they are receiving sufficient support (Valeo, 2008). Findings may also assist district leaders in attempting to ensure that roles and responsibilities are equitable among special education and general education teachers. Special education teachers have numerous mandated legal duties in addition to the typical teaching responsibilities that general education teachers do not have to perform such as conducting IEP (individualized education program) meetings and completing corresponding paperwork.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on social constructionism. Interactions between principals and teachers allow them to create shared values as they build meaning through their interactions (Smith & Leonard, 2005). People make "socially constructed meanings of their realities" (Smith & Leonard, 2005, p. 271). Accordingly, beliefs and attitudes held by teachers influence how they make decisions (Bakken & Smith, 2011). Social identity theory can also be used to describe the underlining theoretical framework of this study. Social identity theory pertains to how "interconnectedness of language (social interactions), meaning (social construction of reality), and thought (inner interpretation)" (Angelle & Schmid, 2007, p.

772) defines who we are and our identity. Thus, principals/assistant principals and special education teachers who work together make meaning out of their communications while uniquely interpreting their own roles, responsibilities and expectations relative to special education.

Delimitations

The population utilized in this study represents only one school district within Northern California. The principals/assistant principals and special education teachers interviewed will be chosen based on them volunteering to be interviewed. The population being studied was selected due to the researcher working in a specific school district. Thus, results of the findings cannot be generalized to the population at large. A reader may be able to transfer some of the knowledge glistened from this study if the reader's contexts are similar to the dynamics of this study.

Limitations

The utilization of surveys may be a limitation as some participants may answer the survey in a manner that they think the researcher wants them to answer. Meaning participants may make politically or socially acceptable statements versus responding with their true feelings. In quantitative research this phenomenon is known as response bias. This way of responding may also happen during the interview process. Participants may respond with politically correct answers versus what they really think. The fact that the researcher/interviewer works within the same district could also impact how the interviewee responds. The interviewees may fear that their views or opinions might be shared within the district even though all participants will remain anonymous. Thus, authentic answers may not be consistently obtained during this study. Lastly, this study will provide only a composite of responses during this time period that may be impacted by many factors such as school/district climate, current educational policy, budget

constraints, etc. For example, circumstances may change over time which could result in different survey and interview responses if this study were conducted a year later.

Definitions of Terms

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grants a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for all students (Sec. 616 (a)(3)(A)).

Free appropriate public education (FAPE)

> means special education and related services that:
>
> (A) have been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge;
>
> (B) meet the standards of the State educational agency;
>
> (C) include an appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the State involved; and
>
> (D) are provided in conformity with the individualized education program required under section 614(d). (IDEA Sec. 602 (9))

The term *inclusion* is often used interchangeably or in conjunction with the term least restrictive environment (LRE). Inclusion refers to students with special needs being included in educational settings with general education peers. There is no formal definition of the word inclusion as it is not utilized in federal laws and it is not used in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.

The *least restrictive environment (LRE)* is defined by IDEA as (IDEA Sec. 612 (a)(5)):

> To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or

severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

The *No Child Left Behind Education Act of 2001*, also referred to as *the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, was implemented so that all students would be provided with an adequate education. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the intent of the act is "to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind."

Resource specialists typically work with students with mild special needs. Resource specialists work with students in all different grades and ages. These students often have only mild special needs thus they typically come to a resource specialist for one hour daily to receive academic support in reading and/or math.

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a recent way to help serve students who are having academic challenges prior to receiving special education services so that no child is academically "left behind".

A *self-contained classroom* means that all students within the class have special needs. There are no general education students in a self-contained classroom. However, these students with special needs often attend general education classes such as physical education with their general education peers.

Special day class teachers are those special education teachers who typically work with students with moderate to severe special needs. Their students are with them for most of the school day within a self-contained classroom.

Summary

This mixed methods study is intended to identify principals'/assistant principals' perceptions of the roles, responsibilities and expectations of special education teachers and to ascertain the

experiences of special education teachers relative to their roles, responsibilities and imposed principal expectations. Fostering understanding between principals/assistant principals and special education teachers of special education teachers' roles and responsibilities is crucial to the success of site special education programs. Lack of understanding often places more responsibilities and expectations upon special education teachers which reduces job satisfaction, contributes to teacher turnover and reduces time spent on teaching.

The literature review will address a broad range of special education topics. The literature review will cover the following pertinent areas: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA), No Child Left Behind (NCLB), inclusion, marginalization, segregation, principals' training in special education and special education teacher retention. These are the most important topics related to this mixed methods study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Historical Background

Two cases, *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972) and *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972), were actually the catalysts for establishing a free and appropriate public education for students with special needs (Frost & Kersten, 2011). The historical decision in the case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) made education a "right that must be made available to all on equal terms" (Frost & Kersten, 2011, p.2). However, this language was sometimes open to interpretation as some states attempted to argue that the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) did not include people with special needs (Frost & Kersten, 2011). The *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972) case stopped school districts from refusing to enroll students with mental retardation (Frost & Kersten, 2011). These cases were the precursors to the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 which eventually became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1990.

Prior to the 1970s, most students with special needs were prevented from receiving an education if a school district stated that it could not meet their needs. Thus, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act was established in 1975 so that students with special needs could receive a free public education. Creation of this act did afford students with special needs entry into public classrooms however it did not guarantee students with special needs the same curriculum as students without special needs. Unfortunately, segregated classrooms evolved in which students with special needs were educated in different classrooms from their peers (Ferri & Connor, 2005).

The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) further changed how students with special needs are educated as the act requires that all students are held to high academic standards as measured by state standards and assessments. The overarching goal of the No Child Left Behind Act is for all students to make "adequate yearly progress (AYP) on state assessments by 2014" (DiPaola, M., Tschannen-Moran, M., & Walther-Thomas, C., 2004, p. 2). The No Child Left Behind Act focuses on four key groups who typically underperform academically: those with special needs, limited English skills, racial minorities and the economical disadvantaged (DiPaola et al., 2004). The No Child Left Behind Act aimed to close the achievement gap of these typically lower performing students thus not leaving these children behind academically. Prior to the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), students with special needs were not required to take the same assessments as their general education peers (Wilson, 2006). Currently, in California most students with special needs in grades two through 11 are required to take state assessments known as the California Standards Tests (http://www.startest.org/cst.html). There is the California Modified Assessment that can be taken if students meet specific criteria including having an Individualized Education Plan (http://www.startest.org/cma.html). There is also the California Alternate Performance Assessment that students with more severe special needs take (http://www.startest.org/capa.html).

Retention of Special Education Teachers

A major obstacle when implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (2004) and the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) is the issue of high teacher turnover especially in special education. Researchers Carpenter and Dyal (2001) reported that four out of 10 special education teachers leave the teaching profession by their fifth year of teaching. Other findings indicate that special education teachers often leave the teaching profession after only one year (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, and Walther-Thomas

(2004) found that almost 50% of special education teachers leave the teaching profession within three years mainly due to lack of principal support. Another report claims that 40% of special education teachers who leave the teaching profession declared that they left because they were dissatisfied with administrative support (Prather, 2011). Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, and Harniss (2001) noted that approximately 70% of special education teachers who stated that they intended to leave the teaching profession actually did leave. Principals might have prevented these teachers from leaving if these principals had been aware of the special education teacher's desire to leave.

It is further important to note that teachers in general who are new to the teaching profession leave at higher rates than those who have been teaching for several years (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). Of these new teachers, beginning special education teachers are still more likely to resign than their general education teaching counterparts (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). Certain studies indicate that 7-15% of special education teachers leave the teaching profession each year while other studies report that 20% of special education teachers quit annually (Lynch, 2012; Thornton Thornton, B., Peltier, G., & Medina, R., 2007). Some special education teachers leave special education to take general education teaching positions (Billingsley, 2007; Gersten, R., Keating, T., Yovanoff, P., & Harniss, M.K., 2001; Thornton et al., 2007). Hence, there are currently many general education teachers who hold special education teaching credentials (Thornton et al., 2007). Furthermore, some general education teachers cannot find general education positions so they take a special education job while waiting to return to a general education teaching assignment (Henley, J., Milligan, J., McBride, J., Neal, G., Nichols, J., & Singleton, J., 2010). These teachers do not remain in special education because they change their type of teaching position which further contributes to special education teacher shortages.

The retention of highly qualified special education teachers is a huge concern as the number of special education students continues to increase (Alvarez McHatton, P., Boyer, N.R., Shaunessy, E., & Terry, P.M., 2010; Carpenter & Dyal, 2001; Prather 2011; Thornton et al., 2007). Over the years, there has been an estimated 50% increase in the number of students with special needs being included into general education classrooms (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010; Dingle et al., 2004). Unfortunately, the number of special education teachers does not increase at an equivalent rate as the number of students with special needs rises. There are typically more open special education teacher positions than graduating special education teachers which contributes to the continual high demand for special education teachers (Prather 2011; Thornton et al., 2007). Special education teacher shortages are greater than in any other subject area (Prather, 2011). Alarmingly, it has been reported that 98% of districts consistently deal with special education teacher shortages (Henley et al., 2010). Therefore, principals are urged to focus on retaining special education teachers versus attracting new special education teachers to avoid turnover (Gersten et al., 2001). Principal support is critical since teachers who do stay in the teaching profession are four times more likely to state that their administrator is supportive than those who leave (Prather, 2011). Special education teachers will more than likely remain in the teaching profession if a school can effectively foster a climate that includes consistent principal and fellow teacher support (Gersten et al., 2001).

Special education teachers primarily leave special education because of feelings of isolation, overwhelming responsibilities and lack of support (Carpenter & Dyal, 2001; Garrison-Wade, D., Sobel, D., & Fulmer, C.L., 2007; Gersten et al., 2001; Lynch 2012). A contributing factor to teachers' feelings of isolation is that special education and general education teachers are typically trained to become teachers via completely different preparation programs (Billingsley, 2007). Upcoming special education teachers and general education teachers rarely interact with

one another since they often attend separate teacher certification programs (Billingsley, 2007; Handler, 2006). Different credential programs and district training required for general education teachers and special education teachers further segregates these two groups. Separate cultures are then established from the onset due to differentiated training and treatment (Billingsley, 2007). Challenges tend to appear when general education and special education teachers do finally interact due to their different background knowledge acquired during their preparation programs (Crockett, 2002). This ongoing practice of training these teachers in segregated and unique programs is a catalyst for the segregation of these teacher groups within schools (Buell et al., 1999). However, special education and general education teachers need to work together to meet the needs of all students regardless if the student has special needs or not.

Special education teachers' jobs are structured in a certain way which forces them to operate in a certain manner. For example, special education teachers often have to attend additional meetings and complete extra tasks without adequate time to do so which takes away from their teacher preparation time. An explanatory study conducted with approximately 600 special education teachers from three urban school districts in three different states revealed that the construct of their job impacts their decision to leave (Gersten et al., 2001). Researchers Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, and Harniss (2001) describe job design as involving what teachers "believe about their jobs (i.e., that they are there to teach children with disabilities) and the realities of their jobs (i.e., burdensome paperwork loads, extensive time spent in meetings, limited opportunities for individualization, and huge ranges in student performance levels" (pp. 562-563). These special education teachers were provided with a survey and an exploratory factor analysis was used to analyze the findings. The researches focused on intent to stay in the teaching profession as the criterion variable during their path analysis. The study uncovered that special education teachers often feel dissatisfied, stressed and less committed to their job when

they cannot achieve goals due to how their job is setup (Gersten et al., 2001). These researchers define a job that is not designed well as one that does not have enough resources (materials, time), inadequate knowledge is provided, lacks opportunity for decision-making and has nonexistent or minimal principal support (Gersten et al., 2001).

Research indicates that teachers in general experience significant isolation due to the nature of their job as they often work independently within the confines of their classrooms (Garrison-Wade et al., 2007; Gersten et al., 2001). Accordingly, teachers' perceptions of their working conditions can play a pivotal role when making a decision to remain in or leave the teaching profession (Gersten et al., 2001). The very nature of special education teachers' jobs causes them to experience neglect, isolation and marginality which is referred to as a "deficit in social capital" (McQuat, 2007, p. 39). Researcher McQuat (2007) defined this deficit as special education teachers lacking social support since meaningful peer relationships are seldom fostered. McQuat uncovered this information during his interviews with special education teachers within three different schools: an elementary, middle and high school. Interview questions were given to the special education teachers a minimum of one week before the interviews were conducted. In this study, the 12 special education teachers interviewed felt separated, isolated and less appreciated which was similar to how their students were treated (McQuat, 2007).

In the Journal of Moral Education, author Nancy Nordmann (2001) discusses the existence of an "educational dynamic of student marginalization in favor of institutional empowerment" (p. 276). This dynamic exists when schools attempt to maintain a traditional school structure without taking all students' specific needs into consideration. Accordingly, a school that fails to identify and meet the needs of each and every student marginalizes the student whose needs are not being met. Schools need to acknowledge, identify, observe and accommodate students with

special needs instead of focusing on maintaining the systemic status quo (Nordmann, 2001). A school must respond to the needs of each student versus the needs of the collective school system (Nordmann, 2001).

Along with their students, special education teachers in particular have reported experiencing a stigma because they are a special education teacher (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). Conderman and Johnston-Rodriguez (2009) reported that these special education teachers claim that other teachers tend to have negative views of special education which leads to stigmatization of them and their students. A teacher who perceives himself or herself as being segregated may be more likely to leave the teaching profession as research indicates that a feeling of belonging is critical to retention (Schlichte et al., 2005). Unfortunately, research indicates that special education teachers frequently encounter feelings of isolation and segregation (Shoho et al., 1998). Special education teachers have felt marginalized and set apart from their peers which is referred to as being "cultural outsiders" or as having an "outsider status" (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009, p. 242). Ironically, special education teachers are often "outsiders looking into the system that is supposed to be inclusive" (Henley et al., 2010, p. 203). Ultimately, it is the administration that needs to make special education teachers into "insiders" (Henley et al., 2010).

Billingsley (2007) emphasizes that administrative support is needed to develop a unified culture in which all teachers and all students feel part of the same learning community. It is suggested that an "organizational culture" (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009, p. 242) could be developed in which norms and values are shared in a collaborative manner versus teachers acting alone. Principals are encouraged to frequently include special education teachers and students in meaningful ways since "the school climate and school culture, which are directly impacted by principal leadership, must support special education" (Thornton et al., 2007, p. 237).

Isolation of special education teachers can occur if principals fail to create an inclusive culture which can also lead to isolation of students with special needs (Billingsley, 2007).

Marginalized and segregated students with special needs are fully aware that they are being labeled and treated differently within their educational programs. In an interesting study on segregated groups involving pullout programs in which the student attends a special education class for an hour daily, these students often felt ambivalent about being educated in this manner (Mattson & Roll-Pettersson, 2007). Researchers Mattson and Roll-Pettersson (2007) were able to conduct a partial study involving student voices by using a phenomenological approach. They interviewed 12 students with special needs using a semi-structured interview process which yielded themes based on the students' responses.

One major theme that emerged was related to the students' feelings about being in a segregated educational group. These students with special needs discussed feeling: like an outsider, being "shut out" from the larger class, "awkward" leaving class to go to another class and that they do not like being "singled out in any way" (Mattson & Roll-Pettersson, 2007, p. 248). An interesting finding was that quite a few of the students mentioned how they did not like being with other students who had behavior or social issues. These students knew they needed academic help yet they deemed it as unfair when they were placed with students who were seen as trouble makers in their schools (Mattson & Roll-Pettersson, 2007). This finding supports the claim of Mattson and Hensen (2009) that schools attempt to segregate those who impede the learning of others.

Mattson and Roll-Pettersson (2007) refer to segregating those with learning difficulties or behavior and social issues as a way to "increase the homogeneity of the ordinary class" (p. 249). Schools justify segregating students within a school by stating that students will receive the instruction needed to meet their unique special needs. Yet, the actual intent of segregating

students in some cases is so other students can learn without the presence of those with special needs (Mattson & Hansen, 2009). Unfortunately, the majority still does not want the learning of non special education students interrupted or altered by a student with special needs. Another intriguing discovery was that most of the students felt that they were receiving better instruction hence they were willing to be segregated and remain with more difficult students in order to receive academic support. The researchers eloquently referred to this phenomena as "involuntary exclusion" (Mattson & Roll-Pettersson, 2007, p. 250) because students are forced to learn in a different environment that is separate from most of their peers.

Nordmann (2001) claims that each school has its own culture when dealing with students with special needs and it is very difficult to change this culture. For example, researcher Nordmann (2001) discusses a school that had the cultural practice of not believing that students receiving special education services were ever able to become fully functioning members of a general education classroom. This school perceived a student with special needs as having learning issues for their entire school career (Nordmann, 2001). Accordingly, such a school will try to adhere to this "norm" or belief system at all costs so that the school can maintain its engrained systemic practices (Nordmann, 2001). Thus, a student with special needs could potentially remain in a special education program for all a his/her years in school if the school believes that the student has permanent learning challenges.

Along with isolation, inadequate or non-existent administrative support is a paramount factor in a special education teacher's decision to leave the field of special education (Thornton et al., 2007). Principal support for special education teachers is necessary in order to increase job satisfaction which will positively impact special education teacher attrition (Foley & Lewis, 1999; Lynch, 2012). A poignant study conducted by California State University (2007), uncovered that 69% ($N = 270$) of active special education teachers remain in the field because of

their bond with other teachers and 67% ($N = 270$) remain because of support from their principal (Futernick, 2007). These survey participants answered "a lot" or "somewhat" to the following question: "How much did each of the factors below affect your decision to remain in the classroom" (Futernick, 2007, p. 97)? This finding indicates that the feeling of support and camaraderie is crucial to the retention of special education teachers. Of those special education teachers who had left the teaching profession, 70% indicated that they did so because they received inadequate support. Additionally, the researchers found that only 8% of special education teachers currently not teaching would return to teaching if their salary was increased (Futernick, 2007). This finding discredits the common myth that teachers will remain in the profession if they are paid more (Futernick, 2007). Additional benefits of principal support include teachers viewing work as more rewarding which results in increased levels of job commitment (Littrell, P.C., Billingsley, B.S., & Cross, L.H., 1994). Decreased stress levels and a reduction in health issues are other positive outcomes of having adequate principal support (Littrell et al., 1994). A noteworthy suggestion is for principal administrative programs to target special education teachers to become principals in order to improve principals' leadership abilities and to increase support provided to special education teachers (DiPaola et al., 2004).

Availability of a competent mentor also impacts the attrition rate of special education teachers (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). However, only approximately 60% of special education teachers have access to a mentor and unfortunately one-third of these special education teachers found that their mentor program was not sufficient (Billingsley, 2007). A survey of approximately 600 special education teachers in three urban school districts in three different states uncovered that teachers who received ongoing professional development were less apt to leave the teaching profession (Gersten et al., 2001). In addition to meaningful professional development, a path analysis of the data uncovered that special education teachers would like to

observe fellow special education teachers. They desire to acquire knowledge from colleagues yet special education teachers are rarely given opportunities to do so mainly due to time constraints and district topic mandated professional development (Gersten et al., 2001).

