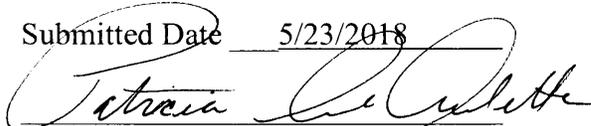


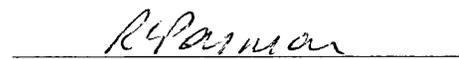
SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR
PREPAREDNESS IN THE AREAS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS
FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE PREPARATION PROGRAMS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
to the faculty of the Department of
ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP
of
THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY
New York
by
Patricia A. Auletta

Submitted Date 5/23/2018


Patricia A. Auletta

Approved Date 5/23/2018


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ABSTRACT

SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PREPAREDNESS IN THE AREAS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Patricia A. Auletta

This quantitative study examined the extent to which secondary level school building leaders in a suburban region of New York state perceive their preparedness for the special education students, as well as the special education-associated laws, mandates, programs, staff, and management issues they encountered in the mainstream, public secondary school building. Research questions sought to explore the special education specific content available in administrative preparation programs, changes in the roles and responsibilities of school building leaders due to these special education laws and mandates, and the perceptions of current school leaders regarding the adequacy of their preparation.

The conceptual and theoretical frameworks were based upon Peter Senge's Systems Thinking theory, which seeks to examine and understand a system by looking at the interrelatedness and interdependence of its parts.

Historically, special education students and issues were housed, overseen and handled separately from students without disabilities. As landmark legislation and mandates have gradually been put in place to guarantee access to education in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for individuals with disabilities, special education can no longer be examined, administrated, or structured outside the "system" of mainstream public schools. Systems Thinking is necessary to ensure that school building leaders are

prepared to lead their entire building and all components within it. Data for the study were collected using online surveys sent to building leaders in the secondary school buildings of 103 school districts on Long Island, New York.

The study found that most School Building Leader advanced certificate programs in New York contained no special education-specific coursework. The few that did either required one class or offered one elective course. Surveys distributed in this study found that while school building administrators in secondary schools on Long Island, New York had generally positive attitudes towards special education students and programs within their buildings, the majority of administrators surveyed did not consider that they had been adequately prepared by their SBL programs for special education leadership. Given the responses, respondents feel that more on-going professional development for school building leaders is needed in the area of special education.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to:

My mother who instilled in her children a love for reading, an appreciation for education, and who taught us that women can do anything. Mom, had your life allowed, you would have paved this path for me. Instead, I travel it in your memory.

My daughters Kerry, Ginger, Christine, and Lynne who taught me so much more than I ever taught them and who encouraged and supported me every step along the way. I am so proud of the women you have become and I love you more than words can say.

My precious grandson, Miles, who moved into my heart and made me feel young enough and strong enough to tackle this project. I had no idea when I began this process that you would be among the number I fight for. Never forget that you are perfect, you are strong, you are unique, and you are loved unconditionally!

My family who have provided the support, encouragement, and love that made this endeavor possible. Sharon and Kat, there are no words to express my appreciation for your unwavering love and encouragement.

Mrs. Barbara (Ragno) Berger who once told a troubled young teen that the path before her wouldn't be easy, but it would be worth the journey. You barely knew me. However, forty-two years later, a pair of tiny red sneakers remains on my desk as a reminder of your kindness and your words. Like the story of the boy with the starfish, always remember that you made a difference for this one!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the wonderful professors at St. John's University who provided unwavering support and guidance throughout this doctoral process and for challenging me to do my very best. And I would like to acknowledge my St. John's cohort, Oakdale 2014, for welcoming me into the "family" and for their continued encouragement and support. I consider myself blessed to have met each and every one of you.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Before the mid-1970s, children with disabilities were excluded from public education, warehoused in out-of-district programs, or were inadequately served by public schools (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 1996). In her article, "Categorical Eligibility for Special Education: The Enshrinement of the Medical Model in Disability Policy", Traino (2000) cited Hensley (1973): "A 1919 Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling, in fact, held that "a mentally normal, blind child could be barred from school since his/her handicap had a depressing and nauseating effect on teachers and children" (p. 2). Until the mid-1970s, most states allowed school districts to refuse to enroll students that they considered "uneducable", a term generally defined by local school administrators (Martin et al., 1996, p. 26).

However, the nature of special education in public schools has changed significantly over the past 40 years. This wave of change began as a tiny ripple with the *National Defense Act* (NDEA) of 1958 (Hunt, 2016). In response to the perceived threat to the U.S. when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the NDEA was enacted to provide grants to improve math and science education. The NDEA also paved the way for federal involvement in elementary and secondary school issues. Four days after signing NDEA, President Dwight Eisenhower also signed Public Law (PL) 85-926, which provided funding for colleges and universities to train educators to work with children with retardation. Five years later, PL 85-926 was expanded to include children with other disabilities as well (Martin et al., 1996).

Title VI of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* created the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (Peterson, 2007). Title VI did little to change practices in the public education classroom for individuals with disabilities, but it acknowledged individuals with disabilities within the educational conversation—however minimally.

Title VI was the springboard that led to a series of laws and Supreme Court decisions including; *Mills v. D.C. Board of Education* (1972), *Section 504* (1973), the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA, 1974), *Education of All Handicapped Children Act* (EAHCA, 1975), the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA, 1990), *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA, 1990), *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB, 2001), and President Obama’s *Race to the Top* (2009) (Peterson, 2007; USDOE, 2014).

Fancy titles and acronyms aside, the result of all this policy was that in a little less than 35 years, individuals with disabilities went from being an invisible population to one that was included, not only in the public-school districts, but in the buildings in self-contained classes or in general education classrooms alongside their non-disabled peers, often responsible for completing the same challenging curriculum and graduation requirements.

The changes brought about by these laws significantly affected educators and students. Disabled students required a variety of special classes to be implemented, and these classes created the need for special educators. What made these educators “special” was that “in addition to the skills and knowledge that were required of a highly qualified general education classroom teacher, special education teachers were required to have specialized skills for addressing unique student needs; extensive knowledge of highly effective, evidence-based practices; and the ability to collaborate effectively with other

teachers to ensure that students with disabilities make academic and social progress that enabled them to be successful in life” (Billingsly, 2005, p. xvi).

Special educator certification programs differed from general education programs in that, for the most part, general educators were trained in specific subject matter and special educators were trained to teach a student according to his/her disability.

Historically, curricula for most students with disabilities consisted of the general education curriculum simplified, differentiated, adapted, taught, and assessed by the special education teacher. Graduation with a “local” or “IEP” diploma was based on passing these special classes as determined, generally, by the special educators.

With special educators being as self-contained as their students, school building leaders (i.e., principals and assistant principals) typically left the running of these programs to the special education staff and special education coordinators or directors, who often worked at the district office (Finan, 2016; Hall-Evans, 2016, Holdman, 2015).

The stakes were raised for special educators and students when reauthorization of IDEA in 1997 required students with disabilities to be included in state and district-wide assessments. With little lead-time, special educators had to become as knowledgeable about the higher-level curriculum and assessments as general education teachers who had extensive content area training and experience teaching to these exams. At the same time, special education teachers still had to adapt and differentiate the curriculum for a population that was unprepared and, in many cases, unable to succeed on such exams.

Many special educators were thrown into the general education world for the first time with little, if any, support.

Academic demands on students with disabilities continued to grow because of government initiatives such as NCLB and RTTT, which included increasingly complex curriculum cumulating in today's common core (CC), and high stakes student testing that resulted in evaluating teachers and principals based on student achievement during annual professional performance reviews (APPR).

Special educators needed administrative direction and support more than ever. The administrators most available to them, however, were building-level principals and assistant principals who were not experienced with or prepared to address the unique needs of special education staff, students, and programs. Administrators with the most knowledge about special education were often located at the district office and were detached from building-level, day-to-day issues experienced by special educators in classrooms (Lynn, 2015). "While principals do not need to be disability experts, they need a working knowledge of disabilities, a clear conception of the unique challenges various conditions present, and a thorough understanding of the laws that protect the educational rights of these students" (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003, p. 11).

In many schools, novice administrators were assigned special education as one of their primary responsibilities. Crooner, Tochtermann, and Garrison-Wade (2004) wrote:

With the advent of new school reforms including site-based management and full inclusion of special education students, more principal involvement is demanded in the education of students with special needs. General education administrators must be prepared to lead in all administrative areas, including special education, to reduce the separateness that has come to exist between general and special education and to create instructional programs that meet the needs of all students (p. 4).

Statement of the Problem

Enrollment of students with disabilities in mainstream public schools has increased during the last 40 years to a current average of approximately 13% of the school-age population. This includes an increase in the range and nature of the disabilities. At the same time, academic expectations for these students have increased due to mandates for curriculum mastery and standardized test completion. The problem that this study set out to address was that insufficient information regarding the preparation of school building leaders has challenged their ability to meaningfully serve this population (Garrison-Wade, Soble, & Fulmer, 2007; Garrison-Wade, 2005; Goor, Schwenn, & Boyer, 1997). The lack of information on existing professional needs of school leaders has hampered the design of effective leadership preparation programs at both the pre-service and in-service levels.

Significance of the Study

Since the 1970s, there have been large increases in the number of students with a wide range of disabilities who are being included in mainstream schools and classrooms. State and federal requirements that these students meet the same academic criteria for graduation as their mainstream peers have placed heightened stress on special education students, as well as their special education and mainstream teachers, their mainstream peers, and the building-level administrators responsible for them. Increased special education populations in public schools bring unprecedented costs, unfunded mandates, and legal issues that could have a significantly negative impact on schools and districts if they are not acknowledged and addressed appropriately. As a result, there is an urgent need for school building leaders to have the knowledge, training, and experience necessary to support these students and educators— as well as ensure that the school is

adhering to laws, mandates, and regulations that have been set in place to protect these groups. Information on school building leaders' perceptions of their own preparedness to administrate the special education programs can be advantageous for both pre-service preparation of school leaders as well as in-service professional development that supports them in keeping current with issues and innovative program approaches.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which school building leaders in Long Island secondary schools perceived their preparedness for special education programs and to respond to the unique staffing, programming, management, curricular, and legal issues that accompany students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms of public secondary school buildings.

Secondary school administrator's positive or negative attitudes towards special education students and the additional administrative responsibilities that accompany these students in mainstream public schools. The following questions guided this study:

Research Questions

1. To what extent do school leadership preparation programs contain coursework and/or practicum specific to special education program administration?
2. To what extent do secondary school building leaders demonstrate adequate knowledge of special education program administration, based on their pre-service and in-service training?
3. To what extent do secondary school building leaders believe that they were adequately prepared by their administrative preparation programs to assume leadership for special education programs, services, and staff?

4. To what extent do secondary school building leaders demonstrate positive or negative attitudes toward special education and the additional responsibilities that accompany special education issues?

Definition of Terms

This study examined the perceptions of secondary school building leaders regarding their preparedness for the complex, day-to-day issues presented by special education programs, laws, and students in the mainstream.

For the purpose of this study, the following terms/phrases are defined:

Administrative Preparation Program refers to any college, university, or online academic program that results in endorsement, licensure or certification leading to eligibility for the position as a secondary school principal or assistant principal (school building leader).

Student with a disability (SWD) refers to students who are classified under one of the 13 categories of disability recognized by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, have an Individualized Education Plan, and whose placement is in a public, secondary school building in either self-contained special education classes in the mainstream building, or in mainstream classes.

School building leader refers to individuals who have been or are currently employed as a principal or assistant principal in a public secondary school building.

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act): Enacted in July of 1990, this Federal legislation gave civil rights protection to individuals with disabilities.