Carpenter and Dyal (2001) suggest additional ways to mitigate adverse factors in order to retain quality special education teachers. Carpenter and Dyal (2001) claim that a mission statement that is inclusive of special education must be communicated school wide and adhered to in theory and in practice. Avenues for clear communication are essential to foster partnerships among teachers so the school can collectively work towards the common mission. Research suggests that principals can act as the key facilitator of collaboration between special education and general education teachers to achieve the mission (Garrison-Wade et al., 2007; Gersten et al., 2001). In a survey completed by 230 secondary principals, these principals did view themselves as collaboration leaders (Foley & Lewis, 1999). Sansosti, Goss, and Noltemeyer (2011) also recommend that special education directors foster relationships with special education and general education teachers.

Furthermore, researchers Carpenter and Dyal (2001) advise that all parties involved in special education must have explicitly defined roles and responsibilities which are typically assigned by the principal. Each professional must know the roles and responsibilities of his or her job and the roles and responsibilities of others. Shared knowledge of specific roles and responsibilities can reduce conflicts that special education teachers, general education teachers and principals have regarding special education procedures (Carpenter & Dyal, 2001). Unfortunately, special education teachers' responsibilities are often "ambiguous and competing" (Garrison-Wade et al., 2007, p. 118) which leads to work overload and job dissatisfaction. Thus, it is crucial that roles and responsibilities are explicitly defined and most importantly that they are distributed equitably.

In addition, the entire school community would benefit by being knowledgeable about special education law (Carpenter & Dyal, 2001). Unfortunately, research indicates that many principals and general education teachers do not have a basic understanding of special education law (Carpenter & Dyal, 2001; Crockett 2002; Garrison-Wade et al., 2007). Furthermore, it has been noted that principals and general education teachers rarely know the actual information contained in a special education student's individualized education program (IEP) (Butera, G., Klein, H., McMullen, L., & Wilson, B., 1998). This absence of knowledge is highly concerning since all teachers are required to follow a student's individualized education program. Other rudimentary administrative changes can be made that can reduce special education teachers' stress level such as providing clerical assistance and extra time along with basic materials and resources (Carpenter & Dyal, 2001).

Instructional Leadership

Numerous studies and articles in the field of educational leadership refer to the principal as the leader for all students including students with special needs (Barnett, 1998; Frost & Kersten, 2011). Hence, it is important to understand principals' perceptions of special education since principals are accountable for the quality of instruction provided to all students (Bays & Crockett, 2007). School leadership, which consists mainly of the principal, is indirectly linked to learning and achievement thus it is crucial that leadership is effective (Bays & Crockett, 2007; Sansosti, F.J., Goss, S., & Noltemeyer, A., 2011). Schools will not be academically successful if a principal only operates from a managerial position (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010; Foley & Lewis, 1999). Researchers Bays and Crockett (2007) claim that adequate instructional leadership can incorporate an instructional vision, foster trust and collaboration via professional development, support teachers via differentiating supervision and include monitoring instruction.

Principals need to commit to their vision and the teachers must be fully dedicated to achieving this vision (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006; Frost & Kersten, 2011). A school's instructional vision of special education usually centers upon how the principal defines a disability and the principal's philosophy regarding inclusion (Bays & Crockett, 2007). Inclusion tends to take on different meanings depending on the principal which in turn shapes the principal's school wide special education vision (Crockett, 2002). Some principals believe that it is ideal to include students with disabilities while other principals hold the opposite position thus their commitment to inclusion and their instructional vision reflects their corresponding beliefs. Principals' opinions and attitudes about special education are critical since negative attitudes are dominant barriers to inclusion (Garrison-Wade et al., 2007; Praisner 2003; Smith & Leonard, 2005). Lowe and Brigham (2000) underline the importance of the principal's attitude regarding special education students. Principals' attitudes are crucial along with their skill level or lack of skill level when directing the instruction of students with special needs (Lowe & Bingham, 2000).

The level and type of principal support regarding any change initiative such as inclusion is typically based on principals' values and attitudes as their leadership determines the success of the change (Praisner, 2003; Sansosti, F.J., Noltemeyer, A., Goss, S., 2010; Sansosti et al., 2011). Unfortunately, "most educational change efforts result in limited implementation success because school leaders are not knowledgeable about nor fully supportive of the change" (Sansosti et al., 2010, p. 287). The majority of research on inclusion indicates that attitudes toward inclusion determines if inclusion will be successful or not (Smith & Leonard, 2005). The principal is seen as the most important person in creating better attitudes toward inclusion because the principal sets the school climate (DiPaola et al., 2004; Frost & Kersten, 2011; Smith & Leonard, 2005). A principal is more likely to have a more inclusive approach of educating

students with special needs versus segregating these students if a principal has a more positive attitude towards inclusion (Praisner, 2003).

General education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and special education is also important. Past research indicates that general education teachers typically harbor negative feelings toward special education teachers and students with special needs which tends to contribute to the sense of separation these groups experience (Shoho et al., 1998). Researchers Daane, Beirne-Smith, and Latham (2000) further support the claim that teachers often have negative feelings about students with special needs. These negative beliefs do not benefit these students when they are placed in these teachers' classrooms as teachers' attitudes impact how these students are treated (Daane et al., 2000).

A survey of approximately 400 elementary principals about their attitudes on inclusion revealed that only 1 out of 5 principals had a positive attitude regarding inclusion while the majority (approximately 76%) were unsure about their attitude towards inclusion (Praisner, 2003). In a contrasting study that surveyed 65 principals from all grade levels, there was no relationship between attitude and inclusion (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998). Regardless of the attitude of principals, teachers often feel that principals have limited skill sets needed to "support inclusive practices" (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Garrison-Wade et al., 2007, p. 123) because principals lack thorough knowledge and understanding of inclusion. Inclusive practice refers to valuing diversity throughout the entire school and in every educational program (Dingle et al., 2004). Even principals feel unprepared for inclusion as discovered in a survey of 56 elementary principals in Illinois. These principals felt less knowledgeable about improving their special education programs, knowing learning objectives for students with special needs and understanding special education rules contained in their state's administrative code (Frost & Kersten, 2011). Consequently, insufficiently prepared principals cannot properly oversee special

education programs such as inclusion (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010; DiPaola et al., 2004). There is quite a discrepancy between principals' frequency of participation in special education matters versus their level of preparation in special education. Principals are often participating in activities that they feel unprepared for such as initial and annual individualized education program meetings (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010).

Barnett and Monda-Amaya's (1998) study of 65 principals regarding their attitudes toward inclusion also uncovered that there was no clear definitive definition of inclusion as principals described inclusion differently. Principals in this study also had no formal training in special education which may have contributed to these findings (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998). Limited knowledge and varying attitudes may be why inclusion tends to not be a priority in all schools. Interestingly, in structured interviews conducted with principals and teachers, principals and special education teachers felt that inclusion was a priority at their schools yet general education teachers disagreed (Downing, J.E., Eichinger, J., & Williams, L.J., 1997).

Proper inclusion also requires differentiated supervision in which special education teachers and general education teachers are not supervised in the same manner (Bays & Crockett, 2007). General education and special education teachers' roles and responsibilities differ as do their instructional methods thus they are not supervised in an identical way. Principals need to customize supervision such as including different ways to monitor instruction for general education teachers versus special education teachers. Unfortunately, numerous principals are less familiar with special education instructional strategies than with general education teaching practices (Billingsley, 2007). Principals' gap of knowledge about teaching methods for special education can hinder special education teachers and their students.

Principals must know effective special education teaching methods in order to effectively monitor instruction instead of assuming that the special education teacher is the instructional

expert (Bays & Crockett, 2007). However, teaching strategies and the student's individualized education program (IEP) are often perceived as exclusively the domain of special education teachers when instructing students with special needs. Singular responsibility of only the special education teacher lessens the principal's desire to learn more about special education (Butera et al., 1998). Principals' lack of knowledge and inability to differentiate supervision or monitor instruction contributes to special education teachers not feeling supported. Knowledgeable principals are more likely to provide adequate resources and proper support for teachers (Sansosti et al., 2010).

Principals are encouraged to acquire more special education knowledge since this information often fosters more positive attitudes toward special education which will ultimately benefit students (Lynch, 2012). General education teachers could also benefit from learning more about special education since teachers who do receive more training have more positive attitudes toward inclusion (Downing et al., 1997). Principals are making critical decisions about how inclusion will be implemented in their schools however most principals have limited knowledge of the needs of students with special needs (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998). Nearly 50% of principals claim that they get minimal training in special education (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010). Principals often lack actual hands on special education experience during their preparation programs such as working with students, teachers, parents, advocates, lawyers and special education directors (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010; DiPaola et al., 2004; Prather 2011). Approximately 70% of principals deem their leadership training as insufficient for real life application (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010). The majority of principal leadership programs typically focus on theories and conceptual frameworks versus practical experiences (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010; Crockett 2002). Unfortunately, very few states (eight or nine) even require principals to have special education training (Crockett 2002; Lynch 2012). In Lynch's

recent study conducted in 2012, California was not listed as one of the states that has special education requirements in principal preparation programs.

Researchers Alvarez McHatton, Boyer, Shaunessy, and Terry (2010) discuss that while the roles and responsibilities of principals are changing, principal preparation programs are only adding information instead of overhauling their training programs. Their survey of mainly 60 elementary female white principals indicated that principals felt that they lacked preparation in special education eligibility meetings and in developing annual individualized education programs (IEPs) (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010). Another study that surveyed 120 administrators enrolled in graduate programs in South Carolina uncovered that the majority of these administrators did not receive explicit training in special education (Monteith, 1998). An alarming 75% of the 120 administrators surveyed, consisting of principals, assistant principals and supervisors, had no explicit special education training. However, these administrators deemed that special education training was important in their role as a leader and they were willing to obtain the necessary training if offered (Monteith, 1998). A more current study that surveyed 56 elementary principals found that principals would find it helpful to receive specialized training in special education teaching methods (Frost & Kersten, 2011).

Of the 120 administrators surveyed, approximately 90% of these administrators felt that specific special education training was needed so that they could successfully lead their school (Monteith, 1998). Alarmingly, 75% of the 120 administrators claimed that they only gained special education knowledge from memos or by making errors that pertained to special education practices (Monteith, 1998). Learning via errors could be quite detrimental since special education procedural or policy mistakes could have costly monetary ramifications in addition to negative student educational outcomes. Actual experience working with students with special needs would likewise be beneficial as studies propose that if principals have a positive

experience with a person with special needs then principals attitudes are typically more positive towards this population (Praisner, 2003).

Furthermore, principals' attitudes tend to be more positive about inclusion if a principal obtains more special education training (Praisner, 2003). Regrettably, many principals are not well trained in implementing inclusion thus they do not know how to take on a proper leadership role in special education (Praisner, 2003). It has been reported that there is a greater chance that the principal will be more willing to support special education teachers when a principal is more cognizant of special education (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010). Principal support is crucial since special education teachers leave the teaching profession because of lack of principal support (Bays & Crockett, 2007).

Principals can be more successful in working with special education teachers and their students if principals "understand the support that special education teachers need" (Frost & Kersten, 2011, p.5). Most special education teachers appreciate principals and fellow teachers if they do posses knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of a special education teacher (Gersten et al., 2001). However, principals and general education teachers often do not know the unique challenges that special education teachers encounter (Prather, 2011). Principals must have a thorough understanding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) and the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) along with best teaching practices so that they can effectively support special education teachers and students with special needs (DiPaola et al., 2004).

Principals must be fully aware of the learning that is going on in each and every classroom not just in general education classrooms (DiPaola et al., 2004). In a survey conducted with 255 rural principals in three different states, learning objectives, goals and instruction were three of the lowest rated areas of principal expertise relative to special education services delivered in

classrooms (Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006). This is an alarming finding when principals are deemed the instructional leaders of their schools. The findings of this study are of importance especially since a broad range of principals was surveyed: 98 were elementary, 78 were secondary, 19 were elementary and secondary combined and 50 were district office employees and other administrators. These principals were located in three different states and each state required at least one course in special education for principal certification (Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006).

Leadership in Special Education

Bays and Crockett (2007) discovered that the literature lacks specific knowledge of instructional leadership as it relates to special education. Researchers have found that principals are often not trained in leadership relative to special education (Bays & Crockett, 2007). In fact, confusion sometimes exists regarding who is responsible for supervising special education teachers and monitoring special education instruction (Lowe, 2000). Is the principal or the district special education director more suitable for this role? Students with special needs are at a disadvantage if a principal, who lacks knowledge or who has very limited knowledge of how to effectively teach students with special needs, monitors special education instruction. Unfortunately, administrators are often more concerned about the appearance of their special education program versus the quality of the teaching methods utilized with students with special needs (Kaufman & Walker, 1993). Furthermore, special education teachers are at a disadvantage when an unknowledgeable principal supervises their additional duties such as writing individualized education programs (IEPs), holding IEP meetings and adhering to legal mandates.

More research is necessary to uncover the characteristics of leadership needed to make special education and inclusion successful (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998). It is important to explore components of special education leadership as some studies suggest that allowing teachers to act as leaders can enhance teacher retention which is a major ongoing issue in special education

(Billingsley, 2007; Garrison-Wade et al., 2007). However, there is not one specific agreed upon definition of what constitutes as teacher leadership (Angelle & Schmid, 2007). In a qualitative study regarding universal teacher leadership, common areas were discovered to be possible indicators of a teacher leader such as making decisions, acting as an educational role model, exceeding expectations and working with intent (Angelle & Schmid, 2007). There are no specific studies on attributes of special education teachers as leaders yet these aforementioned characteristics might be applicable.

Due to the lack of literature in the field of special education instructional leadership, Bays and Crockett (2007) conducted an explanatory study to explore this area. These researchers purposively selected three districts and nine elementary schools. Bays and Crockett then used theoretical sampling to create homogenous groups. They interviewed and observed 13 special education teachers, nine general education teachers, nine principals, three directors of special education, one district coordinator of instruction and one school psychologist. They also observed all teachers while they were teaching and during meetings such as individualized education program meetings.

Researchers Bays and Crockett (2007) developed a grounded theory about instructional leadership for special education by coding findings and creating corresponding categories. They found that time, school size and lack of district administrative support impeded principals' ability to support teachers (Bays & Crockett, 2007). Furthermore, principals tended to casually disperse responsibility for special education by typically relying on the special education director or the special education teachers themselves (Bays & Crockett, 2007; Garrison-Wade et al., 2007). Bays and Crockett (2007) viewed dispersing special education responsibility as diminishing "the importance of instructional leadership for special education" (p. 17). Thus, teachers in this study

tended to rely more on peers for instructional support since leadership was lacking via their principal.

Bays and Crockett (2007) uncovered another distressing finding that most principals' interactions with special education teachers centered on individualized education program (IEP) paperwork and corresponding compliance tasks. Elementary principals have indicated that they are often more involved with special education responsibilities such as legal or instructional issues without having proper knowledge of these subjects (Frost & Kersten, 2011). A study of 205 principals uncovered that approximately 75% of these principals felt that they have experienced an increase in time needed to deal with special education matters (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010). Regardless, principals still spend more time on general education functions as found in a survey of 255 principals located in three different states. Approximately 40% of these principals were at the elementary level, approximately 30% were at the secondary level and the remaining principals were at both levels or at district offices. The time these 255 principals spent on general education duties averaged approximately 80% and the time spent on special education duties averaged approximately 20% (Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006).

A survey of 60 principals about their views on their preparedness and quality of professional development uncovered that most principals feel less successful in dealing with special education legal affairs (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010). During focus groups involving 40 principals and assistant principals, 76% of these principals and assistant principals stated that their special education workload mainly centered on legal issues (Crockett, 2002). Litigious matters tend to supersede instruction thus teaching methods tend not to be the focus between special education teachers and principals' exchanges even though the principal is still deemed the "instructional supervisor" (Bays & Crockett, 2007). Consequently, principals rarely meet with special education teachers to discuss best teaching practices for students with special needs (Frost &

Kersten, 2011). Although principals who hold a state special education teaching credential typically interact more with their special education teachers (Frost & Kersten, 2011).

Special education practices that center around teaching students with special needs and not solely about legal mandates are critical (Crockett, 2002). Alarmingly, principals only spend approximately 12% of their time on instructional leadership in general (Lynch, 2012). This may be due to the fact that many principal preparation programs fail to prepare principals for their role as a special education instructional leader (Frost & Kersten, 2011; Lynch 2012). Research in the field of public education often mentions that principals do not have adequate training in special education instructional methods and in special education law (Lowe & Brigham, 2000; Monteith, 1998; Morgan et al., 1998). A survey conducted with 60 predominantly elementary principals revealed that approximately 50% of them stated that they did not take any classes in special education during their principal training curriculum (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010). However, in this same study, approximately 75% of these principals did receive district training regarding special education legal matters instead of in special education teaching methods (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010).

As mentioned, the literature does not contain many studies on instructional leadership relative to special education nor does the literature contain studies on special education teachers as leaders (Billingsley, 2007). The description of a responsive leader may be worth exploring: "knowledgeable persons in positions of influence who are committed to ensuing contexts that support learning for each and every student" (Crockett, 2002, p. 157). However, achieving this goal may be quite a feat despite the implementation of school reform efforts since the lack of instructional leadership in the reform process sets schools up for failure (DiPaola et al., 2004). The reform or "reculturing" of schools initiated by The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 changed the role of the

teacher as a leader and generated the need for more collaboration between general education and special education teachers (Billingsley 2007; Gersten et al., 2001).

Prominent researcher Billingsley (2007) refers to reculturing as a way to redesign and improve schools by solving challenges, mentoring new teachers, providing professional development for fellow teachers, teachers learning together all through strong teacher leadership. The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) mandated more accountability as it requires all students to make "adequate yearly progress" by the year 2014. This expectation drove the U.S. Department of Education to state that teachers must work together to accomplish this lofty goal of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) (Alvarez McHatton et al., 2010; Dingle et al., 2004; DiPaola et al., 2004; Smith & Leonard, 2005). The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) requires teachers "to strengthen academic expectations and accountability for children with disabilities and to close the achievement gap between high- and low-performing and advantaged and disadvantaged students so that no child is left behind" (Smith & Leonard, 2005, p. 269). Hence, in an ideal educational world, general education and special education teachers would be consistently collaborating while sharing ownership for educating all students (Butera et al., 1998; Dingle et al., 2004). Principals are seen as the main contributor to the success of school reform and teachers require their support to implement systemic changes through collaboration (Angelle & Schmid, 2007; Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006; DiPaola et al., 2004; Praisner 2003). Researchers Morgan, Whorton, and Cruzeiro (1998) stress the importance of principal leadership during change as the principal's leadership abilities will determine if the change will be successful or not.