Adequate yearly progress (AYP): as specified in *No Child Left Behind*, all children need to test as proficient on state tests of math, reading, and science by the year 2014. The gains the school must make between now and 2014 are divided into equal increments for each group and measured accordingly. These groups are: schools, children with disabilities, children learning English, minority children, and children from low-income families.

Limitations

This study was limited by design and focus to be reliable and valid for the purpose of examining the perceptions of principal and assistant principals in secondary buildings on Long Island, New York school districts. Additionally, this study was limited to administrative preparation programs in New York which ended in an advanced certificate in School Building Leader (SBL) and whose coursework was available on-line.

Depending on the size of the district, some school building leaders may have significantly different experiences based solely on the size of their special needs population, the nature of the disabilities mainstreamed in their schools, and the location of their special education director or coordinator. Some districts may have a large enough special education population to run their own in-district programs, creating the need for school building leaders having an enhanced knowledge of special education issues, laws, and management. A smaller district may find it more cost effective to cross-contract their students with significant disabilities to larger districts or to specialized programs and thereby have less need for school building leaders with specialized knowledge and experience in special education. Larger districts are also more likely to have their special education directors or coordinators located at the district office,

whereas smaller districts may have special education coordinators housed in the same building with the students and able to provide stronger on-site support for their SBLs.

This study included only colleges and universities in New York who offered an Advanced Certificate in School Building leadership and who posted the course requirements online. Due to variations in course offerings, titles, and descriptions, issues concerning leadership of special education populations, laws, and programs may be embedded in courses on topics such as School Law, Educational Leadership in Public Schools, and Organizational Leadership as well as within internships and practicum.

Assumptions

The primary assumption for this dissertation was that the school building leaders surveyed possessed an accurate memory of their training program and the courses contained within it, and could separate their knowledge of special education students and issues gained through experience and anecdotal information from information presented in (or lacking) in their administrative preparation program.

Conceptual Rationale

Ravitch and Riggan (2012) defined a conceptual framework as “an argument about why the topic one wishes to study matters, and why the means proposed to study it are appropriate and rigorous” (p. xiii). Conceptual frameworks also bridge the gap between various paradigms and summarize the research topic within the larger context and associated literature (Leshem & Trafford, 2007). The conceptual rationale for this research was based on Peter Senge’s concept of Systems Thinking. Senge (2012) wrote “the discipline of Systems Thinking provides a different way of looking at problems and goals – not as isolated events but as components of larger, but less visible structures that

affect each other” (p. 124). “Systems Thinking is an approach to a problem that considers how components within the larger structure operate and interact over the lifecycle of the system and how to optimize the design, implementation, and evaluation of that system.” (Kapp, Simoes, DeBiasi & Kravet, 2016). Systems Thinking can “best be described as the application of system concepts to frame our understanding of the world, and it is also about possible future action—what ought to be or could be” (Rajagopalan and Midgley, 2015).

To truly understand Systems Thinking, one must be aware of the components of the theory and how they interact. A “system” refers to any organization, group, or entity with two or more components. System’s Thinking proposes that all components within a system interact and impact on other components. Daft, 2008 explained Systems Thinking:

Systems Thinking means the ability to see the synergy of the whole rather than just the separate elements of a system and to learn to reinforce or change whole system patterns. Many people have been trained to solve problems by breaking a complex system, such as an organization, into discrete parts and working to make each part perform as well as possible. However, the success of each piece does not add up to the success of the whole. In fact, sometimes changing one part to make it better actually makes the whole system function less effectively (p.141).

In applying Systems Thinking to the issue of students with disabilities in mainstream public schools, one must understand that the various participants in the system called “Public Education” will bring opinions and critique of the system based upon their personal position within the system and the experiences and background they

bring into the system. A newly hired secondary principal or assistant principal with background experiences in general education may feel that the “problem” with the system is that special education students bring too much paperwork or management issues. A new administrator with a background in special education may insist that the “problem” is that the curricular requirements for students with disabilities are too rigorous, creating management issues and the resulting paperwork.

Systems Thinking would say that both of these administrators are necessary, have valid input and that, together, they and the rest of the components of the system can make provisions for the success of all of the students within the school system. For it is only through acknowledging all of the components that we can see an issue clearly and be able to make necessary adjustments (input) that serve all components equally. With the increased inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream, public schools and classes, comes a greater need for building administrators to have knowledge of the various populations that make up the group called “special education”, and of the unique laws and needs of these populations. No longer segregated into separate buildings and self-contained classes, administrators also need to be aware of how these populations and their needs interact with other components of the school system.

Special education is no longer a separate entity and is thoroughly part of public education as a whole. Without the addition of special education-specific coursework or practica, administrative preparation programs are not preparing SBLs for the issues they will face in their positions and set the stage for a crisis management style of leadership that may lead to disrupting other parts of the system.

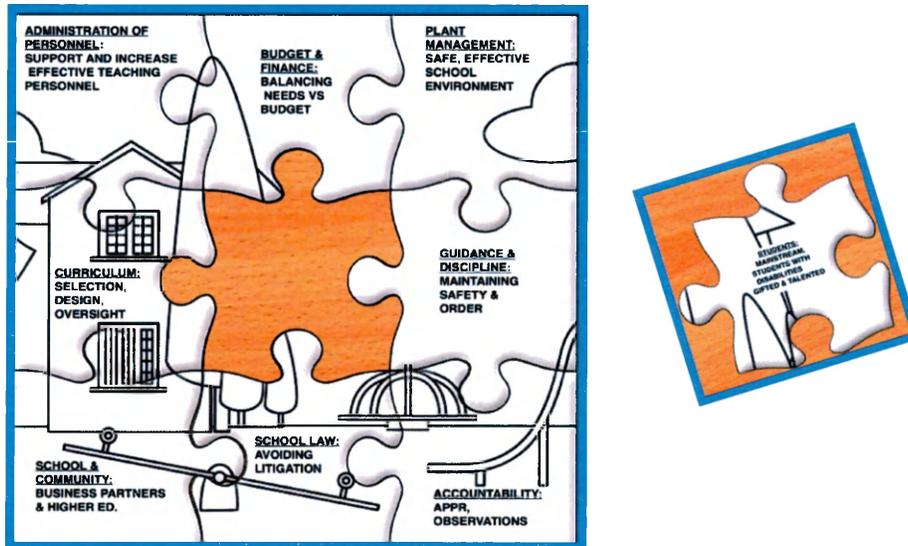


Figure 1. Conceptual framework: School building leadership through the lens of Systems Thinking. Without consideration for and inclusion of all components, the “system” is incomplete.

Methodology Overview

The methodology in the present study was similar to that utilized by Williams (2015) and echoes previous research by Stevenson (2002), Witt (2003), and Rascoe (2007). Data were collected from a quantitative, non-experimental survey previously used by Rascoe (2007) and Williams (2015). Surveys were sent to School Building Leader (SBL) and School District Leader (SDL)-certified individuals (principals and assistant principals) currently working in secondary buildings of the 103 Long Island’s school districts identified by SCOPE Educational Services as containing secondary buildings. Data were summarized using descriptive statistics.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Research

The review of literature for the present study was divided into five sections, each designed to look at where special education fits into the “system” of public education leadership. The first section focused on the historical overview of special education law and legislation leading to current trends concerning students with disabilities in public, mainstream schools. These included trends in enrollment, curriculum, graduation requirements, as well as the type and severity of disabilities represented. The second section looked at the roles and responsibilities of the school building administrator and examined the content of administrative preparation programs for course content in the area of special education. The third section examined school building administrators’ perceptions of preparedness in the area of special education and the final section explored secondary building leaders’ positive or negative attitudes towards special education and the additional responsibilities that accompany special education issues.

By examining these issues in the literature, this research sought to establish the background and rationale leading to this study’s research questions:

1. To what extent do school leadership preparation programs contain coursework and/or practicum specific to special education program administration?
2. To what extent do secondary school building leaders demonstrate adequate knowledge of special education program administration, based on their preservice and in-service training?

3. To what extent do secondary school building leaders believe that they were adequately prepared by their administrative preparation programs to assume leadership for special education programs, services, and staff?
4. To what extent do secondary school building leaders demonstrate positive or negative attitudes toward special education and the additional responsibilities that accompany special education issues?

Overview of Historical Changes in Special Education

“You cannot have a learning organization without shared vision. Without a pull toward some goal which people truly want to achieve, the forces in support of the status quo can be overwhelming” (Senge, 1990).

The path of students with significant disabilities into mainstream, public schools has been a long and difficult journey. This section explores the literature as it leads from a past littered with exclusion, isolation, abuse, and even the killing of those with severe disabilities to the current day where individuals with disabilities, although still struggling against prejudice and socially imposed limitations, are protected by laws that allow them access to free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

Prior to the 1950's, there were few laws specifically addressing the education of children with disabilities. In schools, building administrators had the power to independently decide whether a child with a disability was educable and could decide to deny that child enrollment in the public school. As a result, many individuals with disabilities were institutionalized, abandoned, isolated at home, or signed over into state facilities for life. Darrow (2007) cited Stainback, Stainback, and Bunch as saying that

many school officials doubted the value of education for students with disabilities and that, even though their parents paid the same school taxes as other parents, their children with disabilities were denied access to the most basic of education in their home schools with their neighborhood peers. Darrow found that it wasn't law or an inability to learn that excluded these children, but rather the perceptions of building leaders that education was not necessary or appropriate for most children with disabilities.

Between 1977 and 2002 there was a nationwide emphasis on the education of children with disabilities. The increased number of these children being served in regular education classrooms was in direct relationship to increases in population in general and increases in the identification and classification of individuals with disabilities. The sheer number of students with disabilities now included in mainstream public schools exposes a growing concern among educational professionals that today's building leaders need to be better trained and prepared to lead these students, their staff and their unique needs within the structure of the public-school building (Monteith, 1994; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994; Smith & Colon, 1998; Stevenson, 2002; and Murphy, 1994).

Harvin (1982) noted that in America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, many individuals began to realize the importance of public education for the disabled individual. Special educators and advocates for individuals with disabilities began exposing the abuses of the institutional systems and treatments of these individuals. In 1972, reporter Geraldo Rivera used a stolen key and brought a film crew into Willowbrook, one of the many state institutions for children with intellectual disabilities. His documentary, "Willowbrook: The Last Disgrace" (Primo, Rivera, & Sproutflick, 2010), "shared with the world the graphic images of residents sprawled naked

on feces and urine covered floors, being forced to eat their meals in two or three minutes.” For perhaps the first time, many people were forced to acknowledge the plight of this hidden and ignored population.

After “Willowbrook”, the media began an explosion of expository reports showing the plight of these children and adults and garnered public sympathy towards a population previously ignored or feared. Two historical events paved the path for these early advocates of children with disabilities: The National Defense Education Act (Senate Historical Office, 2014) and the Civil Rights Movement.

Martin et al. (1996) explored the legislative and litigation history of special education from the *National Defense Act* (NDA) in the 1950s through the enactment of each revision of IDEA. A response to the Soviet Union’s launching of sputnik, the NDA did not have a specific focus on students with disabilities, but by involving the federal government in schools, the authors suggested that it led the way for special education advocates to begin bringing the plight of students with disabilities to a higher level and demand help.

The Civil Rights Movement helped individuals with disabilities in a similar way. Once groups who were previously excluded began gaining access to the some of the rights enjoyed by the majority, other minority groups followed, demanding access to mainstream rights and privileges. Following the lead of civil rights activists, advocates for individuals with disabilities were now able to call on the government, seeking legislation to protect children with disabilities (Skiba et al., 2008).

In 1975, Congress passed Public Law 94-142 (*Education of All Handicapped Children Act*), now known as IDEA. According to IDEA, to receive federal funds, states

must develop and implement policies that assure a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities.