Informal Leadership

Principals and special education teachers' roles and responsibilities are being redefined as "reculturing" of schools occurs so that schools can be more effective in meeting the needs of all

students (DiPaola et al., 2004). The very nature of the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers thrusts them willingly or not into leadership roles as informal leaders (Billingsley, 2007). An informal leader is a person who may not necessarily be in a leadership role yet he or she performs tasks indicative of a leader (Billingsley, 2007, Angelle & Schmid, 2007). It is important to note that a teacher will not automatically be able to successfully perform as a leader by simply being placed in a designated leadership position (Angelle & Schmid, 2007).

The implementation of inclusion was also a catalyst for quite a shift in the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers as it forced them into more leadership types of roles (Bryant & Barrera, 2009; Dingle et al., 2004; Garrison-Wade et al., 2007). Special education teachers are required during inclusion to communicate and collaborate more with their peers which is often considered traits of teacher leaders (Angelle & Schmid, 2007). Paradoxically, "Special educators are expected to be skillful in implementing collaborative relationships" (Dingle et al., 2004, p. 46) and initiating these interactions. However, it is very important to contemplate that teacher leadership is impacted by a person's capabilities and aspiration to lead in addition to providing occasions that allow the person to lead (Angelle & Schmid, 2007). Most teachers do not view themselves as formal leaders regardless of the roles and duties they undertake (Angelle & Schmid, 2007). Consequently, it is vital for principals to foster leadership abilities in those teachers who are able and willing to lead (DiPaola et al., 2004).

Teacher Leadership

Principals often heavily depend on special education directors and special education teachers to assist them. Principal reliance on special education teachers has caused special education teachers to partake in horizontal leadership when they work in partnership with principals and general education teachers (Billingsley, 2007). This type of a shift from traditional hierarchical

authority to horizontal authority is highly encouraged within school systems in order to empower teachers (Foley & Lewis, 1999). Research has shown that collaboratively run schools actually function more effectively than schools that are structured as a hierarchy (DiPaola et al., 2004). Thus, schools might attempt to veer away from the typical "principal centered model for school leadership" (Angelle & Schmid, 2007, p. 771). Some teachers may not want to work in a bottom up work environment as they prefer a traditional hierarchical school system. Thus, other teachers who do attempt to collaborate often find it very challenging as they encounter resistance from these teachers (Billingsley 2007; Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). To overcome opposition, a "participatory management system" (Angelle & Schmid, 2007, p. 782) is suggested in which the principal includes teachers in decision-making. Teachers will then feel a sense of empowerment and experience a willingness to work together when their input is valued (Angelle & Schmid, 2007).

Lack of control over making decisions can create a sense of isolation for teachers (Billingsley, 2007). Hence, principals are encouraged to actively involve teachers in shared decision making to build a sense of community and to enhance the overall school climate (DiPaola et al., 2004; Henley et al., 2010). Furthermore, principals are encourage to diligently involve special education teachers in all aspects of the school community (Henley et al., 2010). Increased levels of collaboration and communication are recommended to reduce teachers' sense of segregation (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). However, colleague collaboration may be a challenge since people who feel isolated are less likely to work in partnership with others (Henley et al., 2010).

Collaboration is critical however, teachers tend to lack formal training in collaboration therefore principals can consistently model collaboration (DiPaola et al., 2004). Researchers Conderman and Johnston-Rodriguez (2009) reported that only approximately 50% of special

education teachers take classes in collaboration while only approximately 30% of general education teachers take classes in collaboration. Teacher training programs rarely incorporate strategies on how to collaborate with other teachers to meet the needs of all students hence teachers still do not feel prepared to work in teams (Malone & Gallagher, 2010). Although most teachers feel amicable about being on a team and they typically hold positive opinions about their team if they are part of a team they deem as effective (Malone & Gallagher, 2010). Malone and Gallagher (2010) propose that teachers' perceptions about teamwork are largely based on past interactions on teams which influences a teacher's decision to be on a team or not. The principal must actively engage in facilitating leadership by creating behaviors that support alliances to assist teachers in collaborative processes (Smith & Leonard, 2005). Teachers must be provided with explicit ways to work collectively if teachers do not have the skill set to collaborate (Dingle et al., 2004). Furthermore, well-defined member roles were a major factor that yielded positive feelings about working in a collaborative setting (Malone & Gallagher, 2010).

Role conflict or role ambiguity can be a prominent barrier to special education teachers collaborating and acting as school leaders (Billingsley, 2007). Special education teachers are required to perform additional duties such as focusing on legal compliance which can take focus away from leading fellow teachers or collaborating with peers (Billingsley, 2007). Some special education teachers experience "role dissonance" (Gersten et al., 2001, p. 553) when they are attempting to meet their own expectations and those expectations placed upon them by principals, general education teachers and the special education district office. These three different entities' imposed expectations of special education teachers are often contradictory, unrealistic and overwhelming. Billingsley (2007) claims that special education teachers could assist in solving ongoing role issues if they had more of a voice within their schools.

Role dissonance further exists when special education teachers think that their job will contain certain roles and responsibilities yet the actualized roles and responsibilities are quite different (Gersten et al., 2001). Researchers Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, and Harniss (2001) defined role dissonance as "the degree to which special educators experience dissonance between their own beliefs about the role of a special educator and their actual day-to-day experiences" (p. 556). To minimize role dissonance, research suggests that principals need to be more knowledgeable about the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers which will allow principals to provide better instructional leadership and guidance (Lynch, 2012). Thus, clearly defining all individuals' roles and responsibilities and having awareness of each other's roles and responsibilities can reduce role ambiguity and role dissonance.

Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention, often referred to as RTI, has also impacted the roles and responsibilities of some special education teachers. Response to Intervention is a three-tiered intervention system designed to assist struggling learners. The first tier provides minimal academic support followed by more intense and frequent support in the second tier. The third tier usually falls under the realm of special education as this tier involves the most intense interventions administered frequently (Council for Exceptional Children, 2007). Researchers claim that tier one is only effective for approximately 70-80% of students thus the other two tiers are needed to reach the remaining students who are having difficulty learning (Richards, Richards, C., Pavri, S., Golez, F., Canges, R., & Murphy, J., 2007). Response to Intervention (RTI) was not created as a way to qualify students for special education services rather Response to Intervention (RTI) is supposed to be used to connect general education and special education practices (Frost & Kersten, 2011).

Response to Intervention (RTI) was initially created due to the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (Sansosti et al., 2011; Werts, M.G., Lambert, M., & Carpenter, E., 2009). The overarching goal of these acts is for all students, including those with special needs, to "have access to the general education curriculum" (Hoover & Patton, 2008, p. 196). Response to Intervention (RTI) was also established due to dissatisfaction with the discrepancy model used to qualify students for special education services (Bryant & Barrera, 2009). The discrepancy model is utilized to determine if there is a large enough discrepancy between a student's expected academic abilities (based on his/her age) versus the student's actual abilities (level of current performance). A student would be eligible for special education services if the discrepancy is large enough which is typically a 22 point difference or a 1.5 standard deviation difference in the state of California (Restori, Katz, & Lee, 2009).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) called for "scientific, research-based intervention" (Richards et al., 2007, p. 56; Werts et al., 2009, p. 246) prior to referral for special education services. However, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) did not mandate a singular approved intervention that could be used universally (Richards et al., 2007). Consequently, the type of interventions utilized often varies by state, by district and by school (Bryant & Barrera, 2009; Cummings, K.D., Atkins, T., Allison, R., & Cole, C., 2008; Werts et al., 2009). The central goal of Response to Intervention (RTI) is to decrease the number of students who are at risk of academically failing while increasing the number of students who actually meet educational benchmarks (Callender, 2012). Hence, Response to Intervention (RTI) is supposed to reduce student referrals for special education services with the presumption that fewer students will qualify for special education services (Council for Exceptional Children, 2007; Cummings et al., 2008; Hoover & Patton,

2008; Richards et al., 2007; Swanson, E., Solis, M., Ciullo, S., McKenna, J.W., 2012). Timely and adequate interventions are presumed to meet the educational needs of most struggling learners thus minimizing the need for special education testing and corresponding services (Hoover & Patton, 2008).

Implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) has drastically changed the role of some special education teachers as many extra responsibilities have been placed upon them (Hoover & Patton, 2008; Richards et. al., 2007; Swanson et al., 2012). However, some researchers do not view special education teachers' roles as changing instead they see a need for special education teachers' abilities to broaden (Cummings et al., 2008). The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (2005) describes this as special education teachers needing to work with all teachers, differentiating curriculum, track data to see if interventions work and act as a consultant (Cummings et al., 2008). One could argue that this capacity expansion does in fact sound like a role change as more responsibilities are being added to special education teachers' workload. During Response to Intervention (RTI) phases, some special education teachers are often asked to collect data on students who may need intervention yet these students are not identified as having special needs. Typically, these students would not be the responsibility of special education teachers.

Remarkably, some special education directors even deem it the responsibility of the special education teacher to determine if a general education student responds to intervention or not (Swanson et al., 2012). Data gathering for general education students requires more time as extra paperwork needs to be completed yet special education teachers are already overwhelmed with excessive special education documentation (Swanson et al., 2012). The total number of students special education teachers have to work with increases as special education teachers are completing these added tasks regarding students who do not have special needs (Richards et al.,

2007; Swanson et al., 2012). Consequently, time is taken away from students who do have special needs when special education teachers devote more time to students without special needs. This shifting of priorities could have quite a detrimental impact on the services given to students with special needs (Bryant & Barrera, 2009).

Furthermore, special education teachers are often required to act as consultants or as a support system for general education teachers relative to Response to Intervention (RTI) in addition to their regular special education commitments (Bryant & Barrera, 2009; Cummings et al., 2008; Hoover & Patton, 2008). Administrators often subjectively assign Response to Intervention (RTI) duties without a well-defined method of actually implementing Response to Intervention (RTI) thus principals often rely on special education teachers (Sansosti et al., 2011; Werts et al., 2009). Unfortunately, many principals do not know about "scientifically based interventions" hence special education teachers are seen as the experts in "assessment, instruction, and individualized interventions" (Cummings et al., 2008, p. 24; Lynch, 2012; Richards et al., 2007). Consequently, special education teachers often have Response to Intervention (RTI) roles and responsibilities imposed upon them such as creating or finding interventions and determining how to implement these interventions (Bryant & Barrera, 2009).

It may not be assumed that special education teachers have adequate abilities needed for Response to Intervention (RTI) as they may require training. Researchers Hoover and Patton (2008) warn that some special education teachers may not even have the skill sets required to fulfill their new Response to Intervention (RTI) role. In addition, many general education teachers lack sufficient training in inclusion which relates to Response to Intervention since many students with learning difficulties who have not been placed in special education are integrated into their classrooms (Dingle et al., 2004). In a survey of 324 general education teachers about attitudes regarding inclusion, approximately 75% of them felt that they did not

have the necessary teaching skills to educate students with special needs (Dingle et al., 2004). Therefore, teachers need validated interventions and corresponding training to administer, differentiate and monitor Response to Intervention (RTI) tiers so all students can thrive academically (Bryant & Barrera, 2009).

It is critical that principals provide Response to Intervention (RTI) resources to all teachers such as training, interventions and support. A study of 132 elementary principals indicated that principals do feel knowledgeable about their Response to Intervention (RTI) program within their school district (Frost & Kersten, 2011). Acquiring knowledge about Response to Intervention (RTI) can also increase ones understanding of special education which is an added benefit (Frost & Kersten, 2011). In addition to their competency level, principals need to be aware of their mindset regarding Response to Intervention (RTI). Special education directors caution that principals need to adjust their attitudes and ways they operate in order to make Response to Intervention (RTI) successful schoolwide (Sansosti et al., 2011). It is also essential that principals define the exact roles and duties of each Response to Intervention (RTI) participant (Richards et al., 2007). Role dissonance and role ambiguity often exists surrounding Response to Intervention (RTI) and inclusion as general education teachers and special education teachers often have questions regarding their duties (Smith & Leonard, 2005). Furthermore, in focus groups conducted with special education directors, respondents expressed concern regarding lack of specific state level guidelines of joint special education and general education functions involved in Response to Intervention (RTI) which makes execution even more difficult (Sansosti et al., 2011).

Collaboration with shared responsibilities between special education and general education teachers, is needed to effectively implement Response to Intervention (RTI) however, lack of time is a major barrier to consistent collaboration (Cummings et al., 2008; Richards et al., 2007;

Sansosti et al., 2010; Sansosti et al., 2011). Time constraints involve minimal or no time to plan, numerous time consuming irrelevant meetings and too much paperwork to complete (Jacobson, 2007). Principals need to provide time for collaboration and offer their support to teachers throughout all phases of Response to Intervention (RTI) (Richards et al., 2007). In an article on best practices for Response to Intervention (RTI), Callender (2012) emphasizes that the principal must structure the interventions so that students are successful and he cautions that this cannot be accomplished if teachers work in isolation.

A qualitative study of elementary special education teachers was conducted to uncover special education teachers' perceptions of Response to Intervention (RTI). The study began in one school district with 17 special education teachers participating in the first year and then 12 of those special education teachers continued the study the following year. Ironically, of the few teachers who dropped out of the study, some teachers stopped teaching altogether and the others took a general education teaching position. Special education teachers involved in this study participated in focus groups, interviews and were willing to be observed by the researchers. Some of these special education teachers viewed their new Response to Intervention (RTI) role as a way to integrate themselves more into the overall school community since they interact with more students and teachers (Swanson et al., 2012). This study indicated that Response to Intervention (RTI) could enhance the levels of collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers. The Swanson, Solis, Ciullo, and McKenna (2012) study contained a small sample size and purposive sampling was utilized thus their results cannot be generalized. However, in a contrasting study, researchers Daane, Beirne-Smith, and Latham (2000) uncovered that special education teachers and general education teachers do not have the collaborative training necessary to instruct students with special needs.

Some researchers suggest that school psychologists play a prominent role in implementing Response to Intervention (RTI). School psychologists could determine the school's Response to Intervention (RTI) implementation barriers and provide staff with adequate knowledge and corresponding practical resources (Sansosti et al., 2011). Special education teachers' Response to Intervention (RTI) workload could be minimized if school psychologists maintained a prominent role in executing Response to Intervention (RTI). Special education teachers are expected to complete supplementary roles and responsibilities that are not in their job description which requires substantial extra time and effort (Swanson et al., 2012). School psychologists could help by sharing some of the additional Response to Intervention (RTI) duties. Unfortunately, collaborating to help all students by practicing Response to Intervention (RTI) with fidelity has yet to fully evolve (Mahdavi & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2009).

Support Needed

The definition of principal support varies and is often difficult to define as support is not one-dimensional (Prather, 2011). A national survey of approximately 200 secondary principals suggests that different types of principal support such as emotional support and instrumental support can be important to teachers (Foley & Lewis, 1999; Littrell et al., 1994). These high school principals were randomly selected and they had to rate themselves as leaders of collaborative-based programs. A descriptive and regression analysis was completed to uncover the types of principal support. The data analysis uncovered that principals' emotional and instrumental support were found to be substantial predictors of teachers' commitment level towards their educational duties (Foley & Lewis, 1999). Special education teachers desire emotional support by discussing their jobs with principals and fellow teachers to reduce their stress level (Gersten et al., 2001). Emotional support has been noted to increase teachers' job satisfaction, improve commitment level and enhance feelings of belonging (Littrell et al., 1994).

Appraisal and informational support were also found to be important to teachers (Littrell et al., 1994). Appraisal support involves the principal trusting the judgment of teachers, showing confidence in them and providing consistent feedback (Littrell et al., 1994). Appraisal support encompasses principals providing clear guidelines regarding job responsibilities which yields clear expectations thus reducing teachers' tension levels (Littrell et al., 1994).

In this substantial quantitative study conducted with 385 special education teachers and 313 general education teachers, both groups of teachers viewed the following types of support as valuable in order of most to least important: emotional, appraisal, instrumental and informational (Littrell et al., 1994). A questionnaire was mailed to all teachers to uncover these results. The researchers utilized the Virginia Department of Education to draw a random sample. Unfortunately, the researchers uncovered that a discrepancy existed between the types of support that teachers view as important and the types of support that teachers actually receive (Littrell et al., 1994). For example, teachers reported getting informational support more often than instrumental support thus teachers are not getting the right type of support (Littrell et al., 1994). Teachers further claimed that they are not getting the amount of support that they need (Littrell et al., 1994). It is important to note that this study was conducted prior to the implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI).

Unfortunately, there is minimal research on what special education teachers view as principal support (Littrell et al., 1994). Some special education teachers view principal support as the principal enforcing consequences, including teachers in decision making, respecting and appreciating teachers, listening and fostering collaboration among teachers (Prather, 2011). Other special education teachers view principal support as providing mentoring, offering meaningful professional development and helping with difficult teachers and parents (Henley et al., 2010). An important study of approximately 600 special education teachers in three different

states uncovered that it is "the values and actions of the principal and teaching staff as mediated by the overall school culture that influence the level of support felt by the special education teacher" (Gersten et al., 2001, p. 557). Remarkably, in a survey of approximately 56 elementary principals, these principals ranked administrative support as the most important responsibility when working with special education teachers (Frost & Kersten, 2011). These principals described support as providing "guidance, supervision, communication, and evaluation" (Frost & Kersten, 2011, p. 14). In addition to these various types of supports, it is suggested that principals working in special education focus on "ethics, individuality, equity, effectiveness, and partnerships" (Crockett, 2002, p. 161).

There is limited exploratory mixed methods research that explores principals'/assistant principals' and special education teachers' voices about the roles, responsibilities and expectations of special education teachers. This mixed methods study provides quantitative and qualitative data that will add insight into the perceptions and experiences of principals, assistant principals and special education teachers. This literature review provides awareness as to why a better understanding is needed between principals, assistant principals and special education teachers about special education teachers' roles and responsibilities. Aligning viewpoints will allow principals, assistant principals and special education teachers to work together more effectively in order to implement the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004), the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and Response to Intervention. Knowledge about the actual roles and responsibilities of special education teachers may allow principals and assistant principals to more appropriately lead special education teachers. Proper administrative support may lead to increasing teacher job satisfaction thus reducing special education teacher turnover which has been an ongoing challenge for numerous years. Ultimately, aligning perceptions about special education teachers' roles, responsibilities and expectations will allow

students with special needs to be served properly as more time can be dedicated to actually teaching them.