Students with disabilities began appearing in public schools gradually. At first, only select students were deemed ‘appropriate’ for public schools. These select students were grouped in segregated learning environments where classes and programs were designed for them in off-site buildings or in separate wings removed from the mainstream population. Academic expectations for these students were low, if they existed at all, and achievement was typically measured by their achievement on individualized social, emotional, physical, and only the most basic of academic goals (Sage & Burrello, 1994; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000, Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harness, 2001). Special educators were trained and hired specifically for these students. Most apparent at the secondary levels, certification programs for special educators differed significantly from general education teachers (Elliot & Riddle, 1992; Meyen & Skritic, 1995, Sage & Burrello, 1994; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000). Mainstream teacher candidates took only introductory classes in child psychology and the 'exceptional child', but most of their training was subject-specific. Special educators, on the other hand, were often not required to have subject area certification and their coursework concentrated on teaching students with various disabilities, special education strategies, and differentiated instruction. Special educators were not required to concentrate on subject-area training, as did general education teachers. Once hired in secondary schools, special educators could be assigned any (or all) subject areas and were responsible for adapting the curriculum to make it accessible to the students, including creating the assessments students would take to determine

academic success. In these situations, building administrators typically left both the education and the management of students with disabilities to the teacher and classroom staff (Sage & Burrello, 1994; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000, and Balt, 1996).

According to the Condition of Education, Children and Youth with Disabilities (2017), “From school years 1990-91 through 2004-2005, the number of children and youth ages 3-21 who received special education services increased from 4.7 million, or 11 percent of total public-school enrollment, to 6.7 million, or 14 percent of total school enrollment.”

Individuals with disabilities, by being introduced into public education became technically a part of the system, but were still excluded, now from the inside. Classrooms, curriculum, programs, staff, and all other aspects of their education were separate from that of the rest of the building. Building administrators had little to do with special education. Its oversight was left to the special education teachers in self-contained areas of the buildings.

In the mid- and late 1990s, in response to the mandates of IDEA and NCLB, many students with disabilities became responsible for the same academic curriculum and assessments as their non-disabled peers. The need to implement educational planning that increased the number of students with disabilities in general education classrooms and prepare them for high stakes, standardized assessments connected with school graduation, impacted the roles and responsibilities of school administrators. Added to school accountability, was increased outside pressures from parents and advocacy groups who were more aware of their rights and demanded a larger spectrum of

services and supports for students in special education (Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000, Billingsly, 2005; and Wald, 1998).

Research question 1: To what extent do school leadership preparation programs contain coursework and/or practicum specific to special education program administration?

“Business and human endeavors are systems...we tend to focus on snapshots of isolated parts of the system. And wonder why our deepest problems never get solved.”
(Senge, 2012)

Witt (2003) states that “due to the organizational structures that were established during the initial phase of implementing Public Law 94-142 in the late 1970’s, special education was seen as a specialized field somewhat separate from general education administration”. Special education students were educated in special education classes and taught by special education-trained teachers. Oversight of these specific programs and solely administrators trained and responsible for all facets of special education, from hiring of staff to student graduation, provided teachers (Bender, 2011; Witt, 2003; Landry, 2011; Lynn, 2015, and Goor, Schwenn, & Boyer, 1997). No such leadership existed for students with disabilities in mainstream schools and classes. Administrators were trained solely for the administration of mainstream students, their curriculum, discipline, and staff. As far back as 1994, Sirotnik and Kimball spoke of this separation between special education and general education in both teacher and administrative programs. These authors and many others describe the variety of certification options for teachers, typically a choice between special or general education tracks (Sage & Burrello, 1994; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000).

Williams' 2015 non-experimental, quantitative study examined the relationship between principals' certifications, their knowledge of special education, and their perception of their own preparedness with special education administration. Scaffolding around a theoretical framework of social justice, Williams examined whether the extent to which administrators perceived their preparedness with special education issues jeopardized the educational achievement of students with disabilities in their schools. Williams' study followed up on previous, similar studies by Protz (2005) and Rascoe (2007). The surveys were sent using Survey Monkey to 196 principals in Mid-Atlantic region schools serving students from pre-k through 12th grade. 177 surveys were returned as usable. Descriptive statistics found no relationship between administrator's educational backgrounds and their attitudes towards special education. However, Williams cautioned that some local preparation programs did offer programs with increased special education coursework than others which could have skewed the results slightly. A statistically relevant correlation was found between an administrator's degree or endorsement in special education and their perception of their own preparedness to meet the needs of the students with disabilities in their buildings.

Nelsen (2002) also performed a descriptive study using quantitative research to determine if administrative preparation programs adequately prepared administrators to lead special education programs. Subjects consisted of 285 Louisiana principals who hold Louisiana school principal certificates and 37 full-time faculty members in educational administration programs. Surveys were sent seeking answers to research questions regarding the skills and knowledge principals needed to be effective leaders of special education programs and what additional components should be added to

administrator preparation programs to make them more effective leaders. The survey results found that principals reported receiving limited training in special education in their administrative preparation programs, but all respondents felt that the programs were in need of reform to include more information and training on special education issues.

The need for changes in school administration is not new. Murphy (2003) traced the initiation of administrative standards originally set forth by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) in 1994, and reported on both the supports and critiques that led the ISLLC standards through a series of reforms. According to Murphy, the ISLLC standards grew out of various laws and reforms in special education and their impact on school administration. Various groups were formed to study educational administration and the structure of administrative accreditation programs. One of these groups, the National Policy Board for Educational Administrations (NPBEA) was formed from 10 stakeholder organizations gathered by the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEAA). Acknowledging that educational administration had not adapted to various changes in society and education, the NPBEA developed the ISLLC to create a set of standards for administrators going into the twentieth century. The goal of the ISLLC was to help educational administration evolve from a model of the school administrator as a business official, or that of a scientist armed with statistics and experimentation, to that of an educational leader with student achievement paramount to school or student management (USDOE, 2002; Ryhys, 1996, & Balt, 2000).

Although Murphy presents both the goals and the critiques of several aspects of the original ISLLC standards, a solid theme runs through his exploration of the standards,

evidenced by terms such as “school culture”, “personalized learning”, “community”, “linkage between school and home”, “centrality of mission”, and “social tapestry”.

According to Murphy, the ISLLC standards were relatively well-received and codified by 40 states in application to educational administrations. Forty states required universities to align their administrator preparation programs to ISLLC standards and 13 states developed an exit exam for administrative candidates based on the ISLLC standards that required passage of that examination for licensure.

The ISLLC standards experienced challenges and critiques over the years, resulting in multiple versions of administrative standards in the New National Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership (ELCC, 2006), New National ISLLC Standards (2008), New National Educational Leadership Program Standards (ELCC, 2011), New National Standards: Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL, 2015), and the most recent, New National Leadership Preparation Standards (NELP).

Change is frequently not comfortable nor is it easy. Change requires an investment in the learning curve and the willingness to accept that it sometimes takes hard work to achieve positive outcomes. However, our society is inundated with change, from the huge changes brought on by new and different government leaders to small and irritating changes like new Facebook settings. The result is an almost automatic rejection of the concept of change without consideration of the need for it or the potential outcomes.

There are few places that this is more evident than in special education. Laws, curriculum, standards, certification requirements, graduation requirements, state aide,

federal programs, reimbursements, and countless additional changes roll out constantly. Educators and educational leaders can barely learn a new “system” before it is replaced by another. Professional development is dominated by learning each new, individual change handed down from the education department at the government level.

In her 2003 dissertation examining how educational administrative programs prepare principals in special education issues, Witt surveyed ninety-four department chairs in educational administration. Survey questions collected data on basic demographics, course offerings, respondent’s knowledge of licensure and course requirements in various programs within the building (general as well as special education), and the degree to which respondents believed that a variety of special education laws and mandates should be addressed in administrative preparation programs. Witt’s findings indicated that, while respondents valued inclusion of special education topics and perceived that leadership programs did address key special education issues (with the exception of identification and evaluation), they also perceived a need to improving the educational leadership programs to better prepare administrators for special education issues.

A task force on principalship by the Institute for Educational Leadership (2000) investigated the changing roles of school building leaders and found that the profession had not changed to meet new and increasing demands (p.3). Pazey, Cole, and Garcia (2012) stated, “Given that special education has been a legislated reality of public schools for more than 35 years, scant attention has been paid to the subject within leadership discourse” (p.5).

Investigation of special education leadership and its link to teacher attrition and student outcomes began saturating the literature, questioning whether special education deserved a special place in administrative preparatory programs (Leibfried, 1994; Quigney, 1997; Katsiyannis, Conderman, & Franks, 1996, Goor, Schwenn, & Boyer, 1997, and Billingsly, 2005).

More than ever before, special educators required the help and support of building administrators. Unfortunately, most building-level administrators were not familiar with special education students, disability-specific issues, management challenges, and applicable laws. In fact, unless an administrator had background or prior experience working with students with disabilities, they were unprepared for these challenges because their administrator preparation programs contained little, if any, special education-specific content. Breton and Donaldson (1991) stated that many school administrators “report that they have received very little, if any, training in supervising resource teachers and that they feel inadequate u the performance if that task.” Asperdon (1992) reported that more than 85% of all school building leaders believed that additional, formal training in special education was needed, and over 40% of all school building leaders had no training in special education.

Senge (2012) summed up the problem in only a few words, “many school administrators are drowning in crises” (p. 123). All day, every day, school administrators are busy fielding calls from parents, handling discipline issues, performing observations, attending meetings, amid the myriad of other tasks that are either part of their regular daily schedule or interrupting that schedule. They have to make snap decisions and respond to each crisis as it arises. Senge says that this type of situational crisis

management can create more problems as it seeks to find solutions to individual problems instead of seeking ways to prevent them in the first place. “The discipline of Systems Thinking,” Senge (2012) says, “provides a different way of looking at problems and goals – not as isolated events, but as components of larger but less visible structures that affect each other” (p.124). Senge also proposes “we tend to focus on snapshots of isolated parts of the system. And wonder why our deepest problems never get solved” (1990). Goodman (2016) proposes that Systems Thinking is a “sensitivity to the circular nature of the world we live in; an awareness of the role of structure in creating the conditions we face; a recognition that there are powerful laws of systems operating that we are unaware of; a realization that there are consequences to our actions that we are oblivious to.”

For this to be possible, school administrators need to be taught from the onset to look at the school as a system and to realize that the traditional method of distributing responsibility for individual departments among various individuals fractures the system as a whole. Lowe and Brigham (2000) concluded, “If we accept the notion that principals are their schools’ instructional leaders, we must not exclude special education from that system.”

Goodman (2016) pointed out that the long-term benefits of Systems Thinking involves moving from observing events or data to identifying the underlying assumptions and structures that drove them. In this way, we begin to understand what changes are necessary to change long-standing, chronic problems.

Short (2004) performed a study to examine three issues regarding school administrators and special education; the level of knowledge they possessed, how was the

knowledge acquired, and how is that knowledge applied in the school building. Five professionals in the field of special education examined a 20-question assessment of special education issues and law. The assessments were reviewed for fairness and validity. Once approved, the assessment was given to 25 colleagues of the researcher. Once rated, the 5 highest scoring participants, now known to possess knowledge of special education issues, were then interviewed to determine where they got their knowledge and how it was used in their buildings.

Interestingly, the administrators show to have the greatest knowledge of special education issues reported little formal training in their administrative preparation programs. Participants reported gaining their knowledge by building relationships with personnel in their building who had educational backgrounds in special education.