Chapter 3

Methods

There was a need to better understand principals'/assistant principals' perceptions of the roles, responsibilities and expectations of special education teachers. Knowledge of how their viewpoints are similar and different from special education teachers' perceptions of their own roles and responsibilities was needed to help understand the potential discrepancy between principals'/assistant principals' and special education teachers' perceptions. The primary purpose of this mixed methods study was to identify principals'/assistant principals' perceptions of the roles, responsibilities and expectations of special education teachers. The secondary purpose was to ascertain the experiences of special education teachers relative to their roles, responsibilities and imposed principal expectations. From these data, differences and similarities in how principals/assistant principals and special education teachers view special education teachers' roles and responsibilities were uncovered.

This study employed a mixed method approach as qualitative and quantitative data was collected concurrently during administration of the researcher-developed survey. This study was conducted using mixed methods in order to glisten the benefits from each method and to minimize the weaknesses of each method. The research design, sample selection, data collection strategy and data analysis procedures are defined in this chapter. The research questions addressed in this study were:

1. What are principals' and assistant principals' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers?
2. What are special education teachers' perceptions of their own roles and responsibilities?

3. How do the perceptions of principals and assistant principals compare with those of special education teachers?

Research Design

This study used an explanatory mixed methods design (Gay et al., 2009). This type of study involves using the results of the quantitative portion to "determine the type of data collected in a second study or phase that includes qualitative data collection, analysis, and interpretation" (Gay et al., 2009, p. 463). An online survey was used to collect quantitative data. The survey included nine open-ended questions for special education teachers and 10 open ended questions for principals to gather qualitative information to support the quantitative findings (Appendixes A and B). Additional qualitative data was gathered via semi-structured interviews of six people; two principals, two Resource Specialists and two Special Day Class teachers (Appendixes C and D).

One approach to uncover similarities or differences in principals'/assistant principals' and special education teachers' perceptions is to administer a survey to principals/assistant principals and special education teachers in an attempt to quantify the data. The survey was followed by conducting semi-structured interviews of selected survey participants in an attempt to provide meaningful insight into the quantifiable responses. A semi-structured interview contains elements of a structured and an unstructured interview format (Gay et al., 2009). Hence, there were some formal questions to guide the interview yet the researcher also added or deleted questions based on the interviewee's responses. Interview responses provide further information to help explain why some respondents maintain certain perceptions about the roles, responsibilities and principal expectations of special education teachers.

Sample Selection

The quantitative and qualitative data were convenience samples as the participants were those who volunteered to partake in the study (Gay et al., 2009). The researcher works in the school district where the study was conducted thus it was a convenience sample. The sample consisted of principals and special education teachers within this school district. Schools participating in the survey included elementary, middle and high schools. The school district contains four high schools, eight middle schools and 21 elementary schools. All principals/assistant principals and special education teachers (Resource Specialists and Special Day Class teachers) within the selected district were sent the survey via electronic mail (Appendix E).

A Resource Specialist teaches students with mild special needs in various grades by taking the student out of their general education classroom for a portion of the school day. A Special Day Class teacher usually teaches students with moderate to severe special needs in an inclusive setting as the students are minimally integrated with general education peers. The researcher worked with the Director of Special Education and a program specialist to approve and to disseminate the survey to principals, assistant principals and special education teachers. The school district employs approximately 113 special education teachers and 34 principals/assistant principals.

After reviewing the survey results, the researcher selected interviewees based on their willingness to voluntarily participate in a post survey semi-structured interview. Survey participants were asked at the conclusion of the survey if they would be willing to volunteer for a follow up interview and if so to provide the researcher with their contact information. The researcher then contacted the volunteers to set up in person interviews. The goal was to interview as many participants with differing viewpoints and experiences as possible thus the researcher interviewed both Resource Specialists and Special Day Class teachers.

Data Collection Strategy

The researcher-developed survey was piloted and modified accordingly prior to distribution to the selected sample. The pilot study was conducted to make certain that the survey questions were clear and to determine if the survey questions accurately addressed the research questions. The pilot survey was given to a few public school educational experts. The individuals who participated in the pilot study were asked about the clarity of the survey questions. Pilot participants were asked if they found any question confusing, unclear, misleading or inappropriate. Pilot participants were also asked to time how long it took them to complete the survey.

Final permission to administer the survey was obtained from the district's assistant superintendent. The researcher then distributed the survey via email to special education teachers, principals and assistant principals throughout the school district. The researcher emailed the survey along with an introduction that explained the survey with a choice to opt out (Appendix E). Survey questions focused on the roles, responsibilities and principals'/assistant principals' expectations of special education teachers.

The researcher reviewed the quantitative survey results for patterns and trends in order to build qualitative interview questions around emergent common themes. The researcher then constructed questions around major differences in perceptions between special education teachers and principals as they emerged from the survey data. The interview questions were piloted with a special education teacher and a principal who was not participating in the actual study. The final semi-structured interviews were conducted with two principals, two Resource Specialists and two Special Day Class teachers.

All interviewees were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The interviewees were provided with a written consent form explaining their rights as a voluntary participant (Appendix F). The interviews were recorded and transcribed with participant permission (Appendix G).

Interview questions focused on the roles, responsibilities and principals' perceptions of special education teachers. Member checks were completed after the interview responses were transcribed. Member checks involved each participant reading his/her transcript for accuracy and clarity to provide corresponding feedback to the researcher. The researcher made necessary changes and added clarification based on the member checks to enhance the trustworthiness of the study (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009).

Data Analysis Procedures

A *t*-test for independent samples was utilized to compare responses between principals and special education teachers. A *t*-test is utilized to determine whether "a significant difference exists between the means of two independent samples" (Gay et al., 2009, p. 335). Principals and special education teachers were the independent variables. Patterns were identified from the survey to assist in constructing semi-structured interview questions. Themes and common phrases were also identified from the interview responses. The researcher utilized triangulation since there was not one source of data. Triangulation involves "multiple methods, data collection strategies, and data sources to get a more complex picture of the topic under study and to cross-check information" (Gay et al., 2009, p. 408). This study involved a survey and in person interviews along with two data sources: principals and special education teachers. This multi-instrument approach of using surveys and interviews along with having two groups to compare (principals and special education teachers) enhanced the trustworthiness of this study.

Summary

An explanatory mixed methods design was utilized in this study to quantify, explain and compare principals' and special education teachers' perceptions, expectations, roles and responsibilities of special education teachers. Principals and special education teachers were surveyed and a select few who volunteered were subsequently interviewed. The information

obtained can provide principals and special education teachers with the opportunity to align differing perceptions and to strengthen shared viewpoints that were uncovered in this study.

Chapter 4

Results/Findings

This explanatory mixed methods study consisted of an online survey containing closed and open-ended questions. The survey participants consisted of principals and special education teachers (Resource Specialists and Special Day Class teachers) in one school district. Three principals and three special education teachers volunteered to be interviewed. These individuals provided their name and contact information at the end of the online survey. The semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed to glean themes. This study focused on the following research questions:

1. What are principals' and assistant principals' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers?
2. What do special education teachers perceive as their roles and responsibilities?
3. How do the responses by principals and assistant principals compare with those of special education teachers?

The chapter is organized into the following sections: demographics, quantitative findings and qualitative findings.

Study Demographics

District Demographics

The district in which the study was conducted serves approximately 30,000 students and consists of 35 schools: 21 elementary schools, eight middle schools and four high schools. This district employs approximately 1,400 teachers with an average of 13 years teaching experience. These teachers have been in the district an average of 10 years. The teacher population is 20% male and 80% female and approximately 30% of the teachers hold a masters or doctorate degree with most of this group having a Master's Degree. Schools within this district often rank in the

top 5-10% on various performance measures such as the State Standardized Testing Program and on the Academic Performance Index. This district currently ranks in the top 10 under the California Academic Performance Index. The California Department of Education describes Academic Performance Index or API as "the cornerstone of the state's academic accountability requirements. Its purpose is to measure the academic performance and growth of schools. Each school has unique API growth targets" (California Department of Education, 2013, p.1). Accordingly, since this district has such high Academic Performance Index scores, approximately 90% or more of this district's high school students attend college.

Special Education Teacher Demographics

One hundred thirteen special education teachers received the survey via email. Forty-one special education teachers completed the survey which yielded a 36% response rate. Table 1 displays the demographic makeup of the special education teachers who completed the survey.

Table 1

Summary of Special Education Teacher Demographic Information

Participants	n	%
Job Title		
Resource Specialist	24	59
Special Day Class Teacher	16	39
Resource Specialist and Special Day Class Teacher	1	2
Level taught		
Elementary	16	39
Middle School	14	34
High School	11	27
Gender		
Female	38	93
Male	1	2
Declined to state	6	1
Age Range (years old)		
21-31	7	17
32-42	9	22
43-53	9	22
54-64	11	27
65-75	1	2
Declined to state	8	20
Race/Ethnicity		
White	29	71
Asian	1	2
Mexican	1	2
Declined to state	14	34

The special education teacher survey participants consisted of 24 Resource Specialists, 16 Special Day Class teachers and one person who is a Special Day Class teacher and a Resource Specialist for a total of 41 survey participants. Sixteen special education teachers taught at the elementary level, 14 at the middle school level and 11 at the high school level. Of these participants 38 were female, one was male and six participants declined to state their gender. Survey participants were asked their race on the survey indicating 29 White, one Asian and one Mexican. Fourteen participants declined to state their race. Seven participants were between the ages 21-31. Nine were between the ages 32-42. Nine were between the ages 43-53. Eleven

were between the ages 54-64. One was between the ages 65-75. Eight participants declined to select an age range.

The special education teachers who completed this survey have been a special education teacher ranging from 1-35 years with a mean of 11 years teaching special education. These special education teachers have been at their current school ranging from 1-20 years with a mean of 6.5 years at their current school. These special education teachers have been working with their current principal ranging from 1-10 years with a mean of 3 years. These teachers were asked about their caseload numbers in order to ascertain their workload. Caseload refers to the number of students each special education teacher is responsible for teaching and for completing corresponding paperwork such as Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs). The caseloads of these special education teachers ranged from 8-36 students with a mean of 21 students on their caseload. The lower caseload numbers such as eight correspond with Special Day Class teachers as they teach students with more severe special needs. The higher caseload numbers such as 36 correspond with Resource Specialists as they teach students with mild special needs. Resource Specialists teach different groups of students daily for typically an hour at a time versus Special Day Class teachers who are with the same group of students the entire school day.

These special education teachers were asked about the number of formal assessments that they complete yearly for initial Individualized Educational Plans and for triennial Individualized Educational Plans. Initial assessments are completed to determine if a student qualifies for special education services or not. A triennial assessment is completed every three years for students who are already qualified as a special education student. The range for total assessments completed yearly, including initials and triennials, was 2-40 assessments. The lower numbers such as two correspond with Special Day Class teachers who typically have a caseload of 8-12 students thus the number of students they have to assess is lower. The higher numbers

such as 13-40 correspond with Resource Specialists since they have higher caseloads or number of students they teach.

Lastly, in the demographics' section, special education teachers were asked how many initial referrals for special education services they receive yearly. A referral means that either a parent or a teacher would like a child tested to determine if the child qualifies for special education services. A referral does not necessarily guarantee testing for special education services. A team of educational professionals typically meets to determine if testing is needed or not. The referrals received yearly for special education services ranged from 0-30. It was noted that two of the Special Day Class teachers who took the survey indicated that they did not understand the question. To reiterate, these aforementioned questions were asked to determine the workload of the special education teachers taking the survey.

Principal Demographics

Thirty-four principals and assistant principals received the survey via email. Eleven principals completed the survey and zero assistant principals took the survey which yielded a 32% response rate. Table 2 displays the demographic makeup of principals who completed the survey.

Table 2

Summary of Principal Demographic Information

Principals	n	%
Job Title		
Principal	11	100
Assistant Principal	0	0
Grade Level		
Elementary	9	82
Middle School	1	9
High School	1	9
Gender		
Female	7	64
Male	4	36
Age Range (years old)		
21-31	0	0
32-42	4	36
43-53	2	18
54-64	5	45
65-75	0	0
Race		
White	7	64
Declined to state	4	36
Have an immediate family member with special needs		
Yes	5	45
No	5	45
Declined to state	1	9
Years as principal		
Range	4-21 years	
Mean	10 years	
Years as principal at current school		
Range	2-13 years	
Mean	4 years	
Years as a teacher		
Range	3-20 years	
Mean	13 years	
Number of special education teachers		
Range	1-7 special education teachers	
Mean	4 years	

Note. Means were rounded to whole numbers.

Nine principals were at the elementary level, one was at the middle school level and one was at the high school level. Seven of the principals were female and four were male. The principals ranged in age with four principals in the age range of 32-42 years old, two principals within the age range of 43-53 years old and five principals within the age range of 54-64 years old. There were zero principals in the 21-31 year age range or in the 65-75 age range. Participants were asked their race on the survey. Seven principals indicated their race as White and four of them did not respond. Five of the principals had an immediate family member with special needs and five principals did not have an immediate family member with special needs. One principal declined to answer this question. These principals varied in their years of experience as a principal with a range of 4-21 years with an average of 10 years. The range for operating as principal of his or her current school was 2-13 years with an average of 4 years. Most principals had previously been a teacher ranging from 3-20 years of working as a teacher with an average of 13 years. These principals had 1-7 special education teachers at their school with an average of 4 special education teachers.

Quantitative Findings

Quantitative survey items consisted of closed ended questions, multiple choice questions and Likert scale statements. One closed ended question was asked to determine the principals' and special education teachers' perspectives about principals as instructional leaders. Multiple choice questions were asked to determine what principals and special education teachers thought about the amount of time special education teachers spend on certain tasks. Three scenarios with multiple choice responses were also provided to determine how the principals and special education teachers perceived how the principal would respond to each scenario. Thirty-two Likert scale statements were presented to ascertain how strongly or not principals and special education teachers agreed to specific statements about special education teachers, principals and

Response to Intervention (RTI). Lastly, independent samples *t* tests were then computed for every Likert scale statement in order to compare the means of the two groups - principals and special education teachers.

Closed Ended Survey Question

Since the literature frequently discussed the role of the principal as an effective instructional leader, special education teachers were asked: Do you feel that your principal has adequate knowledge to be an effective instructional leader for special education teachers? There was a definitive split on special education teachers' opinions on this subject with 50% ($n = 20$) of the special education teachers answering "Yes" and 50% ($n = 20$) answering "No". Principals were also asked if they thought that they were an effective instructional leader for special education teachers. Interestingly, 82% ($n = 9$) of the principals stated, "Yes" and 18% ($n = 2$) stated "No". One principal added a comment that he or she was "*not up on law aspect*". However, the intent of this question was to determine if principals had knowledge of best teaching practices for students with special needs. Meaning that principals could effectively coach their special education teachers in corresponding teaching methods.

Five out of nine affirmative (yes) comments mentioned that principals who had adequate knowledge in special education law, corresponding procedures and teaching methods were effective instructional leaders. Some special education teachers stated that their principals had experience as a former special education teacher which they deemed made their principal an effective instructional leader. A few of the affirmative (yes) comments indicated that their principals did attempt to be leaders for special education teachers by contacting other professionals if they needed help with special education issues. The majority of the nine dissenting (no) comments referred to principals' lack of knowledge in special education law and best teaching practices for students with special needs. A few of the dissenting (no) comments

also discussed that principals tried to control Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) meetings without the proper knowledge base to do so. These special education teachers thought this practice undermined their own expertise and ability to lead an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) meeting. Furthermore, there were comments that indicated that some principals have a lack of understanding about special education teachers' jobs which tended to result in unrealistic expectations of special education teachers. For example, one special education teacher commented:

> I don't think any principal who does not have a background teaching in either a Resource or a SDC (Special Day Class) setting understands exactly how much work our jobs entail. Without that understanding, they really don't know what they are asking a lot of the time. We are asked to "just assess" students without a true understanding that that means hours of work. They also don't seem to understand what it's really like to work with these kids all day, every day. That leads to problems when I ask for help with behavior related issues.

Multiple Choice Questions - Time Spent on Tasks

Multiple choice questions pertaining to time spent on specific tasks were asked to better understand the workload of these special education teachers. Principals were asked how much time their Resource Specialist spends on each of these tasks which allowed them to focus on one special education teacher. When asked how much time do you spend weekly scheduling and rescheduling IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) meetings, the most popular response for both special education teachers 47% (n = 21) and principals 73% (n = 8) was one to two hours. The next most popular response for special education teachers 31% (n = 14) was less than an hour. Three special education teachers indicated that their paraprofessional (aide) does all of their scheduling. Two special education teachers indicated that time spent varies from week to week.

When asked how much time do you spend weekly preparing IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) paperwork, the most popular response for special education teachers 33% (n = 15) was three to four hours. The most popular response for principals 45% (n = 5) was five to six hours. Three special education teachers indicated that time spent varies with a range of 0-20 hours. The time spent on IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) paperwork varies weekly because of different IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) due dates. Some weeks may have numerous IEPs (Individualized Educational Plan) due and other weeks may have a few or no IEPs due (Individualized Educational Plan).

When asked how much time do you spend weekly testing students for initial and triennial IEPs (Individualized Education Plans), special education teachers were split with the top responses as one to two hours 39% (n = 17) and three to four hours 39% (n = 17). The majority of principals 50% (n = 5) selected three to four hours. Four special education teachers indicated that time spent varies with a range of 0-25 hours. Again, time variations are because of different due dates for initial and triennial IEPs (Individualized Education Plans). Schools must complete initial testing within 60 days of receiving a signed assessment plan. Triennial testing (re-evaluation) is conducted every three years for students who already qualify for special education services. Some school years may have many triennial IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) due in a particular year and other school years may have a few triennial IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) due in a particular year.

When asked how much time do you spend weekly writing academic reports for initial and triennial IEPs (Individualized Education Plans), the most common response for both special education teachers 36% (n = 16) and principals 50% (n = 5) was three to four hours. An equal amount of special education teachers 36% (n = 16) also selected one to two hours. When asked how much time do you spend weekly planning lessons, most special education teachers 41% (n =

18) selected one to two hours followed by three to four hours 34% (n = 15). Most principals selected three to four hours 50% (n = 5). When asked how much time do you spend weekly on inclusion related activities, most special education teachers 35% (n = 15) selected one to two hours. The second most popular choice for special education teachers 28% (n = 12) was less than one hour. This statement about inclusion was not in the principal survey for brevity.

Questions were asked about the number of meetings that special education teachers attend to further ascertain special education teachers' workload. When asked how many IEP meetings special education teachers attend in a school year, the special education teachers' responses ranged from five to 57 Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) meetings. An average could not be accurately computed since many teachers entered a range such as 12-20, 30-40, or 40+. When principals were asked this question regarding the number of IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) meetings that their Resource Specialist attends in a school year, the principals' responses ranged from 27-65. An average could not be accurately calculated because a few principals entered a range such as 35-40. When principals were asked this question regarding the number of IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) meetings that their Special Day Class teacher attends in a school year, the principals' responses ranged from 15-30. An average could not be accurately computed because a few principals entered a range such as 15-24. To reiterate, Special Day Class teachers typically serve approximately eight to 12 students versus Resource Specialists who typically serve a maximum of 28 students.