Boscardin, Weir, and Kusek (2010) investigated state credentialing requirements for administrators of special education. Surprisingly, although teachers of individuals with disabilities were required to have specialized training and certification in special education in all 50 states in 1975, only 27 states required some type of licensure, certification, or endorsement to be an administrator of special education. The authors designed their 2010 investigation to update the 1975 data regarding the number of states offering licenses, certificates, or endorsements for administrators of special education. Links to an online survey with 17 questions were sent out to state directors of special education in all states and Washington, D.C. Considering that this study was conducted post-IDEA (2004), NCLB (2001), and RTTT (2009), each adding increased requirements for students with disabilities, and accountability for special educators and administrators,

a surprising number (24) still did not have separate special education administrative credentialing.

Of the 27 states and territories who did have a separate credential for special education administrators, five offered endorsements, 12 required certificates, seven required a license, and only three required a hybrid license combining general and special education endorsements.

The authors also queried the 27 locations who had credentialing requirements to see how many states incorporated the administrator of special education standards developed in 2009 by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). These standards included: program development and organization (PDO), evaluation (E), research and inquiry (RI), professional development and ethical practice (PDEP), collaboration (C), and leadership and policy (LP). Of the 27, nine incorporated all the standards, 11 did not incorporate any, and the remaining seven incorporated some.

The most shocking aspect of these studies and their findings are that they did not change in over 25 years. Monteith (2016) cited several studies, including one from Asperdon (1992), in which the researcher found that over 40% of principals had never had any special education training. Over 85% felt that training in special education was necessary for administrative effectiveness and, despite their lack of training, over 75% of principals surveyed had responsibility for supervising special education teachers in their schools (p. 3).

Sirotnik and Kimball (1994) performed an interview-style study of practicing principals in the Pacific Northwest and published select transcripts of the interviews. When asked questions regarding training in special education, who was the most

knowledgeable person in the building about special education issues, how funds were allocated to special education programs, and who made the decisions about special education placements, the most frequently given answers were “very little”, “I don’t know”, “not at all”, and “I can’t say that I was prepared to do this.”

Sirotnik and Kimball concluded that, based on their interviews, there were clearly two “houses” within the buildings; special education and regular, and that the teachers in each house were often the only ones with a thorough knowledge of the issues, management, and laws regarding their populations.

Research question 2: To what extent do secondary school building leaders demonstrate adequate knowledge of special education program administration, based on their pre-service and in-service training?

“To empower people in an unaligned organization can be counterproductive. If people do not share a common vision, and do not share common mental models about the business reality within which they operate, empowering people will only increase organizational stress and the burden of management to maintain coherence and direction” (Senge, 1990).

Historically, the role of the school building leader was clearly defined as a building manager and disciplinarian (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Elliot & Riddle, 1992; Quigney, 1997, and Leibfriend, 1984). The assumption and practice was that the school building leader delegated responsibility for students, curriculum, and classroom management to department chairpersons and classroom educators while s/he was directly responsible for more business-related duties such as budgets, overseeing maintenance, and communicating with district office administrators and boards of education. It was

typically only when student behaviors could not be handled within the classroom or a significant staffing problem arose that the school building leader became involved. Concerning special education, the school building leader was historically even more removed, as the students, their programs, staff, and teachers, were self-contained.

Much has changed in the years since IDEA required that students with disabilities could not only not be excluded from education in general, but that they were entitled by Public Law (P.L) 94-142 to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. This meant that students with disabilities were not only brought into mainstream public schools, but that they had to be educated, to the maximum extent possible, in mainstream classrooms with mainstream peers (O'Reilly & Squires, 1985).

Oversight for the special education department tended to be at the district office level. "District office administrators have historically managed special education programming, staffing, training, financing, testing, and facilities, but the burden of managing special education policies and practices is increasingly placed on the shoulders of the principals" (Patterson, Marshall, & Bowling, 2000, p. 10). Fifteen years later, Lynn (2015) reported "Many school systems rely on one director of special education to lead all of the special education programs in all schools for the entire system" (p. 6). School building leaders found that they were not called upon as final arbiters on matters related to student educational plans (IEPs), section 504 decisions for support services and programs, due process hearings when litigation was initiated, and IDEA compliance overall (Bateman & Bateman, 2001). Where having a person or department to go to for assistance might seem like a good solution, Williams (2015) found that "Principals who used the special education director and/or special education central office supervisors as

resources of information scored significantly lower on overall knowledge than principals who responded that they did not use the special education director as an information source” (p.50).

Over the past 30 years, research has repeatedly shown the connection between the direct involvement of school building leaders and student achievement, and led to an increase in the perception of principal as instructional leader (Brieve, 1972; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Peterson & Deal, 1998). According to Murphy (1994), “data indicate that school reform has increased the principals' work load as well as expanded the repertoire of skills they need to function effectively” (p. 23). However, it is not only the workload that has changed and complicated the role of school building leaders. Accompanying the change from 'manager/disciplinarian' to 'leader' was the need for a thorough knowledge of the intricate and changing laws that govern special education students, their curriculum, placement, and graduation requirements. In an increasingly litigious society, ignorance of these laws could cost the districts significantly, not only in settling individual lawsuits, but also by eroding trust between district administrators and parents of students with severe disabilities, leading to even more litigation (Mathis, 2005).

Educational leadership is ranked as the key variable associated with effective schools; but the principal of an effective school must be the leader for all programs within the school—including special education services (Gersten, Keating, Harniss, & Yovanoff, 2001). Without a solid understanding of special education and the regulations and mandates of IDEA and NCLB, school building leaders cannot effectively administer special education programs. (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; NAESP, 2001; Valente, 1998).

School building leaders' knowledge and competence in special education has also been linked to special education teacher attrition. The literature indicated that the school building leader's knowledge of and support for the work of special educators is critical to recruiting and retaining special educators (Billingsly, 2005; Wald, 1998).

Although inclusion has been a focus of recent school reform, many principals are still unfamiliar and uncomfortable with its concept and practice (Brotherson, Sheriff, Milburn, & Schertz, 2001). Crooner, Tochtermann, and Garrison-Wade quote Anderson (1999). "Despite the implication for school administrators to be trained in special education laws and policies, most school administrators have received little, if any, training related to special education in their leadership preparation training" (p. 5). This lack of training has a deep impact on more than just special education students. Lack of administrative support has also been cited as a cause for teacher "burnout" and attrition. Coleman (2001) asserts that when administrators are knowledgeable about special education programs and necessary supports, teachers feel that their load has been lightened, but when this is not the case, problems emerge. Kouzes and Posner (1995) contended that the most significant factors affecting competent leadership comes from the knowledge administrators have in areas that call for decision-making authority and responsibilities. However, as cited by Wilcox and Wigle (2001), principals consistently overestimated their competency and knowledge in special education and when asked, most school principals do not feel adequately schooled in the legal and curricular aspects of special education.

Rascoe (2012) studied the educational background and knowledge of special education issues of high school principals in Virginia public schools. Using Likert-style

surveys. Rascoe collected information from ninety-eight principals. Rascoe's survey contained questions regarding basic demographics, knowledge-based questions, asked for responses to given scenarios, and contained questions regarding administrator's attitudes towards specific special education issues.

Rascoe's results found that administrators with background training in special education scored higher on knowledge of education law, had more positive attitudes toward inclusion, and were able to respond appropriately to placement, curriculum, and management issues unique to students with disabilities in their mainstream, public schools. Administrators without special education backgrounds were able to seek and apply knowledge appropriately on a case by case basis, but they did not feel as competent to handle these issues.

These factors highlight the growing need for integrated administrative training and licensure programs to require special education-specific coursework, and practicum, and/or prior experience in special education to adequately prepare school building leaders to address the unique needs of the special education programs, staff, and students in their buildings.

Research Question 3: To what extent do secondary school building leaders believe that they were adequately prepared by their administrative preparation programs to assume leadership for special education programs, services, and staff?

"If we see each problem—be it water shortages, climate change, or poverty—as separate, and approach each separately, the solutions we come up with will be short-

term, often opportunistic, “quick fixes” that do nothing to address deeper imbalances” (Senge, 2008).

Stevenson (2002) investigated what elementary and middle school principals in Illinois with and without specific special education certification identified as competence necessary to perform the day to day administration of special education programs. The surveys asked participants to read through a list of Standards for Special Education Administrators and select ten items that they considered most important and rank them in order of their perceived importance. Sixty administrators responded. Although respondents reported “adequate preparation” as one of the top, critical areas for special education administration, more than half of the participants reported having little to no training in special education. Principals who reported having special education training, also reported having responsibility for a greater number of special education students and programs. Stevenson postulated that this could indicate that, either administrators with special education training made sure that special education programs were appropriately administered, or that administrators with special education training were more likely to be placed in buildings with greater special education populations. The findings of this study revealed that administrator preparation programs in Illinois did not contain sufficient coursework and preparation in special education issues n that schools relied on administrators with previous backgrounds in special education to lead their special education populations when available.

Smith and Colon (1998) wrote that despite research stretching back more than 20 years after Public Law 94-142 guaranteed individuals with disabilities FAPE, NASSP field administrators claimed that “they do not understand special education, they have no

desire to understand special education, and they delegate the responsibility whenever possible" (p.40). Goor et al. (1997) stated that "principals often feel unprepared for their roles in the administration of special programs in their schools and thus may be unaware of the extent of their responsibilities, or they may delegate their duties to other personnel in the building" (p. 133). According to Ingesby (2014), "in addition, the majority of beginning principals reported significant dissatisfaction with their administrative preparation program and indicated a high need for additional administrator training in special education".

Current professional literature and studies continue to restate the same issues. Lynn (2015) stated that "it is important that leadership of special education be included in the discourse of educational leadership as it is vital, not only to students with special needs, but also to the school as a whole" (p. 6-7). Lynn also cited McHatton, Boyer, Shaunessy, and Terry (2012), stating that "while there is little formal coursework related to special education in principal preparation programs, there is also little professional development being taken by principals on the subject of special education" (p. 7).

Ingesby (2014) gathered research establishing that "principals receive little to no training in leading special education" (p. 17), and set out to design and implement a professional development workshop called Principals Utilizing Leadership in Special Education to address the lack of pre-service training. Ingesby reported that leadership for students with disabilities can be problematic because of principals' "lack of their own efficacy about their special education leadership role, unfamiliarity about the unique cultural features of special education, and a lack of technical competence for special education" (2014, p. 1). According to Ingesby, most school building leaders see special

education as an area of need and would appreciate professional development, coursework, or training. Inglesby went on to reference Montieth's 1994 study which found that more than 95% of participants in a multi-state study of 120 administrators stated that such training would benefit them. Protz (2005) surveyed administrators in one county serving approximately 3,200 students with disabilities. The survey queried their legal knowledge and their perception of their preparation to administer special education programs. Fifty-one percent of the respondents "strongly agreed" that additional training in special education law was needed. Only 2% disagreed (pp. 19-20).

DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) examined anonymous surveys returned from 1,543 principals and assistant principals in Virginia. The surveys asked respondents about five areas: preparation for principalship, conditions of employment, problems and issues confronting principals, and the changing role of the principal. The researchers stated that school building leaders reported the need for additional knowledge and skills, and that principals identified receiving help administering special education programs as their greatest need: "Given the complexity of the principal's job, rising expectations for both student and professional performance, and increased accountability and public scrutiny, it is not surprising that fewer teacher leaders are choosing career paths that result in administrative positions" (p. 13).

Systems Thinking emphasizes the dangers of fragmenting the training and responsibilities of school administrators. The serious lack of training in special education issues does not impact only the students with disabilities in a school system, but the lack of knowledge of special education issues and laws negatively impact other areas of the system such as staffing, scheduling, budgets, discipline, and litigation.

Research Question 4: To what extent do secondary school building leaders demonstrate positive or negative attitudes toward special education and the additional responsibilities that accompany special education issues?

“Breakthroughs come when people learn how to take the time to stop and examine their assumptions” (Senge, 2005).

Jones (2015) says “states must nurture a mindset in education leaders that motivates them to question established ways of working and pursue new paths forward when existing practices do not lead to desired results. This mindset is what determines administrator’s attitudes towards special education. In *the Unspecial Place of Special Education in Programs that Prepare School Administrators*, Sirotnik & Kimbal state, “This (lack of special education in schools that prepare school administrators) is reflected in the attitudes of students and faculty involved in administrator preparation, and in the recollection of practicing school principals” (p.625)

Multiple studies cite the principal’s ability to oversee effective special education services as being dependent on their attitude (Inglesby, 2014; Bargerhuff, 2001).

In 1998, Barnett and Monda-Amaya sent anonymous surveys to 115 randomly selected principals in Illinois. The survey instrument was divided into four sections and asked questions about definitions, leadership styles, and inclusion of students with special needs in mainstream classes. Answers were codified to protect respondent identities. Interpretation of the surveys led the researchers to conclude that respondents felt that inclusion “could work in their schools, but were not convinced that all children should be included in regular classrooms and that they did not believe that teachers and school

communities were adequately prepared to support the implementation of inclusive educational practices” (p. 189).

McCarthy and Soodak (2007) interviewed nine public school administrators identified as being in charge of discipline in their high school buildings. The study examined how administrators in these schools negotiated between the behaviors and discipline issues of students in general education in an era of zero tolerance, and the behaviors and discipline of students with disabilities (SWD) whose placements afford them legal procedural safeguards designed to examine and address their behaviors and discipline in the context of their disability. The authors chose high school buildings based on the perception that they are more likely to have more serious behaviors and discipline issues than younger grades. The interviews were recorded and transcribed at a later time. The authors describe the Manifestation Determination Hearing (MDH); a meeting held once a student with a disability has been suspended multiple times for the same behavior. The purpose of the MDH is to determine if the student’s behavior is related to (a manifestation of) his/her disability. If it is not determined to be related, the student may be disciplined according to the school’s code of discipline for all other students. If, however, the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the student’s disability, the student cannot be disciplined for the behavior. Instead, the MDH is meant to lead to a Committee on Special Education meeting at which the committee is to determine the cause of the behavior, come up with plan to address the behavior, and/or consider a placement in which the behavior would be less likely to occur.

In their study, however, McCarthy and Soodak found that although administrators were aware of, and understood the philosophy behind the differences in disciplinary

procedures for students with and without disabilities, administrators were more likely to respond to disciplinary situations in ways that were better suited to the general good than to react in a way that addressed the rights of the SWD. In fact, one building reported that they reduced the disciplinary tension between students with and without disabilities by reducing the number of SWD in the building.

Manifestation Determination Hearings were not perceived as effective to the interviewees. According to the interviews, if a behavior was determined to be based on the student's disability, resulting procedures to limit or extinguish the behavior were not seen as effective. Suggestions for alternate, more restrictive placements were expensive and funneled money from the district's budget, resulting in the SWD remaining in the placement which might have been the cause of the behavior in the first place.

Administrators interviewed voiced issues of problematic relationships between the school and the parents of the SWD, conflicts between administrators and parents of students without disabilities who received harsher punishments for similar/same behaviors, and dissatisfaction between building administrators and special education administrators/superiors who return SWD back to the schools without addressing the behaviors.

Harris (2009) stated that "In order for a school to effectively address the needs of its special education population, the principal must display a positive attitude and commitment to the inclusion practices and pose the skills and knowledge that lead the staff to create an inclusive learning environment" (p.32). Peterson and Deal (1998) stated that "Schools that embrace rather than fear organizational change are more successful in implementing new initiatives." In 2003, the Council for Exceptional Children wrote, "It

takes a strong instructional leader to create a positive learning climate that embodies a unifying philosophy of respect for all children and stakeholders in the total school community (p.9.). Bargerhuff's (2001) study examined how principal's leadership qualities and attitudes influenced inclusion in their schools. The study found that that the principals studied were able to foster and promote successful inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classes through the establishment of a vision that included trust, respect, and cooperation. Inglesby states "such leadership attitudes can permeate the entire school community" (p.7.).

Schools That Learn (2012), included contributions and essays from educators and organizational change leaders. One such contribution was "We Dance Together", by Candee Basford. Ms. Basford tells about a time that she went on a field trip to the zoo with her daughter, Katie and Katie's class. Everyone was reported to be happy until the bus stopped at a separate, special education building, where students with mild developmental disabilities boarded the bus with their teachers. Students and chaperones from the mainstream building groaned. "All of the children on the bus got up and moved to the back so they wouldn't have to sit with 'those' kids" (p. 195). The remarkable thing was that Ms. Basford's daughter was a child with Down syndrome who was included in mainstream classes, in a mainstream public school, and had more significant disabilities than the children in the special education class. Despite her disability, Katie was not considered one of "those kids" because they knew her. She was a part of their class, their school, and their "system".

The principal's attitude toward special education and the needs of students with disabilities directly affects the success of the special education programs (Burrello,

Schrup, & Barnett, 1992; Liebfried, 1984). The level of preparation and knowledge that principals hold of special education has been linked to principal's attitudes and organizational practices of special education. According to Milson (2006) Praisner (2003) suggested that the attitudes of school principals "could result either in increased opportunities for students to be served in general education or in limited efforts to reduce the segregated nature of special education services" (p. 136). Milson summarized Praisner (2003) as saying that principals with positive attitudes were more likely than principals with negative attitudes to recommend inclusive educational placements for students with disabilities.

Interestingly, Praisner's study also found that teachers, counselors, and principals who had prior experience with students with disabilities were more likely to be involved in special education planning and more likely to encourage inclusion.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Peter Senge's Systems Thinking. As special education programs, students, and issues are but pieces of the entire system known as public education, evaluation of the extent to which school building leaders perceived their preparedness for special education students, programs, and issues was examined by this researcher through this lens.

Systems Thinking is a means of recognizing the interconnectedness of parts of a system and understanding that no one part can be examined accurately without considering the whole. Nor can the whole be examined without considering all the parts. Systems Thinking understands that no part is ever outside of the system and that, in some way, all parts impact all others (Senge, 1990).

A Systems Thinking approach guided this research in that the researcher examined special education leadership within the total system of the school, gathering literature and research that represented school leadership from multiple positions. This research sought the perceptions of all secondary administrators regardless of background or specialty. This researcher expected participants with backgrounds in special education to consider themselves better prepared to lead schools with special education populations, but also sought the input of participants without special education backgrounds to determine if there was a perception that additional coursework at the SBL level would have prepared them better for their roles as school building leaders.

Research into the number of special education-specific coursework in New York State approved SBL programs certainly shows a lack of specific representation for special education issues. The lack of special education content and/or practica in administrative preparation programs on the special education population in mainstream public schools clearly demonstrates that this field is generally excluded from discussions of the public education system. Not only is it an increasingly important area of a building-level administrator's job responsibilities, but it also has the potential to affect other areas within the system. Several of these areas are: budget, complying with state and federal mandates, personnel requirements, safety, and teacher and administrator APPR.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This chapter includes procedures that were used in the study to collect and analyze data regarding administrative preparation programs for school building leaders in Long Island secondary schools. The researcher used quantitative research methods to investigate the special education specific coursework currently required in administrative preparation programs. Qualitative research methods were used to see the extent to which secondary school building leaders perceive whether their preparation program adequately prepared them for special education students and issues in the building.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate the special education-specific content in administrative certification programs on Long Island and to determine the extent to which secondary school building leaders feel they were adequately prepared for the special education students and issues they encountered in their mainstream buildings.

The research was guided by the following questions:

Specific Research Questions

1. To what extent do school leadership preparation programs contain coursework and/or practicum specific to special education program administration?
2. To what extent do secondary school building leaders demonstrate adequate knowledge of special education program administration, based on their pre-service and in-service training?

3. To what extent do secondary school building leaders believe that they were adequately prepared by their administrative preparation programs to assume leadership for special education programs, services, and staff?
4. To what extent do secondary school building leaders demonstrate positive or negative attitudes toward special education, based on their pre-service and in-service training?

Research Method

Quantitative data were collected manually regarding historical trends in school-age enrollment in both general education and special education to determine the need for special education-specific knowledge for building level administrators. Data were collected from the New York State Education Department website (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/statistics/public/>)

Quantitative data were also collected regarding administrative preparation programs. Programs examined were chosen from New York State Department of Education's inventory of registered programs offering certification in Educational Administration/Educational Supervision. (<http://www.nysed.gov/COMS/RP090/IRP2BB>). Course offerings, mandated and elective, were examined on college or university public websites with the purpose of finding the number of required courses that focused specifically on special education students and issues.

Population and Sample

To keep the sample relatively similar in size, and because only special education programs, students, and programs were examined, the researcher chose to survey

principals and assistant principals from secondary buildings (middle school/junior high and secondary school) from the 103 school districts on Long Island who identified as having secondary-level buildings. Demographics considered were: gender, years teaching, education and background, the presence of a special education population in building and the training, background, experiences, perceptions, and responsibilities of the principal and assistant principal(s) in each building. Socioeconomic status, race, religion, and other personal attributes were not considered for student populations or school building leaders.

Elementary schools, schools that had no special education population, and schools that had only specialized, self-contained, special education buildings with no general education component were not included in the sample.

The total sample surveyed included 674 secondary principals and assistant principals from 103 Long Island school districts identified as having secondary buildings. Participants were selected and email addresses were collected from school district websites and SCOPE Educational Services directories of Suffolk and Nassau County Public Schools (<http://www.scopeonline.us/publications.php>).

Of the 150 individuals who completed, or partially completed the survey, 51 (32.69%) identified as secondary building principals, 102 (65.38%) identified as secondary building assistant principals, and 3 (1.92%) participants identified themselves as “Other”.

Information on the required content and curriculum of New York colleges and universities that offer SBL accreditation was gained through the publicized program content supplied by each school on its public website. Specific schools, professors, and

staff were not surveyed, as only program content was examined and not the perceptions of individuals having any position within the accrediting institution.

Instruments

As this study was designed to build on previous studies in other states, the *Principal's Knowledge and Perceptions of Special Education Regulations Survey* was amended and utilized with permission for this study (Rascoe, 2007; Williams, 2015). This study consisted of 35 questions in the areas of school building leader's preparation. The survey instrument was divided into five sections:

- Section 1: Demographics—Job title, school level, gender, employment background (9 multiple choice questions).
- Section 2: Formal Training—University/College administrative preparation program: degree, emphasis, and special education coursework (6 multiple choice questions).
- Section 3: Current Assignment—Special education populations (6 multiple choice or “yes”/“no” questions).
- Section 4: Perceptions and attitudes about the adequacy (or lack thereof) of administrative program vis-à-vis special education students, issues, academic requirements, behaviors, and management (9 Likert Scale questions, “Strongly Disagree” = 0, “Strongly Agree” = 10).
- Section 5: Special education knowledge: Laws, programs, procedures (5 Likert Scale questions, “Strongly Disagree” = 0, “Strongly Agree” = 10).

Williams (2015) amended the previous Rascoe survey to update language, special education-specific jargon, and to make the questions less wordy and more suitable for an

online survey. This research added additional questions about special education-specific coursework taken in the respondent's administrative preparation program. Demographics were collected through multiple-choice questions (Sections I and II). Likert scale questions (Sections III, IV, and V) where respondents responded to a given question or scenario by moving a slider from "Strongly Disagree" (0), to "Strongly Agree (10)

Procedures

The survey instrument was developed in Survey Monkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com>) by utilizing and adapting instruments previously used by Rascoe (2007) and Williams (2015). The similarity of the instrument and similar sample population examined in different areas of the United States over a span of 10 years increases the external validity of the results.