When asked how many SST (Student Study Team) meetings special education teachers attend in a school year, the special education teachers' responses ranged from zero to 75 SST (Student Study Team) meetings with a mode of zero. An accurate mean could not be calculated since some teachers entered a range such as 8-10. The mode is important relative to this question since 25 teachers entered zero for the number of Student Study Team meetings that they attend (n =

44). This indicates that a majority (57%) of the special education teachers who took this survey do not attend Student Study Team meetings.

When principals were asked this question regarding the number of SST (Student Study Team) meetings that their Resource Specialist attends in a school year, the principals' responses ranged from zero to 50 with a mean of 24 Student Study Team meetings. When principals were asked this question regarding the number of SST (Student Study Team) meetings that their Special Day Class teacher attends in a school year, the principals' responses ranged from zero to 15. An accurate mean could not be calculated since some principals entered a range such as zero to four Student Study Team meetings. In some schools, Student Study Teams are deemed to be a function of general education thus special education teachers do not attend these meetings. However, some schools do require that a special education teacher attend these meetings hence the wide range of responses.

Multiple Choice Scenarios

Survey participants were provided with three scenarios to determine how the principal would respond to each scenario. The survey participants were provided with three or four answer choices as well as an "other" option in which they could type in their own response. Special education teachers were asked how their principal would respond to this scenario: An IEP meeting goes beyond the contracted work stop time and the general education teacher announces that she needs to leave. My principal would. The majority of special education teachers 61% (*n* = 23) selected the following answer: Release the general education teacher and finish the IEP meeting that day. Only three special education teachers selected this response: Stop the meeting and reschedule for a future date to finish. Only three special education teachers selected this response: Require the general education teacher to stay and finish the IEP meeting that day.

Nine special education teachers entered comments discussing such topics as obtaining an excusal form prior to the meeting so the general education does not need to stay, the team usually stays and that their meetings are typically not held beyond contractual work hours. One respondent alluded to possible differential treatment of special education teachers and general education teachers when he or she stated, "If the meeting is a litigious one, my principal may find a way to pay for the general education teacher's extra time. However, I don't believe the special education teacher would be as easily paid". The majority of principals 73% (n = 8) entered comments instead of selecting a specific choice when presented with this same scenario asking what they would do. The principals' comments ranged from: it depends on how close they were to finishing the meeting, obtaining an excusal for the general education teacher, preparing ahead so this does not happen and that this does not happen at their site.

Special education teachers were then asked how their principal would respond to the following scenario: A general education student with behavior challenges who is not identified as a special education student has an outburst within the general education classroom. My principal would. The majority of special education teachers 47% (n = 17) selected the following response: Take the student to the principal's office. The next most popular choice that nine special education teachers selected was: Call the school psychologist for help. Five special education teachers entered comments that their principal would do all of the following: Call the special education teacher for help, call the school psychologist for help, take the student to the principal's office, or inform the general education teacher to handle the situation. Three special education teachers entered comments indicating that it depends on the student and the severity of the situation.

In contrast, when principals were asked what they would do regarding this same scenario, four principals selected: Take the student to the principal's office. None of the principals

selected the option of: Call the school psychologist for help. However, in their written comments, four principals did mention seeking out the help of the school psychologist, the Resource Specialist, or special education personnel. Five principals commented that it depends on the situation, the student, or the severity of the incident.

Finally, special education teachers were asked how their principal would respond to the following scenario: An IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) meeting needs to be held during a teacher's preparation period to meet legal deadlines. My principal would. The majority of special education teachers 34% (n = 13) selected the following response: Not pay or provide compensation time for the teachers. Special education teachers frequently mentioned no compensation in their comments as well. The next most popular response with nine special education teachers responding was: Allow the general education teacher to only attend for 10 minutes.

A few special education teachers entered a comment that alluded to the potential differential treatment of special education teachers and general education teachers. These comments imply that it is acceptable for special education teachers to not have their full preparation period and to not receive compensation for missing their preparation period. One special education teacher commented that her principal would "provide coverage for general education teachers only to have preparation time. Not special education teacher time. (The principal) believes it's part of our job." Another special education teacher remarked,

> The general education teacher always gets a sub. The special education teacher never gets a sub for meetings. The general education teacher will have the sub stay in their class for the appropriate time after the meeting is done to avoid having to lose a preparation period.

Four principals stated that they would not pay or provide compensation time for the teachers. Although one principal did enter comments that he or she would, "Offer to pay or provide some comp time". Another principal commented, "We do not routinely pay staff for missing their preparation time". Interestingly, none of the principals selected that they would: Allow the general education teacher to only attend for 10 minutes. However, according to the special education teachers' responses releasing the general education teacher is happening at their schools. It is important to note that it is unknown if the principals who responded to this survey are the same principals at all of the same schools as the special education teachers.

Likert Scale Statements

To determine the survey participants' perceptions about special education teachers' roles and responsibilities, they were asked relevant questions about special education teachers, principals and Response to Intervention. The statements used a 4-point Likert scale with a range of: strongly disagree valued as a "1", disagree valued as a "2", agree valued as a "3" and strongly agree valued as a "4". No responses or when a participant did not answer a question were also tracked as participants could skip survey questions.

Likert Scale Statements Regarding Principals

Table 3 shows that special education teachers and principals answered similarly to most of the questions that were asked about principals. Interestingly, all 11 principals strongly disagreed with this statement: My principal feels that only the special education teacher is responsible for the education of students with special needs. However, there were six special education teachers who agreed with this statement while 21 disagreed and 16 strongly disagreed. Special education teachers were clearly split with 50% agreement and 50% disagreement with this statement: My principal makes uninterrupted time available for communication and collaboration between special education and general education teachers (outside of Individualized Educational Plan

meetings). All 11 principals were on the agreement side meaning that they felt that they made uninterrupted time available for teachers to communicate and collaborate.

Special education teachers were also relatively split with almost 50% agree and almost 50% disagree with this statement: My principal meets with special education teachers regularly outside of IEP/SST meetings and staff meetings. In contrast, almost all principals agreed with this statement 91% (n = 10) while only one principal disagreed with this statement. The majority of special education teachers disagreed that their principal frequently discusses instructional methods with them outside of IEP (Instructional Educational Plan) meetings. However, most principals 82% (n = 9) agreed with this statement while only two principals disagreed.

The majority of principals and special education teachers responded similarly to questions about special education teachers attending SST (Student Study Team) meetings and staff meetings. Most principals and special education teachers disagreed that special education teachers have to attend all SST (Student Study Team) meetings. Most principals and special education teachers agreed that special education teachers have to attend all staff meetings. Most principals and special education teachers further agreed that principals recognize special education teachers' achievements, that principals are aware of the challenges that special education teachers face and that principals establish and communicates clear expectations. Most principals and special education teachers disagreed that substitutes are provided for special education teachers to collaborate. Table 3 and Table 4 show the findings relative to Likert scale statements about principals.

Table 3

Responses to Likert Items Related to the Principal

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
1. My principal feels that only the special education teacher is responsible for the education of students with special needs.					
Special Education Teachers	0	6	21	16	2
Principals	0	0	0	11	0
2. My principal makes uninterrupted time available for communication and collaboration between special education and general education teachers (outside of IEP meetings).					
Special Education Teachers	6	15	15	6	3
Principals	2	9	0	0	0
3. My principal meets with special education teachers regularly outside of IEP/SST meetings and staff meetings.					
Special Education Teachers	6	16	12	9	2
Principals	5	5	1	0	0
4. My principal holds special education teachers and general education teachers to the same expectations.					
Special Education Teachers	7	21	9	3	5
Principals	3	7	1	0	0
5. My principal requires special education teachers to attend all SST meetings.					
Special Education Teachers	2	7	16	16	4
Principals	1	2	3	5	0
6. My principal requires special education teachers to attend all staff meetings.					
Special Education Teachers	24	13	4	1	3
Principals	5	4	2	0	0
7. My principal recognizes the achievements of special education teachers.					
Special Education Teachers	12	17	9	5	2
Principals	4	7	0	0	0
8. My principal is aware of the challenges special education teachers encounter.					
Special Education Teachers	11	18	7	7	2
Principals	8	3	0	0	0

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
9. My principal provides a substitute for me for collaboration when general education teachers have a substitute to participate in grade level collaboration.					
Special Education Teachers	4	12	15	9	5
Principals	2	4	5	0	0
10. My principal establishes and communicates clear expectations.					
Special Education Teachers	10	24	7	2	2
Principals	4	7	0	0	0
11. My principal frequently discusses instructional methods with me outside of IEP meetings.					
Special Education Teachers	5	8	21	9	2
Principals	3	6	2	0	0

Table 4

Comparison of Responses to Likert Scale Principal Statements

Job Title	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
1. My principal feels that only the special education teacher is responsible for the education of students with special needs.				
Special ed teachers	43	1.77	0.68	0.10
Principals	11	1.00	0.00	0.00
2. My principal makes uninterrupted time available for communication and collaboration between special education and general education teachers (outside of IEP meetings).				
Special ed teachers	42	2.50	0.92	0.14
Principals	11	3.18	0.40	0.12
3. My principal meets with special education teachers regularly outside of IEP/SST meetings and staff meetings.				
Special ed teachers	43	2.44	0.98	0.15
Principals	11	3.36	0.67	0.20
4. My principal holds special education teachers and general education teachers to the same expectations.				
Special ed teachers	40	2.80	0.82	0.13
Principals	11	3.18	0.60	0.18
5. My principal requires special education teachers to attend all SST meetings.				
Special ed teachers	41	1.88	0.87	0.14
Principals	11	1.91	1.04	0.31
6. My principal requires special education teachers to attend all staff meetings.				
Special ed teachers	42	3.43	0.77	0.12
Principals	11	3.27	0.79	0.24
7. My principal recognizes the achievements of special education teachers.				
Special ed teachers	43	2.84	0.97	0.15
Principals	11	3.36	0.50	0.15
8. My principal is aware of the challenges special education teachers encounter.				
Special ed teachers	43	2.77	1.02	0.16
Principals	11	3.73	0.47	0.14
9. My principal provides a substitute for me for collaboration when general education teachers have a substitute to participate in grade level collaboration.				
Special ed teachers	40	2.28	0.93	0.15
Principals	11	2.82	0.87	0.26
10. My principal establishes and communicates clear expectations.				
Special ed teachers	43	2.98	0.77	0.12
Principals	11	3.36	0.50	0.15

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree

Comparison of Responses to Likert Scale Principal Statements cont.

Job Title	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
11. My principal frequently discusses instructional methods with me outside of IEP meetings.				
Special ed teachers	43	2.21	0.91	0.14
Principals	11	3.09	0.70	0.21

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree

Likert Scale Statements Regarding Special Education Teachers

In this section of Likert scale statements, there were more similarities in how the two groups responded. Table 4 shows the responses of both special education teachers and principals with ten out of the 12 statements being answered by the majority of the respondents at the same rating. Meaning the majority in both groups answered strongly agree/agree or the majority in both groups answered disagree/strongly disagree. However, there were two statements that seemed to have dissimilar responses from the two groups. The majority of special education teachers agreed that special education teachers should be paid more. Conversely, the majority of principals disagreed with this statement. A related statement also garnered different responses from the two groups: Special education teachers have more responsibilities than general education teachers. The majority of special education teachers agreed with this statement while principals were relatively split between agree 45% (n = 5) and disagree 55% (n = 6). Table 5 and Table 6 show the findings relative to Likert scale statements about special education teachers

Table 5

Responses to Likert Items Related to Special Education Teachers

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
1. Special education teachers have enough time during the school day to complete all duties.					
Special Education Teachers	1	3	14	25	2
Principals	1	0	6	4	0
2. Special education teachers should be paid more than general education teachers.					
Special Education Teachers	16	8	14	3	4
Principals	1	0	9	1	0
3. I, as a special education teacher, feel valued and respected at my school.					
Special Education Teachers	11	20	8	4	2
Principals	5	6	0	0	0
4. I feel isolated from general education teachers.					
Special Education Teachers	2	11	21	8	3
Principals	1	3	4	3	0
5. I feel isolated from my principal.					
Special Education Teachers	3	5	25	10	2
Principals	0	1	3	7	0
6. I feel like an integral member of my school community.					
Special Education Teachers	8	25	9	1	2
Principals	6	5	0	0	0
7. I have fewer responsibilities than general education teachers.					
Special Education Teachers	1	1	20	21	2
Principals	0	0	9	2	0
8. I have more responsibilities than general education teachers.					
Special Education Teachers	17	15	10	1	2
Principals	2	3	5	1	0
9. I attend the same training sessions that general education teachers are required to attend (for example, literacy, Data Director, Second Step, Envision math, etc.).					
Special Education Teachers	14	14	11	4	2
Principals	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
10. I see myself as a school leader.					
Special Education Teachers	6	24	10	3	2
Principals	7	4	0	0	0
11. I feel adequately trained in special education instructional delivery methods.					
Special Education Teachers	15	22	4	0	4
Principals	2	5	4	0	0
12. I feel adequately trained in special education law.					
Special Education Teachers	6	27	7	1	4
Principals	4	4	2	1	0

Table 6

Comparison of Responses to Likert Scale Special Education Teacher Statements

Job Title	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
1. Special education teachers have enough time during the school day to complete all duties.				
Special ed teachers	43	1.47	0.63	0.10
Principals	11	1.82	0.87	0.26
2. Special education teachers should be paid more than general education teachers.				
Special ed teachers	41	2.90	1.02	0.16
Principals	11	2.09	0.70	0.21
3. I, as a special education teacher, feel valued and respected at my school.				
Special ed teachers	43	2.88	0.91	0.14
Principals	11	3.45	0.52	0.16
4. I feel isolated from general education teachers.				
Special ed teachers	42	2.17	0.79	0.12
Principals	11	2.18	0.98	0.30
5. I feel isolated from my principal.				
Special ed teachers	43	2.02	0.80	0.12
Principals	11	1.45	0.67	0.21
6. I feel like an integral member of my school community.				
Special ed teachers	43	2.93	0.70	0.11
Principals	11	3.54	0.52	0.16
7. I have fewer responsibilities than general education teachers.				
Special ed teachers	43	1.58	0.66	0.10
Principals	11	1.82	0.40	0.12
8. I have more responsibilities than general education teachers.				
Special ed teachers	43	3.12	0.85	0.13
Principals	11	2.55	0.93	0.28
9. I attend the same training sessions that general education teachers are required to attend (for example, literacy, Data Director, Second Step, Envision math, etc.).				
Special ed teachers	43	2.88	0.98	0.15
Principals	0[a]	.	.	.
10. I see myself as a school leader.				
Special ed teachers	43	2.77	0.78	0.12
Principals	11	3.64	0.50	.15
11. I feel adequately trained in special education instructional delivery methods.				
Special ed teachers	41	3.27	0.63	0.10
Principals	11	2.82	0.75	0.23

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree

a. t cannot be computed because at least one of the groups is empty.

Comparison of Responses to Likert Scale Special Education Teacher Statements cont.

Job Title	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
12. I feel adequately trained in special education law.				
Special Ed teachers	39	2.87	0.61	0.10
Principals	11	3.00	1.00	0.30

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree

Likert Scale Statements Regarding Response to Intervention (RTI)

Both groups answered similarly to most of the statements made about Response to Intervention with a few exceptions (Table 5). Most special education teachers 60% (*n* = 24) did not think that Response to Intervention (RTI) increased their workload while 40% (n = 16) special education teachers did think that RTI increased their workload. However, principals were relatively split on this statement with five principals agreeing and six principals disagreeing that Response to Intervention increased special education teachers' workload. The groups also responded differently to the statement: Special education teachers should only deliver tier 3 interventions. The majority of special education teachers agreed with this statement while the majority of principals disagreed with this statement. Table 7 and Table 8 show the findings relative to Likert scale statements about Response to Intervention (RTI).

Table 7

Responses to Likert Items Related to Response to Intervention (RTI)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Response
1. Response to Intervention (RTI) has increased my workload.					
Special Education Teachers	6	10	17	7	5
Principals	1	4	4	2	0
2. Special education teachers should determine if students do not respond to intervention (RTI).					
Special Education Teachers	1	15	16	6	7
Principals	0	0	5	6	0
3. Special education teachers should be the sole data collectors for Response to Intervention (RTI).					
Special Education Teachers	1	2	17	19	6
Principals	0	1	3	7	0
4. General education teachers should determine if students do not respond to intervention (RTI).					
Special Education Teachers	3	22	12	0	8
Principals	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
5. General education teachers should be the sole data collectors for Response to Intervention (RTI).					
Special Education Teachers	3	6	23	7	6
Principals	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
6. General education teachers should deliver tier 1 and tier 2 interventions.					
Special Education Teachers	10	22	4	0	9
Principals	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
7. Special education teachers should only deliver tier 3 interventions.					
Special Education Teachers	4	16	14	2	9
Principals	1	0	6	4	0
8. School psychologists should play a major role in setting up and monitoring Response to Intervention (RTI).					
Special Education Teachers	2	17	16	2	8
Principals	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
9. My school has successfully implemented Response to Intervention (RTI).					
Special Education Teachers	4	15	13	6	7
Principals	3	5	2	1	0

Table 8

Comparison of Responses to Likert Scale Response to Intervention (RTI) Statements

Job Title	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*SEM*
1. Response to Intervention (RTI) has increased my workload.				
Special Ed Teachers	40	2.38	0.95	0.15
Principals	11	2.36	0.92	0.28
2. Special education teachers should determine if students do not respond to intervention (RTI).				
Special Ed Teachers	38	2.29	0.77	0.12
Principals	11	1.45	0.52	0.16
3. Special education teachers should be the sole data collectors for Response to Intervention (RTI).				
Special Ed Teachers	39	1.62	0.71	0.11
Principals	11	1.27	0.47	0.14
4. General education teachers should determine if students do not respond to intervention (RTI).				
Special Ed Teachers	37	2.76	0.60	0.10
Principals	0[a]	.	.	.
5. General education teachers should be the sole data collectors for Response to Intervention (RTI).				
Special Ed Teachers	39	2.13	0.80	0.13
Principals	0[a]	.	.	.
6. General education teachers should deliver tier 1 and tier 2 interventions.				
Special Ed Teachers	36	3.17	0.61	0.10
Principals	0[a]	.	.	.
7. Special education teachers should only deliver tier 3 interventions.				
Special Ed Teachers	37	2.54	0.87	0.13
Principals	11	1.82	0.87	0.26
8. School psychologists should play a major role in setting up and monitoring Response to Intervention (RTI).				
Special Ed Teachers	37	2.51	0.69	0.11
Principals	0[a]	.	.	.
9. My school has successfully implemented Response to Intervention (RTI).				
Special Ed teachers	38	2.45	0.89	0.14
Principals	11	2.91	0.94	0.28

Note. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree.

a. t cannot be computed because at least one of the groups is empty.