Survey research was used to collect information about the special education-specific content of building leadership accreditation programs, the perceptions of secondary school building leaders regarding their administrative roles and duties regarding special education programs, students, and staff in their mainstream buildings. Also, school building leaders' perceptions of their administrative preparation programs and the extent to which they feel that the program adequately prepared them for special education issues in their buildings were included.

The advantage of using surveys was the ability to distribute them electronically and reach a greater number of participants than could be gained through interviews. An introductory email was sent that explained the study, its types of questions, and to assure participants that their answers would remain anonymous. The surveys completed online and took 5-15 minutes. Follow-up emails were sent after one week those who either did

not complete the survey or those who only partially completed the survey. A third, final email was sent one week later.

Threats to internal validity were the length of time an individual has been an administrator, the size and makeup of the special education populations in his/her building, accessibility to an on-site special education-specific administrator and, most importantly, the ability of the school building leader to recall his/her training programs and to be able to distinguish knowledge gained in those program from knowledge learned on-the-job. An additional threat to internal validity was the use of course titles alone to indicate special education content in college and university on-line SBL program course offerings. It is possible that special education issues are contained and embedded in courses without special education-specific titles.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviations were calculated for the responses provided on the survey. The results for each research question are presented in this chapter.

Description of the Sample

SBL Curriculum of New York Colleges and Universities

Information on the required content and curriculum of New York colleges and universities that offer School Building Leader accreditation was gained through the publicized program content supplied by each school on its public website. Specific schools, professors, and staff were not surveyed as only the program content was examined, and not the perceptions of individuals at any position within the accreditation school. Fifty-three New York State colleges and universities were identified by New York State Department of Education's inventory of registered programs as offering advanced certification as a School Building Leader.

(<http://www.nysed.gov/COMS/RP090/IRP2BB>).

School Administrator Survey Respondents

The total sample surveyed included 150 secondary school building principals and assistant principals. The frequencies and percentages for the variables describing the sample are shown in Table 1. The majority of respondents were male (56%), in the role of Secondary Assistant Principal (65.4%), and in high schools (54.7%). The largest percentage of respondents had worked as administrator at another building, level, or district a part of their previous employment (28.7%), had 16-20 years in education

(28.7%), had 1-5 years in their current administrative position (54.7%), and had a Professional Diploma (School Building/District Administrator (SBL / SDL) as their highest degree (67.3%). The majority did not have any degree or endorsement in Special Education (86.0%). More than half reported receiving information concerning special education from a Special Education Department Lead teacher or Chairperson (52%).

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages for the Demographic Variables Describing the Sample

Demographic Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Position		
Other	3	1.9
Secondary Principal	50	32.7
Secondary Assistant Principal	98	65.4
Total	150	100.0
School Level		
High School	82	54.7
Middle School / Junior High School	68	45.3
Total	150	100.0
Gender		
Male	84	56.0
Female	66	44.0
Total	150	100.0
Previous Position		
Other (please specify)	5	3.3
Administrator at another building, level, or district	43	28.7
Secondary Principal	10	6.7
Secondary Assistant Principal	31	20.7
Department Chairperson	13	8.7
Teacher - General Education	33	22.0
Teacher - Special Education	8	5.3
Teacher - Special Area (reading, art, music, P.E., etc.)	5	3.3
Related Service Provider (speech, OT/PT, social worker, psychologist)	2	1.3
Total	150	100.0
Years in Education		
6-10 years	13	8.7

11-15 years	30	20.0
16-20 years	43	28.7
21-25 years	30	20.0
25+ years	34	22.7
Total	150	100.0
<hr/>		
Years In Current Administrative Position		
1-5 years	82	54.7
6-10 years	32	21.3
11-15 years	26	17.3
16-20 years	9	6.0
21-25 years	1	.7
Total	150	100.0
<hr/>		
Highest Degree Attained		
Master's	10	6.7
Professional Diploma (School Building/District Administrator (SBL / SDL)	101	67.3
Doctorate	39	26.0
Total	150	100.0
<hr/>		
Has Any Degree or Endorsement in Special Education		
Yes	21	14.0
No	129	86.0
Total	150	100.0
<hr/>		
Receive most of my information concerning special ed. from		
Other (please specify)	11	7.3
Directly from the State Department of Education	16	10.7
Memos from Central Office	6	4.0
Memos from an Office of Student Services located at Central Office	12	8.0
In-service training	7	4.7
Special Education Department Lead teacher / Chairperson	78	52.0
Workshops / Seminars	8	5.3
Peers	12	8.0
Total	150	100.0

Table 2 shows the frequencies and percentages for the variables describing special education student representation in the school, and their involvement in the program.

Over 30 % reported 11-15% of students with IEPs in their building, which is close to the State average of 13%. Approximately half reported > 6 self-contained special education

classes in the building (Classes containing ONLY students with disabilities). The majority were not primarily responsible for supervising the special education programs in their school (82.1%). Finally, 37.9% indicated that <25% best represents the level of responsibility they had for the special education programs, staff, and/or students with disabilities in their school.

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages for the Variables Describing Special Education in the School

Factor	<i>n</i>	%
Approximate percentage of students with IEPs in your building		
1-5%	6	4.1
6-10%	43	29.7
11-15%	50	34.5
16-20%	29	20.0
21-25%	6	4.1
>26%	3	2.1
Not Sure	8	5.5
Total	145	100.0
Number of self-contained special education classes in the building (Classes containing ONLY students with disabilities)		
0 classes	2	1.4
1 class	12	8.3
2 class	7	4.8
3 class	11	7.6
4 class	14	9.7
5 class	11	7.6
6 class	9	6.2
>6 classes	71	49.0
Not sure	8	5.5
Total	145	100.0
Primarily responsible for supervising the special education programs in my school		
Yes	26	17.9
No	119	82.1

Total	145	100.0
Best represents the level of responsibility you have for the special education programs, staff, and/or students with disabilities in your school		
Less than 25%	55	37.9
More than 25% but less than 50%	42	29.0
More than 50% but less than 75%	20	13.8
More than 75% but less than 100%	16	11.0
100%	12	8.3
Total	145	100.0

Research Question 1:

To what extent do school leadership preparation programs contain coursework and/or practicum specific to special education program administration?

An analysis of the program descriptions from the 53 colleges and universities in New York State that offered School Building Leadership certification revealed minimal preparation for school leaders regarding dealing with special education issues.

Only one, (Bank Street College) offered a Special Education Program option. Bank Street College also offered one special education-specific course in their regular SBL certificate program. St. Joseph's College offered two special education-specific courses. City University of New York - Lehman College, St. Bonaventure University, State University of New York - Courtland, Syracuse University, and Touro College each offered one special education-specific course. City University of New York - Queens College and State University of New York Buffalo offered one special education elective each. None of the remaining 49 colleges and universities advertised any course specifically titled to indicate special education issues although some of these topics might be included in courses with generic titles such as "*Special Issues in Contemporary*

Education,” “Legal and Policy Issues,” “Organizational Dynamics and Cultures of School Systems.”

Survey Questions 10-15 were used to provide further information regarding this research question, and the responses are summarized in Table 3. Approximately half of the respondents had no experience with individuals with disabilities before formal training in education (51.4%). The largest percentage had an undergraduate degree in General Education: Secondary (any subject) (48.7%) and 41.2% had not taken any undergraduate courses that dealt specifically with special education programs, laws, and/or students with disabilities. The majority (59.3%) had a degree in General Education: Secondary (any subject) and 27% took no graduate courses that dealt specifically with special education programs, laws, and/or students with disabilities. Fewer than half (44.6%) were required to take a course in their Administrative Preparation Program (SBL/SDL) that dealt specifically with special education programs, laws, or students with disabilities, consistent with the information on SBL program content as evidenced in program descriptions.

Table 3
Frequencies and Percentages for Survey Questions 10-15

Survey Item	<i>n</i>	%
Q10: Experience with individuals with disabilities before formal training in education		
Other (please specify)	2	1.4
Yes: family member or close friend with a disability	24	16.2
Yes: I have had non-educational, volunteer/work experience with individuals with disabilities	19	12.8
Yes: during experiences in student teaching / substitute teaching	27	18.2
No	76	51.4
Total	148	100.0

Q11: Area(s) of your undergraduate degree/s (Check all that apply)		
General Education: Elementary	23	15.3
General Education: Secondary (any subject)	73	48.7
Special Education: Elementary	8	5.3
Special Education: Secondary	7	4.7
Vocational / CTE	1	.7
Other	63	42.0
Q12: How many undergraduate courses were you required to take that dealt specifically with special education programs, laws, and/or students with disabilities		
0 courses	61	41.2
1 course	21	14.2
2 courses	20	13.5
3 courses	7	4.7
4 courses	3	2.0
5 courses	1	.7
6+ course	5	3.4
I don't recall	30	20.3
Total	148	100.0
Q13: Area(s) of your graduate degree/s (Check all that apply):		
General Education: Elementary	9	6.0
General Education: Secondary (any subject)	89	59.3
Special Education: Elementary	6	4.0
Special Education: Secondary	10	6.7
Vocational / CTE	1	.7
Other	51	34.0
Q14: How many graduate courses were you required to take that dealt specifically with special education programs, laws, and/or students with disabilities		
0 courses	40	27.0
1 course	38	25.7
2 courses	25	16.9
3 courses	7	4.7
4 courses	2	1.4
6+ course	8	5.4
I don't recall	28	18.9
Total	148	100.0
Q15: How many courses were you required to take in your Administrative		

Preparation Program (SBL/SDL) that dealt specifically with special education programs, laws, or students with disabilities		
0 courses	45	30.4
1 course	66	44.6
2 courses	28	18.9
3 courses	7	4.7
4 courses	1	.7
>6 courses	1	.7
Total	148	100.0

Approximately half of the survey respondents came to their educational careers with no experience with individuals with disabilities and 41.2% had not taken any undergraduate courses that dealt specifically with special education programs, laws, and/or students with disabilities. Less than half of respondents reported being required to take 1 course in their SBL certificate program that dealt specifically with special education programs, laws, and/or students with disabilities

Research Question 2:

To what extent do secondary school building leaders demonstrate adequate knowledge of special education program administration, based on their pre-service and in-service training?

As reported in Table 4, Survey Questions 20,21,31,32,33,34,35 addressed specific areas of knowledge regarding policies for special education students. More than half (62.8%) of the respondents indicated they did not have mandatory in-service / professional development to support them in meeting the specific needs of students with disabilities, however most (81.4%) had taken optional/voluntary in-service/professional development. The survey did not request information on the nature and extent of the professional development.

The next set of questions related to knowledge of particular issues and policies. Roughly four-fifths (81.4%) indicated the following statement was true: *“Once a student is determined to be eligible for special education services, an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) must be developed within 30 calendar days.”* This statement was, however, false. According to the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education (2016), *“Within 60 school days of the receipt of consent to evaluate for a student not previously identified as having a disability, or within 60 school days of the referral for review of the student with a disability, the board of education shall arrange for appropriate special programs and services”* (200.4.e).

Regarding the statement, *“According to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), even if a student is classified with an emotional disability (ED), if they are found possessing something like a Swiss Army knife in school, they must be unilaterally removed from the school,”* three-fourths (72.6%) indicated, correctly, that this was false. According to the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education (2016), a student with a disability who is suspended for more than 10 consecutive school days, or for a series of suspensions that constitute a pattern of similar behavior, must be evaluated at a manifestation determination hearing to review the relationship between the student’s disability and the behavior” (201.4.a). Disciplinary action can be imposed if the relationship is not determined. If a relationship is determined, steps must be taken to conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement or modify a behavior intervention plan. For the statement, *“If a parent/guardian disagrees with the recommendations of the Committee on Special Education (CSE), the school may place the student in the CSE requested placement until the parent/guardian agrees or until an*

impartial hearing is held,” only half of the respondents correctly indicated this was false. In fact, if a parent disagrees with the recommendations of the CSE, state law provides for pendency in which the student continues the placement and services of the IE currently in place until the parent and school district come to agreement (NYS Education Department, 2002).