Results of *t* Tests

Independent samples *t* tests were calculated for every Likert scale statement in order to compare the means of the two samples - principals and special education teachers. No significant differences were found in the majority of the statements with some exceptions. It is important to note that principals were asked these questions about themselves and about their special education teachers. For example, the statement I see myself as a school leader was rephrased on the principal survey to state, I see special education teachers as school leaders. There were 11 statements that did show a significant difference between the means of the two groups:

1. My principal feels that only the special education teacher is responsible for the education of students with special needs.

   $t(42) = 7.35, p < .05$

   The mean of the special education teacher group was higher ($m = 1.77$, $sd = 0.68$) than the mean of the principal group ($m = 1.00$, $sd = 0.00$).

2. My principal makes uninterrupted time available for communication and collaboration between special education and general education teachers (outside of IEP meetings).

   $t(38) = -3.65, p < .05$

   The mean of the special education teacher group was lower ($m = 2.50$, $sd = 0.92$) than the mean of the principal group ($m = 3.18$, $sd = 0.40$).

3. My principal meets with special education teachers regularly outside of IEP/SST meetings and staff meetings.

   $t(52) = -2.93, p < .05$

   The mean of the special education teacher group was lower ($m = 2.44$, $sd = 0.98$) than the mean of the principal group ($m = 3.36$, $sd = 0.67$).

4. My principal is aware of the challenges special education teachers encounter.

$t(36) = -4.58, p < .05$

The mean of special education teacher group was lower ($m = 2.77$, $sd = 1.02$) than the mean of the principal group ($m = 3.73$, $sd = 0.47$).

5. Special education teachers should be paid more than general education teachers.

$t(50) = 2.48, p < .05$

The mean of the special education group was higher ($m = 2.90$, $sd = 1.02$) than the mean of the principal group ($m = 2.09$, $sd = 0.70$)

6. I feel isolated from my principal.

$t(52) = 2.16, p < .05$

The mean of the special education group was higher ($m = 2.02$, $sd = 0.80$) than the mean of the principal group ($m = 1.45$, $sd = 0.69$).

7. I feel like an integral member of my school community.

$t(52) = -2.71, p < .05$

The mean of the special education group was lower ($m = 2.93$, $sd = 0.70$) than the mean of the principal group ($m = 3.55$, $sd = 0.52$).

8. I see myself as a school leader.

$t(52) = -3.49, p < .05$

The mean of the special education group was lower ($m = 2.77$, $sd = 0.78$) than the mean of the principal group ($m = 3.64$, $sd = 0.50$).

9. I feel adequately trained in special education instructional delivery methods.

$t(50) = 2.01, p = .05$

The mean of the special education group was higher ($m = 3.27$, $sd = 0.63$) than the mean of the principal group ($m = 2.82$, $sd = 0.75$).

10. Special education teachers should determine if students do not respond to intervention (RTI).

    $t(47) = 3.38$, $p < .05$

    The mean of the special education group was lower ($m = 2.29$, $sd = 0.77$) than the mean of the principal group ($m = 1.45$, $sd = 0.52$).

11. Special education teachers should only deliver tier 3 interventions.

    $t(46) = 3.00$, $p < .05$

    The mean of the special education group was higher ($m = 2.65$, $sd = 0.79$) than the mean of the principal group ($m = 1.82$, $sd = 0.87$).

Quantitative Summary

Principals and special education teachers tended to disagree on the closed ended question. Special education teacher responses were distinctly split between agree and disagree to the statement: Do you feel that your principal has adequate knowledge to be an effective instructional leader for special education teachers? However, the majority of principals deemed themselves as effective instructional leaders for special education teachers. Principals' and special education teachers' responses often varied regarding time special education teachers spend on tasks. Principals typically selected more time spent on certain tasks versus special education teachers who selected less time. For example, most principals may have selected 2-3 hours while the special education teachers selected 1-2 hours. There was also some disagreement in how these two groups thought that the principal would respond to the three provided scenarios. Lastly, 11 out of 32 Likert scale statements showed a significant difference between the means as revealed by the independent samples *t* tests.

Qualitative Findings

Qualitative findings were gathered from seven open-ended questions on the survey and from semi-structured interviews with principals and special education teachers. Open-ended questions

were utilized to obtain the special education teachers' and principals' perceptions about special education teacher challenges and about principal expectations of special education teachers. The comments entered in the open-ended questions were color coded based on similar words and phrases which were then counted. The words or phrases that appeared most often were deemed as reoccurring themes surrounding teacher challenges and principal expectations.

Semi-structured interviews were individually conducted with three principals and three special education teachers. All interviews were transcribed and read numerous times by the researcher. Similar words and phrases were color coded and then counted to determine the most frequently discussed topics. Three themes emerged from these interviews: theme of principal and district support, theme of negative parental interactions impacting special education teachers' workload and stress level and the theme of Response to Intervention impacting special education teachers' workload. Lastly, semi-structured interviews also provided some insight into the debate regarding higher pay for special education teachers.

Special Education Teacher Challenges and Principal Expectations

Open-ended questions revealed that the majority of special education teachers indicated that time was their number one challenge followed by interactions with parents and then interactions with general education teachers. In contrast, none of the principals mentioned time as special education teachers' number one challenge. Principals mentioned parents and caseload/workload as the number one challenge that special education teachers encounter. Also, none of the principals mentioned working with general education teachers as a challenge that their special education teachers encounter. Not surprisingly, special education teachers and principals tended to agree on the part of the job that special education teachers like the most. A substantial majority of special education teachers and principals mentioned teaching students as the most enjoyable component of a special education teacher's job.

Special education teachers and principals further agreed that knowledge is what principals look for most in special education teachers with some special education teachers and principals mentioning this attribute. Many special education teachers felt that principals also look for organizational skills in special education teachers while only a few principals mentioned this trait. Lastly, seven special education teachers indicated that principals want special education teachers who can communicate well. Only three principals mentioned communication as being an important quality in special education teachers.

Finally, both groups were asked about principals' expectations of special education teachers. The majority of special education teachers responded that their principal expects them to teach students, collaborate and work well with parents. Principals responded that they expect special education teachers to teach students, collaborate and work well with parents. Respondents described collaboration as working with other teachers and with other special education service providers such as school psychologists.

The researcher wanted to find out the perceptions of principals and special education teachers about attrition since this is an ongoing issue. Thus, survey participants were asked to type in what they felt was the number one reason why special education teachers leave the teaching profession. Responses were read for repeating key words which were then color coded and counted to determine the most frequent words and phrases. The majority of special education teachers indicated that "lack of support" is the number one reason why special education teachers leave the teaching profession. The next most popular reasons special education teachers listed as the reasons why special education teachers leave the field were parents, burnout and paperwork. In contrast, only one principal mentioned lack of support as the main reason why special education teachers leave the profession. The majority of principals mentioned paperwork and

only a few of the principals mentioned parents as the number one reason why special education teachers quit.

In addition, respondents were asked to complete the following item: I think special education teachers leave the teaching profession after __ years. The special education teachers entered a range of one to 35 years. The principals entered a range of three to 25 years. The year ranges are interesting to note since principals listed the shortest time as three years while special education teachers listed the shortest time as one year. In addition, principals listed the longest time as 25 years versus special education teachers who listed 35 years as the longest time.

The majority of special education teachers indicated that the most important step a principal can take to retain special education teachers is to provide support. The next most important step that special education teachers mentioned was to acknowledge or appreciate teachers. In contrast, only approximately half of the principals stated support and only one principal mentioned acknowledging or appreciating their special education teacher. It is important to reiterate that the sample sizes of these groups are not the same thus exact comparisons of results cannot be made. Table 9 shows open-ended question data

Table 9

Number of Special Education Teacher Responses and Principal Responses to Open-Ended Questions

How many IEP meetings do you attend during a school year?		
Special Education Teachers		
Range	5-57	
Mode	40	
Principals		
Range	27-65	(Resource Specialists)
Mode	50	(Resource Specialists)
Range	15-30	(Special Day Class Teachers)
Mode	15	(Special Day Class Teachers)
How many SST meetings do you attend during a school year?		
Special Education Teachers		
Range	0-75	
Mode	0	
Principals		
Range	0-50	(Resource Specialists)
Mode	20	(Resource Specialists)
Range	0-15	(Special Day Class Teachers)
Mode	0	(Special Day Class Teachers)
I think special education teachers leave the teaching profession after __ years.		
Special Education Teachers		
Range	1-35 years	
Mode	5 years	
Principals		
Range	3-25	
Mode	3	
I think special education teachers leave the teaching profession at the same rate as general education teachers.		
Special Education Teachers		
Yes	7	
No	35	
Declined to answer	3	
Principals		
Yes	2	
No	9	

Semi-structured Interviews with Principals and Special Education Teachers

Three special education teachers and three principals were individually interviewed to gather further insight about the quantitative findings. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Transcripts were thoroughly reviewed and reoccurring phrases were put into categories which were then analyzed for patterns to uncover major themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Miles and Huberman advised that "noting patterns, themes" and "counting" are ways to verify qualitative findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 245). Accordingly, the researcher coded words that appeared most frequently in the interview transcripts which were support, parents and RTI (Response to Intervention). The researcher then compared and contrasted each interviewee's dialogue surrounding these three themes to gather a more thorough understanding of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Special Education Teachers' View of Support

The theme of "support" emerged frequently during the semi-structured interviews with special education teachers. Three female special education teachers, two Resource Specialists and one Special Day Class teacher, were interviewed. All three of these special education teachers made comments about principal support during their interviews. One special education teacher stated, "She (the principal) is very supportive of our special education team which is fabulous. She supports us whole-heartedly". Another special education teacher remarked,

> So when it comes to her (the principal) and supporting me in terms of being on the staff about things. I have no worries what so ever. She is great about that part. I think she's great and very supportive but I feel like she doesn't always have time.

One of the special education teachers mentioned the lack of district support for new special education teachers.

> I don't feel like there is enough support for that in the district. I don't feel like there's someone who goes around and just says, 'Okay do you know how to do this? Are you ready to do this? Did you get this yet?' All of those little things.

When asked to describe what this special education teacher meant by "support", she replied,

> (Support) that could be in an IEP(Individualized Educational Plan) meeting that she (the principal) doesn't talk over. She lets us do our piece. That could be standing up to a parent and supporting us in that respect. It could be as much as, 'I know you're overwhelmed. Let's see if we can find another way of doing this kind of thing' which we appreciate that she acknowledges that we are up to our eyeballs.

One of the special education teachers also talked about support in more general terms. "I think when you don't feel supported and you feel that you're killing yourself and nobody's there to support you or care then you do feel like hey I'm working over and above here."

Principals' View of Support

Three principals were individually interviewed for this study. One principal was at the elementary level, one was at the middle school level and the other was at the high school level. Two of the principals were male and one was female. These principals also discussed the theme of support. When asked to define support, one principal remarked,

> A lot of times the support comes from fighting the district (special education department). You know I mean in terms of things that they want you to do or whatever. They (special education teachers) want to know that someone has their back and that somebody understands the craziness of their job just like you know and they've got a different kind of craziness . . .

The middle school principal described support as:

I think on the surface are you gonna if a parent is mean to me are you gonna stand up for me or are you gonna tell me that I have to change what I'm doing to mollify the parent? On the surface but I think support takes a lot but if we notice a special ed. teacher has if they come to me and say, 'I have six assessments due next Thursday. I don't know how I'm gonna get it done.' If we can provide a release day, that's support. If we can give them some time to get some stuff done, that's support. If we can provide the time that they can meet with other departments, I hope that is supportive as well. I mean on the surface yeah when you say to teachers, 'Do you support us?' It's usually about conflict with parents. Are you gonna back me up or are you gonna say I have to change what I know professionally is the right thing to do because you have somebody yelling at you?

This principal continued to discuss what he or she can do to be supportive.

. . . you know the parent who starts insulting a teacher and having to cut that off really quick and really and you know from my point of view that's what I can do. I can support that teacher and say that you will not be treated poorly by a parent or by an advocate.

The high school principal, who has previous experience working as a Resource Specialist, explained how she could be supportive of special education teachers. "You know we try to support them by attending their special ed. meetings and things when they have parent meetings in there so that they feel it that way. You know visiting their classrooms . . ."

Parental Impact on Special Education Teachers' Responsibilities and Job Satisfaction – Principals' Perspectives

Both principals and special education teachers who were interviewed discussed the effect of parent interactions on special education teachers. Interviewees discussed how negative parent encounters can increase a special education teachers workload while decreasing his or her job satisfaction. One principal clearly stated that tough parents lead to burnout issues for his special

education teachers. This principal discussed how parents can be demanding by requesting more accommodations for their child. The special education teacher ultimately has to provide these accommodations. Parents also tend to request additional or unnecessary testing which increases the special education teacher's workload. The principal further explained that some parents can be confrontational and hostile during IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) meetings. He stated that his special education teachers most often need his support when a "conflict with parents" occurs.

The elementary principal who was interviewed concurred when he mentioned in his interview that working with parents is probably the most challenging piece for a special education teacher. This principal specifically discussed how he feels that Special Day Class teachers have to work with difficult parents more often because the students' needs are more intense. This principal revealed the he had been a part of a committee whose goal it was to enhance the district's special education programs and to retain special education teachers. He succinctly answered "parents" when asked what was the main reason why special education teachers were leaving this district in previous years. He explained that added duties brought on by parental requests along with adverse interactions made the special education teachers highly stressed resulting in their departure from the district.

This principal further discussed how demanding parents also requested more IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) meetings and how these parents' presence resulted in longer IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) meetings. This added to the time special education teachers had to spend in meetings and it added to the amount of paperwork that had to be completed by special education teachers. This principal brought up the issue of parental power when it comes to their child who has special needs. He elaborated,

> . . . truthfully the parents have a lot of power in that dynamic and if they want to call another IEP meeting it's very hard to say no we're not gonna have another IEP meeting and you know there were some meetings that they (the parents) were just down right abusive and we would just call an end to the meeting . . .

Consequently, multiple additional contentious IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) meetings added to the workload and stress level of the special education teachers which impacted their job satisfaction.

Finally, the high school principal also mentioned difficult parents whom she referred to as "high maintenance parents". She talked about the incongruent perceptions that some parents have about the role of the special education teacher and how special education teachers tend to "internalize" the parents' misperceptions. For example, this principal discussed how her special education teachers go above and beyond to meet unreasonable parental expectations. She explains, "They (special education teachers) can internalize that (parents' expectations) and work really hard to cover all of the bases even though they (special education teachers) may only be responsible for only first or second base".

She went on to explain that some parents have high and impractical expectations such as their child being fully prepared for college. Realistically, some students with special needs will not be cognitively capable of attending a traditional college. Lastly, this principal disclosed that some parents attempt to use special education testing as a way for their child to receive extra time on college admission tests such as the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test). A parental request for special education testing causes additional hours of test administration and report writing for special education teachers in order to determine if the student qualifies or not for special education services. As the elementary principal discussed, this high school principal also

mentioned how the parents have power when it comes to the education of their child with special needs. She exasperated, "You know parents have a lot of power. They just do."

Parental Impact on Special Education Teachers' Responsibilities and Job Satisfaction – Special Education Teachers' Perspectives

The special education teachers who were individually interviewed similarly brought up parents and how their demands add to special education teachers' workloads and stress level. One Resource Specialist indicated that a majority of her preparation time is spent responding to parent emails and corresponding with them. She complained that she even spends some time at home emailing parents. She stated that some of her parents email her daily and/or expect an email from her daily. She explains the ramifications if she does not email some parents. "If you don't respond immediately they (parents) start harassing you or then they start emailing all of the principals or emailing other staff. Then they'll go to the district office because they didn't get an email immediately". The parental need for constant communication adds to her workload and her stress level. This Resource Specialist continued on about how difficult it is to work with some parents in this district and how parental interactions could impact her decision to leave.

> And the parents in our district honestly are very, very hard to work with sometimes. Some of them have very unrealistic expectations and can be extremely demanding when they're not willing to help with the support. Like they all want it to be done at school yet nothing's being done at home. That's what's really hard. That I think would make it for me. I would say that would make me leave before what I'm doing at work would.

She then discussed a specific incident in which a parent would regularly come on campus and observe classrooms. She described this parent as "very aggressive" and "intimidating". This teacher's daily negative interactions with this parent made her want to transfer to another school. Fortunately, the district offered support by sending a district office special education

representative to every IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) meeting to minimize this special education teacher's interactions with this parent. The district taking action allowed this special education teacher to remain at her school and alleviated her anxiety level as she described, "That was amazing and honestly at that point it was like the weight was lifted. I was no longer stressed out. I was able to sleep at night."

Similarly to the principal who mentioned parental requests for testing, this Resource Specialist likewise discussed how her workload increased with numerous parents demanding testing for special education eligibility. She felt that the incessant parental requests for testing at the middle school level are due to the increased workload and demands of being a middle school student. Some parents complain that their child cannot get their work done during class. Hence, these parents want their child tested for special education services so that their child can be granted extra time to complete classroom assignments and homework. This Resource Specialist described the testing as "completely unnecessary" yet her school typically completes testing if a parent makes a request to have their child tested for special education services. Unfortunately, this practice leads to more hours of test administration and report writing for the special education teacher.

Just as one principal mentioned, the elementary Resource Specialist reiterated how Special Day Class teachers tend to have more extreme parents to deal with. She speaks from experience as she used to be a former Special Day Class teacher as well. She felt that parent interactions were one of the main reasons why Special Day Class teachers leave the teaching profession. She commented,

> I would say a lot of the SDC (Special Day Class) teachers go (quit) because it is very intense and the parents are very intense and a lot of times it will be the parent

relationships that will just fry you more so than the students. And I do see that happening on this campus definitely.

This Resource Specialist further remarked that she thought that the continual high turnover rate for program specialists was also mainly due to parents. Program specialists oversee special education programs at multiple schools and they often only attend contentious and potentially litigious IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) meetings.

The Special Day Class teacher expressed how parents impact her workload in another way than the other special education teachers described. She discussed how she often has to communicate more with the principal and general education teachers about specific parents so that they are all on the "same page". She concurred with the other special education teachers that she also spends a vast amount of time communicating with parents via email, text, or phone. In addition to the principals who mentioned parental power, this Special Day Class teacher used the term "parent entitlement". She felt that parents in this district put more demands on her than her parents did in former districts that she previously worked in. She described the parents' sense of entitlement as "unfair". She explained that the ongoing challenge of parental privilege is further compounded when the parents and the teachers do not agree on moral issues or on academic matters. She further clarified that some parents try to challenge special education teachers and or "hyper analyze" what is going on with their child in the classroom which she stated burns her out.

Similarly to one of the Resource Specialists, this Special Day Class teacher also had a difficult parent that she had to deal with on a daily basis which vastly impacted this teacher's mental state. As with the other special education teacher, the district did take action once she contacted the special education office for help. She suggested that the principal should try to proactively work with parents by informing parents about proper communication between

parents and special education teachers such as frequency and content. In her opinion, principals establishing and communicating clear expectations to parents could possibly help prevent such issues from initially occurring. She suggested that a Special Day Class parent orientation at the beginning of the school year may be helpful. She recommended that the principal should be present to address such topics as "respecting boundaries" or following school rules relative to classroom visits. She believed that ultimately principals could attempt to alleviate her "two main frustrations" which were "parents who don't support this program that I'm trying to build and then parents that want to pick everything apart".

Overall, the principals and special education teachers brought up similar topics regarding challenging parents. These two groups seemed to share comparable viewpoints about parental issues within this district. Some of their parents are often demanding which can lead to increased special education teacher workloads and decreased job satisfaction due to anxiety.

Response to Intervention Implementation Varying Across Schools

Quantitative survey results about Response to Intervention (RTI) should be interpreted with caution since all schools do not have full Response to Intervention programs which was uncovered during the interviews. For example, in the interview process when a principal was asked if they have a Response to Intervention (RTI) program, he replied,

> Not to the extent that we would like to. I think that the general framework of we start with the least restrictive environment and the least restrictive interventions going to you know monitored interventions. Going to special you know to being potentially in special ed. We have that general idea in place. I think are monitored interventions are lacking. I wish we had more of them.

It was also noted during interviews that Response to Intervention (RTI) programs are different at each school. One principal described their Response to Intervention (RTI):

> I would tell ya that half my staff if you know I said RTI they would look around and go, 'What do you have?' but we have a teacher that has one period off a day to run SSTs and so we have SSTs once a week and she does all of the follow up and such. We have three academic enrichment classes that we put students in that are struggling with you know whether it be organization or just you know whatever. So those are you know a type of program . . . And then we have lots of tutoring and such that goes on.

One of the Resource Specialists described how Response to Intervention (RTI) works at her school:

> For the most part, that's (Response to Intervention) a general education thing. They're supposed to handle that part. When it comes to like for example my teachers are very collaborative with me so if they have a kid that they are concerned about and they don't know what to try. They will come down and ask me. This is what is happening. 'What can you tell me to help them out or what do you think would be beneficial for this type of kid? Can I show you some of their work samples and tell me what you think?' And I do a lot of that with them as far as working with the kids – no. Only if they have IEPs otherwise I do not. All of the RTI stuff is done in the general ed. part until it gets to the SST (Student Study Team) point and then if we want to go for testing then we go from there.

However, another Resource Specialist at a different school is involved in Response to Intervention which impacted her workload.

> I do a lot of RTI . . . It's added (to my workload) if those students are actually coming into my classroom and I'm doing lessons and I'm noting pre and post testing and all of that. You know that's a lot of paperwork and such. So yeah absolutely it's added (to my workload).

The interviews revealed that Response to Intervention (RTI) can increase a special education teacher's workload if the teacher has to instruct students who are not considered students with special needs. In this study, it is difficult to determine the overall impact of Response to Intervention (RTI) on special education teachers' workload because each site implements Response to Intervention (RTI) differently.

Discussion of a Salary Increase for Special Education Teachers

Interestingly, during the interviews with principals, all three principals did not think that special education teachers should be paid more. There was a consensus that all teachers' jobs are difficult regardless of whom or what subject they teach. However, these principals still mentioned that special education teachers do have more roles and responsibilities and that their jobs are more demanding. One principal had difficulty answering this question as he explained,

> It's hard to say cuz I think every teacher deserves more than they are getting. Right. If you ask me from an objective level do they (special education teachers) do more work (pause) most of the good ones yeah. It's just a really hard question for me to answer. Like yeah sure but I think it's a bad. In this business, salary is a bad measuring stick for how good we are doing or how not good we are doing.

This principal ultimately thought that all teachers should be paid more and that one group should not be considered more worthy of higher pay than another group of teachers. However, when asked about responsibilities of special education teachers, this principal did state that special education teachers do have more responsibilities. Another principal stated that special education teacher do work harder. Two of the principals also mentioned how there should not be inequity in pay and how that can create issues among teachers such as competition and unwillingness to collaborate. One principal mentioned a possible incentive system and another

principal mentioned a longer work year for special education teachers to possibly justify more pay.

The interviews with special education teachers yielded some interesting responses about this question. The Special Day Class teacher discussed how people in the local community assume that special education teachers do get paid more than general education teachers.

> I've had several people who aren't in the teaching profession ask me well or say to me, 'Well you get paid more right because you do so much more?' and I'm like, 'No actually we get paid exactly the same'.

It is important to note that some school districts do pay special education teachers more or certain districts offer a stipend because a special education teacher opening is considered a hard to fill position. However, the school district in which this study was conducted does not offer a stipend for special education teachers. Special education teachers are paid the same as general education teachers in this district.

The interviewed Special Day Class teacher felt on one hand that special education teachers should be paid more yet she also thought that there are other teachers who work just as hard. One of the Resource Specialists had a similar view that special education teachers should be paid more however she explained there are other teachers who go "*over and above*". This Resource Specialist further discussed the importance of support and an adequate working environment as being more crucial than pay. This statement corresponds with research on salary and how work environment is more important when attempting to retain teachers (Futernick, 2007). The researcher noticed that during this portion of the interviews most of the interviewees seemed a bit comfortable and perhaps reluctant to strongly advocate for more pay or not for special education teachers. Practically all of the interviewees tended to diplomatically explain both sides of the argument or almost talk themselves out of one position or the other.

Qualitative Summary

Qualitative findings revealed a slight opinion difference relative to special education teacher challenges and regarding principal expectations of special education teachers. The interviews uncovered different explanations of support from the principals and the special education teachers. However, both groups deemed support as being highly important to special education teachers. Both groups agreed that negative parental interactions is a huge challenge in this district as it leads to increased workload and decreased job satisfaction for special education teachers. The interviews lead to the discovery that not all schools have a functional Response to Intervention program. Response to Intervention implementation varies at each school that does have the program. Furthermore, Response to Intervention can increase a special education teacher's workload if he or she is involved in providing interventions for general education students. Lastly, all principals and special education teachers who were interviewed felt that special education teachers should not be paid more since all teachers typically work hard.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter will provide an overview of the findings as they pertain to the research questions addressed in this mixed methods study. The research questions were: What are principals' and assistant principals' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers? What do special education teachers perceive as their roles and responsibilities? How do the responses by principals and assistant principals compare with those of special education teachers? The chapter will then report the findings relative to the literature review, implications for practices and policies and suggestions for future research.

Discussion

The quantitative section of this mixed methods study did uncover some variations in principals' and special education teachers' responses to 11 of the 32 Likert scale statements as discovered by the independent samples *t* tests. All principals strongly disagreed with the notion that only special education teachers should be responsible for the education of students with special needs. Eighty-six percent of the special education teachers surveyed either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement: my principal feels that only the special education teacher is responsible for the education of students with special needs. However, there were six special education teachers who did agree that their principal thinks that only special education teachers should be responsible for the education of students with special needs.

All principals either agreed or strongly agreed that they make uninterrupted time available for communication and collaboration between special education and general education teachers. Interestingly, the special education teachers were split on this statement with 50% in agreement and 50% in disagreement. There were similar findings regarding principals holding regular meetings with special education teachers outside of Individualized Educational Plan (IEP),

Student Study Team (SST), or staff meetings. All of the principals surveyed except for one indicated that they do meet with special education teachers. Conversely, special education teachers were almost exactly split between agree and disagree on this statement. Another statement revealed that all principals felt that they were aware of the challenges special education teachers encounter. The majority of special education teachers did agree that principals are aware of the challenges special education teachers face. However, there was still a reasonable number of special education teachers (33%) who were on the disagree side.

One Likert scale statement yielded different results than the findings uncovered in the individual interviews with principals and special education teachers. The survey statement special education teachers should be paid more than general education teachers rendered different responses from the principals and special education teachers who took the survey than those interviewed. All principals but one disagreed. The majority of special education teachers were on the agreement side 59%. Yet, 41% of special education teachers did disagree.

On the contrary, semi-structured individual interviews with three principals and three special education teachers revealed that all six of them did not think that special education teachers should be paid more. There was a consensus among their responses that all teachers work hard thus all teachers should be paid the same. Although nearly all interviewees mentioned that special education teachers do work harder than general education teachers (e.g., more responsibilities, paperwork and meetings). Interviewees also expressed that special education teachers' jobs are more demanding or stressful than general education teachers' jobs.

Principals and special education teachers varied in their responses regarding special education teachers feeling isolated from their principals. Data also differed regarding special education teachers feeling like integral members of their school community. All principals felt that their special education teachers were integral members of their school communities. Furthermore, all

principals except one thought that their special education teachers were not isolated from them (principals). Nevertheless, there were some special education teachers who did feel isolated from their principal. There were also some special education teachers who did not feel like an integral member of their school community.

The interviews provided some insight into these disparities in answers. One principal indicated that he/she could see how special education teachers could feel isolated by the very nature of their position. This principal explained that teachers in general tend to work in an isolated environment of their own classroom. This principal further described how he/she could see special education teachers isolating themselves.

> I think that as much as we want that culture to be open and we want it to be all kids are all of our responsibility. I think a special ed. team can isolate itself as much as the culture of the school can isolate them. Uh you know I mean if they don't make the outreach you know the outreach is a two way street. It's (isolation) something that I've seen departments do to themselves as much as a school culture can do it to them.

A Resource Specialist confirmed how a teacher could isolate oneself, "I feel isolated on a daily basis because I rarely leave my classroom." Another Resource Specialist who was interviewed discussed feeling segregated from general education teachers, "Occasionally I will feel isolation from a teacher who may not be receptive or may be new to this type of (special education) program and so it takes some time, communication, collaboration to kind of get there."

The Resource Specialist further explained that she/he does not feel isolated from his/her principal due to their regular weekly special education meetings that are separate meetings from Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), Student Study Team (SSTs), or staff meetings. Unfortunately, consistent meetings between principals and special education teachers are not being held at every school on a regular basis. Such meetings may be a way to help reduce

special education teachers' feelings of isolation and build a sense of belonging to the school community. This Resource Specialist elaborates on the benefit of routine meetings with her/his principal,

> The principals that we've had, we work closely with as I said. We have meetings every week and so you know I have really not been allowed to feel isolated. I think because we had to work with each other.

As one of the principals mentioned, the Special Day Class teacher discussed how she has to make an effort so that she does not feel isolated from her school community. She explains, "I don't feel isolated from staff because I think that if I didn't seek it out I probably would be (isolated) because its not set up to where we're all kind of I guess included."

Another principal described how his/her special education teachers did feel isolated at times due to the school belief that special education students are the special education teachers' responsibility and not everyone's responsibility. This principal stated that the school culture needs to be changed or created in a way that prevents this from happening for the sake of the students and the special education teachers. This principal advised that responsibilities for students should be disseminated so that the special education teacher does not feel isolated as the singular person who can "fix the problems" of the student with special needs. One of the Resource Specialists similarly discussed how she felt isolation in previous years due to the belief that a student belongs to either a special education teacher or a general education teacher. However, this has changed for her over the years since schools have shifted to more inclusive practices and push in models. A push in model involves the special education teacher going into general education classrooms to support students with special needs. Thus, the special education teacher is integrated into the classroom as well as the student.

Another interesting finding of the survey is that all of the principals considered their special education teachers to be school leaders. However, not all of the special education teachers saw themselves as school leaders. The majority of the special education teachers tended to see themselves as a school leader 70% (n = 30). Although some of them did not see themselves as school leaders 30% (n = 13). Another Likert scale statement that showed a difference between the two groups was I feel adequately trained in special education instructional delivery methods. As expected a large majority of special education teachers (90%) agreed with this statement while only 10% of them disagreed (n = 4). The majority of principals 64% (n = 7) agreed while four out of eleven disagreed (36%).

The results of the independent samples t tests also revealed a difference in the means between the principal group and the special education teacher group on two of the statements relative to Response to Intervention (RTI). All 11 principals strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement special education teachers should determine if students do not respond to intervention. However, special education teachers were somewhat divided in their responses. The majority of special education teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed 58% (n = 22). Yet, a notable number of special education teachers did agree with this statement 42 % (n = 16).

Comments provided on the survey indicate that Special Day Class teachers typically are not involved in Response to Intervention practices. The Special Day Class teacher also discussed this during her interview as she explained that she was not involved with Response to Intervention in any way at her school even though they did have a program. This Special Day Class teacher further explained that she had no knowledge of her school's Response to Intervention system as she has never been involved in any conversations about it. Thus, it appears that only Resource Specialists are involved in Response to Intervention practices at their schools.

As mentioned in the survey findings and in the interviews, each school tends to operate their own Response to Intervention program as there is no consistent implementation across schools within this district. The special education teachers who felt that they should not determine if a student responds to intervention may have answered in this manner due to how the program functions at their school. Their school may have an approach in which all teachers regulate if a student does not respond to intervention. Thus, special educations teachers may not feel that they should be the sole determiner of a student's responsiveness. Other special education teachers may teach at a school that has a Response to Intervention program in which the general education teacher is the person who decides if a student does not respond to intervention.

Furthermore, all of the interviewed principals and the Resource Specialists described Response to Intervention differently. The two interviewed Resource Specialists' involvement in Response to Intervention also diverged. One Resource Specialist was highly active in the process as she provided interventions for general education students by regularly pulling them out of their general education classrooms. However, the other Resource Specialist was not involved in any way in Response to Intervention programs at her school.

The final question that principals and special education teachers disagreed on could similarly be attributed to Response to Intervention programs being implemented differently at each school. The statement was special education teachers should only deliver tier three interventions. Ten out of eleven (91%) principals disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement and only one principal strongly agreed. The special education teachers were relatively split again on their responses. The majority of special education teachers actually agreed or strongly agreed that they should only deliver tier three interventions 56% (n = 20). However, there were 16 special education teachers who did disagree or strongly disagree (44%).

Discussion of Research Questions

The first research question of this study was What are principals' and assistant principals' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers? The survey and the interviews did ascertain the perceptions of 11 principals. However, there were no assistant principals who took the survey thus no assistant principals were interviewed either. Assistant principal responses could have provided more knowledge since some assistant principals are assigned to special education at their schools. Principals' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers were fairly consistent within their group. There were only a few principals who descended on some of the survey responses. Interviews with principals in elementary, middle and high school offered additional insight into principals' perceptions.

The second research question of this study was What do special education teachers perceive as their roles and responsibilities? This study obtained the perceptions of 24 Resource Specialists, 16 Special Day Class teachers and one teacher who is both a Resource Specialist and a Special Day Class teacher. There were divergent responses within the special education teachers' group on numerous survey questions. There were also a few questions in which the special education teachers' group was clearly divided. The individual interviews of two Resource Specialists and a Special Day Class teacher provided insight into why survey responses may have varied within the special education teachers' group.

The final research question was How do the responses by principals and assistant principals compare with those of special education teachers? Only principals' and special education teachers' responses were gathered as no assistant principals participated in the survey or in the interviews. As discussed, there were many topics that principals and special education teachers tended to agree on. However, there were some topics that were identified in which these two groups did not agree as previously discussed.

Results Related to Literature Review

There were four areas that were addressed in the literature that were focal points in this mixed methods study: support, leadership, special education teacher retention issues and feelings of isolation. The data in this study indicates that principals and special education teachers describe support differently as identified in the survey results and in the interviews. The interviewed special education teachers often discussed principal support as principals dealing with difficult parents. Principals described support in this way yet they also discussed attending special education teachers' meetings or giving special education teachers extra time to complete tasks. In addition, the study data corresponds with the literature that principal and district support is crucial to enhance special education teachers' feelings of job satisfaction (Foley & Lewis, 1999; Lynch, 2012).

The literature review concentrated on two areas of leadership: principals as effective leaders for all special education teachers and special education teachers as leaders within their schools. The literature review discussed how important it is for principals to be effective instructional leaders for all teachers not just for general education teachers (Barnett, 1998; Frost & Kersten, 2011). Survey data indicates that most principals perceive themselves as effective instructional leaders for special education teachers. However, special education teachers were clearly divided with exactly half of them perceiving their principals as effective instructional leaders. The other half of special education teachers surveyed did not perceive their principals as effective instructional leaders. A few principals mentioned their lack of special education law knowledge as a reason why they were ineffective instructional leaders for special education teachers. Special education teachers also mentioned their principals' lack of law knowledge in addition to their principals' absence of understanding about special education teaching methods. Some special education teachers further pointed out that their principals had no prior experience with

special education which they deemed made their principals ineffective instructional leaders. These topics were also discussed in previous literature as some principals were deemed to have inadequate knowledge of special education practices (Billingsley, 2007; Valeo, 2008).

Another area discussed in the literature review was the role of special education teachers as school leaders due to the very nature of their unique position (Billingsley, 2007). Special education teachers have to perform what some special education teachers and principals described as two roles or two jobs in one. They have the job title of teacher and they have the job title of case manager for all of their students. Case managing entails many additional roles and responsibilities such as completing legal paperwork and holding Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) meetings. The data of the study indicates that all principals surveyed perceived their special education teachers as leaders. However, all of the special education teachers did not see themselves as school leaders. The majority of special education teachers 70% (n = 30) did perceive themselves as school leaders yet 13 of them did not (30%). These findings are congruent with the research about teachers not perceiving themselves as formal leaders (Angelle & Schmid, 2007). More qualitative data is needed to better understand why these 13 special education teachers did not view themselves as school leaders.

Special education teacher retention issues are frequently discussed in research since it is a continual problem in numerous school districts across the United States (Carpenter & Dyal, 2001; Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). An interesting and unexpected finding of this study was special education teachers discussing negative interactions with parents as a major challenge. Many special education teachers mentioned in the survey and in the interviews that parental issues would make them leave their position. All three principals who were interviewed also discussed how parental issues is a huge concern for them and for their special education teachers. The literature did not specifically discuss parents as a major reason for special

education teachers leaving the teaching profession. The literature mainly addresses inadequate working environments and lack of support as the main reason for special education teacher turnover (DiPaola, et al., 2004; Futernick, 2007; Gersten et al., 2001). The findings of these interviews did reveal that either the district or the principal provided support for special education teachers when dealing with difficult parents. The two interviewed Resource Specialists described how timely and adequate support does help special education teachers remain in their positions which corresponds with the literature about support (Gersten et al., 2001; Prather, 2011).