Roughly half (48.9%) correctly indicated the following statement was true: *“A student with an IEP who is in general education, mainstream classes is to be held to the same rules of conduct and is disciplined according to the same procedures as his/her non-disabled peers.”* This statement is false as the conduct and behavior of students with disabilities in any placement must be examined to determine if their conduct or behavior is a manifestation of their disability. Disciplinary action, a behavior intervention plan, or a change in placement might be determined as outcomes of that examination.

Finally, 65.9% correctly indicated the following statement was true: *“A Manifestation Determination Hearing is conducted after a student with a disability has violated school conduct rules multiple times. The purpose of the hearing is to review the reason for the behavior and consider a change in service or placement.”*

Table 4
Frequencies and Percentages for Survey Questions 20,21,31,32,33,34,35

Survey Item	<i>n</i>	%
Q20: I have had mandatory in-service / professional development to support me in meeting the specific needs of students with disabilities		
Yes	54	37.2
No	91	62.8
Total	145	100.0
Q21: I have taken optional/voluntary in-service/professional development to support me in meeting the specific needs of students with disabilities		
Yes	118	81.4

No	27	18.6
Total	145	100.0

Q31: Once a student is determined to be eligible for special education services, an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) must be developed within 30 calendar days

True	95	70.4
False	15	11.1
Not Sure	25	18.5
Total	135	100.0

Q32: According to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), even if a student is classified with an emotional disability (ED), if they are found possessing something like a Swiss Army knife in school, they must be unilaterally removed from the school

True	25	18.5
False	98	72.6
Not Sure	12	8.9
Total	135	100.0

Q33: If a parent/guardian disagrees with the recommendations of the Committee on Special Education (CSE), the school may place the student in the CSE requested placement until the parent/guardian agrees or until an impartial hearing is held

True	37	27.4
False	71	52.6
Not Sure	27	20.0
Total	135	100.0

Q34: A student with an IEP who is in general education, mainstream classes is to be held to the same rules of conduct and is disciplined according to the same procedures as his/her non-disabled peers

True	66	48.9
False	66	48.9
Not Sure	3	2.2
Total	135	100.0

Q35: A Manifestation Determination Hearing is conducted after a student with a disability has violated school conduct rules multiple times. The purpose of the hearing is to review the reason for the behavior and consider a change in service or placement

True	89	65.9
False	41	30.4
Not Sure	5	3.7

Total 135 100.0

Research Question 3:

To what extent do secondary school building leaders believe that they were adequately prepared by their administrative preparation programs to assume leadership for special education programs, services, and staff?

As seen in Table 5, Survey Questions 22-23 were used to answer this research question. Participants rated the statements on a Likert scale of 1 = *strongly disagree* to 10 = *strongly agree*; as such, the means, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, mode, and median were calculated. The items are organized by extent of agreement. The sample expressed agreement with the item related to the need for greater professional development, as evidenced by the high mean score, and the high mode. They did not feel adequately prepared during their leadership training, as demonstrated by the low ratings for Item 2. .

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics for Survey Questions 22-24

Item	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Median	Mode
There is a need for more on-going professional development for school administrators in the area of special education in my school district.	1.00	10.00	7.54	2.39	8	10
I believe that my educational background adequately prepared me to administer special education programs, staff, and students with disabilities.	1.00	10.00	4.70	2.77	5	1

Research Question 4:

To what extent do secondary school building leaders demonstrate positive or negative attitudes toward special education, based on their pre-service and in-service training?

As seen in Table 6, Survey Questions 24-30 were used to answer this research question. Participants rated the statements on a Likert scale of 1 = *strongly disagree* to 10 = *strongly agree*; as such, the means, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, mode, and median were calculated. The items are organized by extent of agreement. Overall, respondents reported highly positive attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities and indicated that their schools exceeded the legal mandates regarding providing inclusive curricula and programming. They did indicate, on average, that keeping up with legal mandates could be difficult, although most felt that the requirements were not burdensome. The average rating of agreement for the statement: “Special Education programs receive funding entitlements that take away from other programs at my school,” was 1.86 ($SD = 2.30$) with a range of 1 to 8.30; the most frequently occurring rating for this item was 1 and the median was 1.00. On average, participants disagreed with this statement

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Survey Questions 25-30

Item	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Median	Mode
Q25: The inclusion of students with disabilities is a core practice and valued in my school.	1.00	10.00	8.75	1.87	9.00	10
Q26: I strive to ensure that local and state curriculum standards are part of the general education curriculum and that all students with disabilities are included/	1.00	10.00	8.70	1.94	9.00	10

Q25: Students with disabilities are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities in my school.	1.00	10.00	9.11	1.92	10.00	10
Q25: The inclusion of students with disabilities is a core practice and valued in my school.	1.00	10.00	8.75	1.87	9.00	10
Q28: The practices and accommodations for students with disabilities in my school exceed legal limits.	1.00	10.00	6.22	3.31	7.00	10
Q29: The frequent changes in laws and legislation regarding students with disabilities are difficult to stay current with.	1.00	10.00	5.89	2.77	6.00	5
Q27: Administering the rights, accommodations, and entitlements for students with disabilities is necessary but burdensome.	1.00	10.00	4.32	3.25	5.00	1
Q24: Special Education programs receive funding entitlements that take away from other programs at my school.	1.00	8.30	1.86	2.30	1.00	1

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Introduction

This research was a study of secondary-level public school administrators' perceptions of the adequacy of their administrative preparation program in the areas of special education students, laws, procedures, and practices in Long Island school districts. This investigator also set out to examine School Building Leadership programs in New York State to determine the number of special education-specific coursework included in their on-line program descriptions and catalogs.

The first part of this study examined the extent to which school building leader (SBL) accreditation programs have addressed the specific challenges brought by special education in mainstream schools and the perception that such coursework would better prepare future building leaders for these issues. Secondary-level school building leaders were surveyed to examine their perception of their preparedness to meet the legal, maintenance, curricular, and staffing needs of the special education populations in their buildings.

This research indicates that, although some special education topics might be included and embedded within courses with more generic or inclusive titles (i.e. School Law), current School Building Leader certificate programs often do not contain special education coursework sufficient to prepare administrators for the specific laws, regulations, and management of special education populations in mainstream, public school buildings.

When examining the results of this research survey data, demographics clearly set the foundation. More than twice the number of respondents were assistant principals (65.4 %) than principals. The majority of respondents reported that they were not primarily responsible for the special education programs in their schools. More than half of respondents reported relying on the special education department lead teacher or chairperson in their building for specific information pertaining to special education rather than information direct from the State Education Department, memos from central office or office of student services, coursework, in-service training, or workshops/seminars.

Discussion

Research Question 1: To what extent do school leadership preparation programs contain coursework and/or practicum specific to special education program administration?

The literature reviewed in Chapter two presented two strong indicators of success leading schools that included students with disabilities; training in special education-specific issues (Senge, 2012; Lowe and Brigham, 2000; Protz, 2005; Monteith, 2016; Asperdon, 1992, Milson, 2006, and prior experience with students with disabilities (Milson,2006; Praisner, 2003). According to the results of this study, more than half of the surveyed respondents reported beginning their administrative careers having had no experience with individuals with disabilities, not being required to take any undergraduate courses that dealt specifically with special education programs, laws, and/or students with disabilities, and not having been required to take formal coursework

that dealt specifically with special education issues in their administrative preparation programs.

Through the lens of what Systems Thinking, this gap in knowledge and experience has the potential to disrupt the entire school system. If not anticipated, issues that commonly accompany special education programs (including but not limited to discipline, peer, staff, and administrative reactions to behaviors, staffing, curriculum, testing accommodations, and changes in graduation requirements) can affect other areas of the school system, resulting in escalated student discipline, staff attrition, aversive parental involvement, additional meetings, budgetary problems, state aide, and litigation.

Research Question 2: To what extent do secondary school building leaders demonstrate adequate knowledge of special education program administration, based on their pre-service and in-service training?

Results of this study were in line with McCarthy and Soodak's 2007 study regarding the disparity between administrative knowledge of special education laws and practices in public secondary schools. Nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that they were not mandated to engage in in-service training on special education-specific topics. When asked about their specific knowledge, respondents were likely to correctly respond to knowledge items related to school discipline, but were less knowledgeable about issues of identification, placement, and programming.

These deficits in knowledge could have a devastating effect on the entire school system even beyond the area of special education. Without knowledgeable leaders, students with disabilities chance issues such as misplacement, inappropriate discipline (or

lack thereof), and errors in coursework and training that could interfere with graduation or advancement.

Not every administrator needs to be responsible for every area of the school, and in larger buildings, tasks are typically shared among available administrators. However, in order for issues in one area not to overflow impact other areas, all administrators must have at least a basic knowledge of the interconnectedness of their areas of responsibility with those of the others.

Research Question 3: To what extent do secondary school building leaders believe that they were adequately prepared by their administrative preparation programs to assume leadership for special education programs, services, and staff?

Administrators surveyed were asked to rate, on a scale of 1-10, their perception that there was a need for on-going professional development in the area of special education and whether they believed that their educational background adequately prepared them for special education issues. A score of 1 indicated that they strongly disagreed and 10 indicating that they strongly agreed. The majority of respondents indicated that they strongly agreed (mode = 10) that there was a need for increased professional development in the area of special education in their district, and that they strongly disagreed (mode = 1) that their educational background adequately prepared them for the special education issues they encountered in their administrative positions. These results line up with the literature reviewed and mirrored Stevenson's 2002 study which also found that administrators in Illinois cited "adequate preparation" as one of the top, critical areas of need in special education administrations and found that

administrative preparation programs did not contain sufficient coursework to prepare administrators in this area. The sixteen years between Stevenson's study and the current one are significant. Stevenson reported that gaps in administrator preparation in special education were handled by districts placing administrators with less training in schools with smaller populations of students with disabilities. With the increasing mandates for students with disabilities to be placed in the least restrictive environment, and districts being monitored and cited for discrepancies in this area, districts can no longer sort student populations to match administrator experience, training, and competency.

Students with disabilities also challenge secondary systems as they are allowed to attend school until age twenty-one, two years beyond the point that most schools have curricular and elective options available, creating additional staffing, transportation, and curricular responsibilities.

Research Question 4: To what extent do secondary school building leaders demonstrate positive or negative attitudes toward special education, based on their pre-service and in-service training?

The surveys indicate generally positive attitudes towards special education. Administrators overwhelmingly agree that the constantly changing laws can be difficult, they also feel that the changes are worth the burden in the long run. These results reflect the findings of Patterson and Deal, 1998; Senge, 1990; Senge 2012, and Bargerhuff's, 2001, when they overwhelmingly discovered strong relationships between administrative attitudes, school success, teacher longevity, and student achievement.

This research and the research that has been done since the mid-1990's continues to call for administrators who understand the various systems at play within

their school system, have knowledge of all of the components and how they interact, and present a positive, supportive environment to the stakeholders within their system to encourage others to also embrace and contribute to the success of the system as a whole.