Implications for Practices and Policies

The findings of this study may be helpful as the state of California moves towards even more inclusive practices as students with special needs will spend greater time in the general education classroom. Students who had previously been in a mild Special Day Class will be placed in a general education classroom. Thus, the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers and general education teachers will ultimately shift as more students with special needs enter general education classrooms. Furthermore, the state of California is in the process of implementing Common Core Standards which will further change how special education teachers educate students with special needs.

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of Response to Intervention added to the workload of some special education teachers. Accordingly, the inclusion movement could potentially add even more roles and responsibilities to special education teachers' workloads. It is currently unclear how the shift to Common Core Standards will impact the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers. It is unlikely that the new standards will reduce special education teachers' duties.

The findings of this study might further assist in opening dialogue between principals and special education teachers regarding special education teachers' current roles and responsibilities. An in-depth discussion might involve a discussion of how principals may best support special education teachers with the upcoming changes in special education practices such as more intensive inclusion and Common Core Standards. Principals and special education teachers proactively working together in this change process is crucial. Principals and special education teachers might strengthen their relationships by building on their shared perceptions while discussing the areas in which their perceptions diverge.

Lastly, there is a potential opportunity to foster leadership in both principals and special education teachers. Some principals might benefit by gaining more knowledge in special education law and practices so they may lead their special education teachers more effectively. This suggestion is based on 50% of special education teachers in this study who did not view their principals as instructional leaders for special education. Likewise, there is the potential for special education teachers to take on more prominent leadership roles as all of the principals in this survey viewed their special education teachers as school leaders. Principals might foster leadership in these special education teachers who see themselves as leaders. Principals may further attempt to better understand their special education teachers who do not perceive themselves as school leaders.

Recommendations for Future Research

Expanding this mixed methods study to different districts in order to gather more in depth results would be of value. It would be of interest to survey other districts with varying demographics since the district in this study is a high performing district. Lower performing districts' principals' and special education teachers' responses may offer different perceptions about special education teachers' roles and responsibilities. For example, perhaps parental issues

do not greatly impact special education teachers' jobs in lower performing schools. There may be unique issues that are pervasive in lower performing districts or in urban schools that were not discovered in this study of a high performing district. Conducting this study in other states may further uncover different perceptions since educational systems tend to differ from state to state.

Another opportunity for future research would be to focus on assistant principals who are assigned to special education. Assistant principals' perceptions of special education teachers' roles and responsibilities could vary from principals' perceptions. It is further suggested to also survey and interview program specialists and special education directors. These two groups may have different perspectives than principals/assistant principals about the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers especially since their sole focus is special education. Special education teachers have to follow directives from principals, assistant principals, program specialists and special education directors. Thus, insight from all of these various professionals may be beneficial to foster a common understanding among these groups.

Surveying and interviewing more people would provide additional quantitative and qualitative data versus this study which had a small sample size. A larger sample size would allow the results to be more generalizable to the larger population. Conducting a similar study within the same district after the implementation of Common Core Standards may provide some interesting results. As mentioned, districts throughout California will be moving towards even more inclusive practices of students with special needs over the next few years. Meaning more students with mild special needs who have typically been in a Special Day Class setting will be placed into general education classrooms.

Movement towards greater inclusion will certainly shift the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers and general education teachers. Hence, gaining the general education teachers' perceptions about special education teachers' roles and responsibilities may also be

important as these two groups will be forced to work together more in upcoming years. Additional mixed methods studies may also be beneficial in order to better understand the rationale behind principals' and special education teachers' survey responses. For example, more in depth interviews with principals and special education teachers would have been useful to further understand all of the survey results.

Appendix A

Survey for Special Education Teachers

How many IEP meetings do you attend during a school year? _____

How many SST meetings do you attend during a school year? _____

How much time do you spend weekly on scheduling and re-scheduling IEP meetings?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 or 2 hours
- 3 or 4 hours
- 5 or 6 hours
- 7 or 8 hours
- Other _____

How much time do you spend weekly preparing IEP paperwork (initials, annuals, and triennials)?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 or 2 hours
- 3 or 4 hours
- 5 or 6 hours
- 7 or 8 hours
- Other _____

How much time do you spend weekly testing students for initial and triennial IEPs?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 or 2 hours
- 3 or 4 hours
- 5 or 6 hours
- 7 or 8 hours
- Other _____

How much time do you spend weekly writing academic reports for initial and triennial IEPs?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 or 2 hours
- 3 or 4 hours
- 5 or 6 hours
- 7 or 8 hours
- Other _____

How much time do you spend weekly planning lessons?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 or 2 hours
- 3 or 4 hours
- 5 or 6 hours
- 7 or 8 hours

- Other _____

How much time do you spend weekly on inclusion related activities?
- Less than 1 hour
- 1 or 2 hours
- 3 or 4 hours
- 5 or 6 hours
- 7 or 8 hours
- Other _____

My principal feels that only the special education teacher is responsible for the education of students with special needs.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

My principal makes uninterrupted time available for communication and collaboration between special education and general education teachers (outside of IEP meetings).
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

My principal meets with special education teachers regularly outside of IEP/SST meetings and staff meetings.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

My principal holds special education teachers and general education teachers to the same expectations.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

My principal frequently discusses instructional methods with me outside of IEP meetings.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

My principal requires special education teachers to attend all SST meetings.
- Strongly agree
- Agree

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

My principal requires special education teachers to attend all staff meetings.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

My principal recognizes the achievements of special education teachers.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

My principal is aware of the challenges special education teachers encounter.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

My principal provides a substitute for me for collaboration when general education teachers have a substitute to participate in grade level collaboration.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

My principal establishes and communicates clear expectations.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Special education teachers have enough time during the school day to complete all duties.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Special education teachers should be paid more than general education teachers.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I, as a special education teacher, feel valued and respected at my school.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel isolated from general education teachers.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel isolated from my principal.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel like an integral member of my school community.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I have more responsibilities than general education teachers.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I have fewer responsibilities than general education teachers.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I attend the same training sessions that general education teachers are required to attend (for example, literacy, Data Director, Second Step, Envision math, etc.).
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I see myself as a school leader.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

Response to intervention involves using research based interventions to assist struggling learners. Response to intervention typically involves three tiers of support with tier 1 being the least intense, tier 2 being more intense and with more frequent intervention, and tier 3 being the most intense level of intervention.

Response to Intervention (RTI) has increased my workload.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Special education teachers should determine if students do not respond to intervention (RTI).
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Special education teachers should be the sole data collectors for Response to Intervention (RTI).
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

General education teachers should determine if students do not respond to intervention (RTI).
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

General education teachers should be the sole data collectors for Response to Intervention (RTI).
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

General education teachers should deliver tier 1 and tier 2 interventions.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Special education teachers should only deliver tier 3 interventions.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

School psychologists should play a major role in setting up and monitoring Response to Intervention (RTI).
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

My school has successfully implemented Response to Intervention (RTI).
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I think special education teachers leave the teaching profession at the same rate as general education teachers.
- Yes
- No

Explain _____

I think special education teachers leave the teaching profession after _____ years.

List the number one reason why special education teachers leave the teaching profession.
_____

List the most important step a principal can take to retain a special education teacher.

_____

List the number one challenge you encounter. _____

List the part of your job that you enjoy the most. _____

Principals look for these qualities in a special education teacher _____.

Principals have these expectations of special education teachers _____.

I feel adequately trained in special education instructional delivery methods.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel adequately trained in special education law.
- Strongly agree
- Agree

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I acquire special education knowledge or training via _____.

I receive ongoing special education training
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Every other month
- Other _____

Do you feel that your principal has adequate knowledge to be an effective instructional leader for special education teachers?
- Yes
- No

Explain _____

An IEP meeting goes beyond the contracted work stop time and the general education teacher announces that she needs to leave. My principal would
- Stop the meeting and reschedule for a future date to finish.
- Release the general education teacher and finish the IEP meeting that day.
- Require the general education teacher to stay and finish the IEP meeting that day.
- Other _____

A general education student with behavior challenges who is NOT identified as a special education student has an outburst within the general education classroom. My principal would
- Call the special education teacher for help.
- Call the school psychologist for help.
- Take the student to the principal's office.
- Inform the general education teacher how to handle the situation.
- Other _____

An IEP meeting needs to be held during a teacher's preparation period to meet legal deadlines. My principal would
- Pay the general education and the special education teacher for their time.
- Provide compensation time to the general education and special education teachers.
- Not pay or provide compensation time for the teachers.
- Allow the general education teacher to only attend for 10 minutes.
- Other _____

If you express concern to your principal that you need more time to complete all of your special education duties and responsibilities. Your principal would _____.

Please write any other comments you would like to share:
_____.

Please select your title:

- Resource Specialist
- Special Day Class Teacher
- Other _____

Please select at what level you teach.

- Elementary
- Middle School
- High School
- Other

How long have you been a special education teacher? _____

How long have you been a special education teacher at your current school? _____

How long have you been working with your current principal? _____

Please enter the number of students currently on your caseload. _____

Please enter how many assessments you complete yearly (total – initials/triennials). _____

Please enter how many referrals you receive for special education services yearly. _____

Gender

- Male
- Female

Age range

- 21-31
- 32-42
- 43-53
- 54-64
- 65-75

Race _____

If you would like to volunteer to be interviewed, please provide your name and phone number or personal email address. _____

The researcher will contact you directly to set up an interview at your convenience.

Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this important survey.

Appendix B

Survey for Principals

How many IEP meetings do you think your Resource Specialist attends during a school year?
_____

How many SST meetings do you think your Resource Specialist attends during a school year?
_____

How many IEP meetings do you think your Special Day Class teacher attends during a school year? _____

How many SST meetings do you think your Special Day Class teacher attends during a school year? _____

How much time do you think your Resource Specialist spends weekly in scheduling and re-scheduling IEP meetings?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 or 2 hours
- 3 or 4 hours
- 5 or 6 hours
- 7 or 8 hours
- Other _____

How much time do you think your Resource Specialist spends weekly preparing IEP paperwork (initials, annuals, and triennials)?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 or 2 hours
- 3 or 4 hours
- 5 or 6 hours
- 7 or 8 hours
- Other _____

How much time do you think your Resource Specialist spends weekly testing students for initial and triennial IEPs?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 or 2 hours
- 3 or 4 hours
- 5 or 6 hours
- 7 or 8 hours
- Other _____

How much time do you think your Resource Specialist spends weekly writing academic reports for initial and triennial IEPs?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 or 2 hours
- 3 or 4 hours
- 5 or 6 hours
- 7 or 8 hours
- Other _____

How much time do you think your Resource Specialist spends weekly planning lessons?

- Less than 1 hour
- 1 or 2 hours
- 3 or 4 hours
- 5 or 6 hours
- 7 or 8 hours
- Other _____

I feel that only the special education teacher is responsible for the education of students with special needs.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I make uninterrupted time available for communication and collaboration between special education and general education teachers (outside of IEP meetings).

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I meet regularly with my special education teachers outside of IEP/SST meetings and staff meetings.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I hold my special education teachers and general education teachers to the same expectations.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Special education teachers have enough time during the school day to complete all duties.

- Strongly agree
- Agree

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Special education teachers should be paid more than general education teachers.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I frequently discuss instructional methods with my special education teachers outside of IEP meetings.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I require special education teachers to attend all SST meetings.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I require special education teachers to attend all staff meetings.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I recognize the achievements of my special education teachers.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I am aware of the challenges my special education teachers encounter.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Special education teachers feel valued and respected at my school.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I provide a substitute for my special education teachers for collaboration when general education teachers have a substitute to participate in grade level collaboration.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Special education teachers at my school feel isolated from general education teachers.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Special education teachers at my school feel isolated from me.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Special education teachers feel like they are integral members of my school community.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Special education teachers have more responsibilities than general education teachers.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Special education teachers have fewer responsibilities than general education teachers.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I establish and communicate clear expectations to my special education teachers.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I see special education teachers as school leaders.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

Response to intervention involves using research based interventions to assist struggling learners. Response to intervention typically involves three tiers of support with tier 1 being the least intense, tier 2 being more intense and with more frequent intervention, and tier 3 being the most intense level of intervention.

Response to Intervention (RTI) has increased special education teachers' workload.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Only special education teachers should determine if students do not respond to intervention (RTI).
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Special education teachers should be the sole data collectors for Response to Intervention (RTI).
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Special education teachers should only deliver tier 3 interventions.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

My school has successfully implemented Response to Intervention (RTI).
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I think special education teachers leave the teaching profession at the same rate as general education teachers.
- Yes
- No
  Explain _____

I think special education teachers leave the teaching profession after _____ years.

List the number one reason why special education teachers leave the teaching profession.
_____

List the most important step a principal can take to retain a special education teacher.

_____

List the number one challenge special education teachers encounter.
_____

List the part of the job that special education teachers enjoy the most.
_____

I look for these qualities in a special education teacher _____.

I have these expectations of special education teachers _____.

I feel adequately trained in special education instructional delivery methods.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I feel adequately trained in special education law.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

I acquire special education knowledge/training via _____.

I receive ongoing special education training
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Every other month
- Other _____

Do you feel that you have adequate knowledge to be an effective instructional leader for special education teachers?
- Yes
- No

Explain _____

An IEP meeting goes beyond the contracted work stop time and the general education teacher announces that she needs to leave. I would
- Stop the meeting and reschedule for a future date to finish.

- Release the general education teacher and finish the IEP meeting that day.
- Require the general education teacher to stay and finish the IEP meeting that day.
- Other _____

A general education student with behavior challenges who is NOT identified as a special education student has an outburst within the general education classroom. I would

- Call the special education teacher for help.
- Call the school psychologist for help.
- Take the student to my office.
- Inform the general education teacher how to handle the situation.
- Other _____

An IEP meeting needs to be held during a teacher's preparation period to meet legal deadlines. I would

- Pay my general education and special education teacher for their time.
- Provide compensation time to my general education and special education teachers.
- Not pay or provide compensation time for the teachers.
- Allow the general education teacher to only attend for 10 minutes.
- Other _____

My special education teacher expresses concern that more time is needed to complete all duties and responsibilities. I would _____.

Please write any other comments you would like to share:
_____.

Demographics

Please select your title

- Principal
- Assistant principal
- Other _____

Please list your site level

- Elementary
- Middle School
- High School
- Other _____

How long have you been a principal or an assistant principal? _____

How long have you been the principal or assistant at your current school? _____

If you were a teacher, how many years did you teach? _____

How many special education students did you have in your class when you taught?
_____

Please describe the special education training you received during your administrative/principal program or during a teacher credentialing program. _____

Do you have an immediate family member with special needs? _____

How many special education teachers (special day class teachers and resource specialists only) do you have at your school? Please do not include reading or intervention specialists. _____

Gender
- Male
- Female

Age range
- 21-31
- 32-42
- 43-53
- 54-64
- 65-75

Race _____

If you would like to volunteer to be interviewed, please provide your name and phone number or personal email address. _____

The researcher will contact you directly to set up an interview at your convenience.

Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this survey.

Appendix C

Sample Interview Questions for Special Education Teachers

1. Tell me about your roles and responsibilities as a special education teacher.

2. Tell me about the time it takes you to complete these tasks.

3. Has Response to Intervention (RTI) changed your special education workload? If so, please explain how.

4. Tell me about your relationship with your principal.

5. Do you feel that your principal understands what you do on a daily and weekly basis?

6. Is your principal knowledgeable about special education such as instructional methods and special education law?

Appendix D

Sample Interview Questions for Principals

1. Tell me about the main roles and responsibilities of your special education teachers.

2. Tell me about the time you think it takes your special education teachers to complete these tasks.

3. Has Response to Intervention (RTI) impacted your special education teachers' workload? If so, please explain how.

4. Tell me about your relationship with your special education teachers.

5. Do you feel that you understand what your special education teachers do on a daily and weekly basis?

6. Do you feel knowledgeable about special education such as instructional methods and special education law?

Appendix E

Survey Introduction

Greetings [Principals OR Special Education Teachers],

I am a Resource Specialist at Walt Disney Elementary and I am a doctoral candidate at Saint Mary's College of California. I am currently working on a research project titled, "Principals' and Special Education Teachers' Perceptions of Special Education Teachers' Roles and Responsibilities". I am eager to learn your perceptions about this topic. This survey will only take about **10 minutes** to complete. Your participation is **voluntary**, your responses will remain anonymous, and your identity will not be revealed. You may skip questions or stop taking the survey at any point. By taking the survey online, you are giving your consent to participate in my study. At the conclusion of the survey, there is a section to complete if you would like to be interviewed in the near future about these themes. You may also email me directly at jmotthilton@yahoo.com if you have questions or if you would like a copy of the results. Please email me with your personal email address or your mailing address if you would like to receive a copy of the results of this survey. Thank you for taking the time to answer these important questions.

Appendix F

Written Consent (Interview)

Dear Interview Participant,

I am a doctoral candidate at Saint Mary's College of California. I am also a Resource Specialist in the San Ramon Valley Unified School District. I am currently working on a research project titled, "Principals' and Special Education Teachers' Perceptions of Special Education Teachers' Roles and Responsibilities". The main purpose of my study is to gather, explain, and compare principals'/assistant principals' and special education teachers' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of special education teachers.

I am asking for your permission to participate in my study. The study involves interviewing you to learn your story and experience. The interview should take about 20-30 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary and you do not have to answer every question. We can also stop at any time if you wish. Your responses will remain anonymous and your identity will not be revealed.

Once I complete all of the interviews, the data will be analyzed under the supervision of my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Kaetlyn Lad. I will then present and discuss the results with my dissertation committee at Saint Mary's College of California. I would be happy to provide you with a copy of my report when it is completed. Please provide your email address or mailing address below if you would like to receive the report. The district and individual schools will not be named or identified in the report. Schools will only be reported by grade level such as elementary school, middle school, or high school.

Please ask should you have any questions or concerns at any point during the duration of the interview. You may contact me at any time after the interview by emailing me at jmotthilton@yahoo.com. You can also contact my dissertation chair at klad@stmarys-ca.edu. Please note that you will be given a copy of this form for your records. Thank you for your assistance with my research which will allow me to complete my doctoral degree in educational leadership.

In appreciation of your time,

Japhia Mott

I agree to participate in the research described above.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

_____

Printed Name

Please send me a copy of the report via email at _____ or via mail at:

_____

Appendix G

Audio-Recording Release

With your permission, I would like to audio record this interview so that I can make an accurate transcript. The recordings will be destroyed as soon as the transcript is completed. Your name will not be listed in the transcript as only codes will be used as identifiers. For example, each interviewee will be referred to as Principal A, Principal B, Special Education Teacher A, Special Education Teacher B, etc.

I agree to have the interview audio recorded.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

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