Limitations of The Study

The internal validity of a study can be best summed up as simply as asking questions such as, “So what?” Why was this research done? What was the driving issue or problem the study sought to expose, address, or examine? Will the results of the study be replicable? Will this research make a difference? Many factors can jeopardize the internal validity of a study (Ohlund and Yu, 2010). Factors that could have jeopardized the internal validity of this research included:

History: Regardless of attempts to stay current, school district and building administrators are inundated almost daily with changes in laws governing students with disabilities in recent history. Those who begin without a foundation of knowledge in special education will have a more difficult time, but legal and societal demands will force them to continue chasing the knowledge.

Maturation: A significant threat to internal validity was represented by the length of time between the respondent’s administrative preparation program and the survey. Many survey answers were recorded as “I don’t remember”. Other respondents may no longer be aware of what they learned in their accreditation program and what they picked up in the field and/or during professional development since certification.

Subject Selection and Experimental Mortality: Over 600 surveys were sent out to 103 school districts. Responses were anonymous. Only 150 surveys were complete and submitted. The balance of target districts and schools selected, with

consideration to such things as size, affluence, and percentage of special education populations was weakened by no knowing which districts the information came from. Surveys returned gave information only as to the approximate percentage of special education students in the respondent's school and the number of self-contained classes. No other identifiers were available for district/school comparison.

Testing: the effect that taking a test (the survey) has on a respondent wanting to "pass", even if anonymous.

Factors that can jeopardize external validity refer to the generalization of the study and its findings in the field as a whole. Senge would probably ask, "do the answers to specific question targeting one specific component of a system represent the interactions of that component with other parts or the system?"

Factors that could have jeopardized the external validity of this research were:

Interaction of the respondents with the variable: Surveys were sent to all secondary building administrators in schools identified as having special education programs or populations. The nature of the programs (i.e. inclusion vs, self-contained) could have had significant impact on the respondent's familiarity with, and responsibility for, those programs. Other districts might have administrators trained specifically to lead their special education programs. This research could not accurately identify if the respondent was a "special education" administrator in such a system.

Political popularity of special education laws and issues: Despite the anonymous nature of the surveys, respondents often feel that when they feel they should be knowledgeable about a particular topic, they may refrain from admitting that they don't.

Conclusions:

There is a clear and growing need for additional research in special education administration program offerings and their ability to adequately prepare building level administrators for their responsibilities in today's inclusive public-school buildings. Although this need has been well researched and well documented, this research and others before it shows that the content of administrative preparation programs has not evolved to adapt.

Examination of the course requirements for New York State colleges and universities offering SBL advanced certificate programs, and upon the survey answers of 150 school building leaders in secondary schools across Long Island, New York, support the need for increased special education content in school building leader programs in New York. School building leaders expressed overall positive attitudes towards special education in their positions in mainstream, public buildings. However, their lack of practical knowledge concerning special education law as applied to programs and management of students with disabilities in their buildings and their dependence on special education department lead teachers for information and updates concerning students with disabilities shows a decided lack of direct connection with a field of education law that changes frequently, sometimes daily.

Special education is a growing, complicated, expensive, and time-consuming aspect of public education. Special education services, laws, and issues can consume funding, time, and building resources. Special education litigation has increased as the number and complexity of students with disabilities are increasingly brought back into district schools from self-contained placements and accommodations must be made. The

only way to responsibly manage special education programs is to know the laws that govern special education, be able to anticipate the needs of students with disabilities, their staff, programs, and resources, and to stay current with the ever-evolving laws surrounding and supporting these students and programs. Even more important is that organizational theories and Systems Thinking expose how the lack of attention to these aspects of education affect so many other areas of the system as a whole.

The many aspects of preparation and responsibility require a greater wealth and breadth of administrative training and school building leaders can no longer depend on lead teachers, or chance acting on outdated or incorrect information that could lead to student/program failures and/or costly litigation.

Students with various and often complicated special needs are increasingly brought back into districts and given responsibility for the same rigorous academic requirements of their typical peers. At the same time, they come with individualized programs required to give them equal access to succeed among their non-disabled peers. Today's administrators can no longer be left to learn in the field. Administrative accreditation programs must adopt both the letter and intent of the Professional Standards for Education Leaders (2015), and create courses and fieldwork requirements specifically addressing the education, management, support, and staffing requirements for leading students with disabilities, their staff, and their programs as an integral part of the building system, not a sub-culture of it.

Colleges and Universities can no longer depend on one chapter in the School Law class, or anecdotal information in a single practicum seminar, to prepare SBL candidates adequately for building level administration. SBL candidates require

substantial training in the administration of special education programs, staff, and students. It is clear from research beginning in the 1980s and continuing to the present time, that administrative preparation programs should be regulated and required to build their SBL programs on the frameworks provided by the 2015 ISLLC Standards, with all coursework including the integrated issues within any building with a special needs population.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although research into the area of special education administration is plentiful and ongoing, a great deal of the research dates back to the foundations provided by IDEA, PL-94-142, and other landmark legislation. However, that legislation is in place, and has been for more than 30 years. More current research needs to be conducted to better understand the interconnectedness of special education training in administrative preparation programs and overall school stability, budgetary stability, staff, student, and community relationships, and especially, achievement for all students served by the school system. This is especially critical as legislation targeting special education programs continues to change, as often as on a monthly basis.

Research comparing the effectiveness administrators with educational background in areas of special education and administrators who had no formal training and learned “on the job” might identify more specific areas to target in preparation programs.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Three quarters of the respondents in this study have been in their current administrative positions for 10 years or less. It is reasonable to assume that these

administrators will be in their positions, or similar positions in other schools or districts, for quite a few more years. For these administrators, professional development in the area of special education administration needs to be created, consistently updated, and become a mandatory, yearly requirement in order to keep administrators current with the ongoing changes in the field of special education.

Simultaneously, administrative preparation programs must begin including special education specific coursework and practicum to prepare new administrative candidates for the issues they will be responsible for in today's inclusive schools. Only in this way will the educational system begin to run smoothly, fulfilling the legal and moral promise of a free and appropriate public education, in the least restrictive environment for all students.

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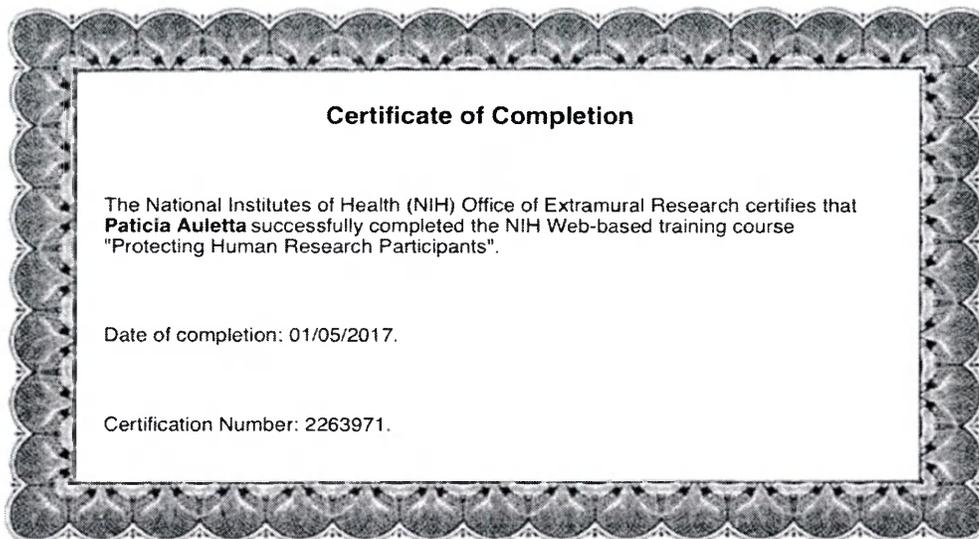
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Appendix 1

IRB Approval Memo



**ST. JOHN'S
UNIVERSITY**

MEMO

Institutional Review Board
Federal Wide Assurance: FWA00009066

Dr. Raymond DiGiuseppe
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Tel 718-990-1955
digluser@stjohns.edu

Date: February 13, 2018

To: Patricia Auletta

CC: Dr. Rene Parmar
Dr. Seokhee Cho
Dr. Autumn Cypres

Dr. Marie Nitopi
IRB Coordinator
Tel 718-990-1440
nitopim@stjohns.edu

Protocol # 0417-229

Protocol Title: High School Administrators' Perceptions of their Preparedness in the Areas of Special Education: Implications for School Administrative Preparation Programs

Please be advised that your human subject protocol has been approved as expedited by the IRB. You may begin your study.

As a reminder, SIU-IRB approval of research projects is valid for **one year only** from the original date of approval. Approval of the continuation of the research is possible on a yearly basis. A new proposal must be submitted upon request for renewal.

Best wishes for successful pursuit of this research.

****MARK YOUR CALENDAR TODAY FOR 1/13/18. YOU SHOULD SUBMIT YOUR APPROVAL FOR CONTINUATION ON THAT DATE AND NO LATER. YOU WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO COLLECT DATA MORE THAN TWELVE MONTHS FROM DATE OF APPROVAL WITHOUT AN EXTENSION GRANTED BY THE IRB. It is imperative that you keep this on file where it can easily be accessed. You will need to provide copies of this document when involved in further correspondence with the IRB. The IRB will provide you with an additional copy of this document only in the case of an emergency.****

Appendix 2

Educational Acronyms

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
APPR	Annual Professional Performance Review
CC	Common Core
CSE	Committee on Special Education
FAPE	Free & Appropriate Public Education
IEP	Individualized Education Program
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
RTTT	Race to the Top
PL-94-142	Education of All Handicapped Children Act, now codified as IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

Appendix 3

Timeline of Important Milestones in Special Education

1817	American Asylum for the Education and Instruction of the deaf and Dumb	First special education school in the United States, the American Asylum for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb (now called the American School for the Deaf), was established in Hartford.
1840	Law Mandating Compulsory Education	Rhode Island passed a law mandating compulsory education for all children. Compulsory education is education which children are required by law to receive and governments to provide.
1870	Association of Instructors of the Blind	The School for the Deaf and the School for the Blind offer comprehensive educational programs for hearing impaired and visually impaired students.
1886	American Association on Mental Deficiency	The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) (formerly the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR) is formed to advocate for handicapped people's rights.
1922	Council for Exceptional Children	The International Council for the Education of Exceptional Children is organized by a group of administrators and supervisors attending the summer session at Teachers College, Columbia University, and their faculty members on August 10, 1922.
1933	Cuyahoga Council for Retarded Citizen	Parental Advocacy Group composed of five mothers of children with mental retardation who came in Cuyahoga, Ohio to protest their children's exclusion from public schools. Led to the establishment of a special class for their children, even though the parents sponsored the class.
1939	Cuyahoga County Court of Appeals, Ohio	Ruled that the statute mandating compulsory attendance gave state department authority to exclude certain students.

1940	Beginning of the modern Special Education Movement & National Foundation for the Blind & American Federation of the Physically Handicapped	This decade is considered the beginning of the modern Special Education Movement. During World War II, many young soldiers sustained injuries that resulted in lifelong disabilities. The need for educational and employment opportunities and services for these young men created legislation that would precede Special Education legislation. *National Foundation for the Blind is formed and advocate for white cane laws and input from the blind on a variety of programs. *American Federation of the Physically Handicapped is formed -advocated for the end-of-job discrimination.
1943	Classification of Autism	The classification of Autism as introduced by Dr. Leo Kanner of Johns Hopkins University
1945	Public Law 176: National Employ the handicapped Week	Public Law 176 created more awareness for possibilities for employment of the "handicapped."
1946	Cerebral Palsy Society	Parents in NYC form the Cerebral Palsy Society.
1947	Perkins Braille Developed	The Perkins Braille is developed; printing of large type books is initiated.
1950	National Association for Retarded Citizens	ARC was founded to help identify children with disabilities and mental retardation and bring them out of their houses
1951	First institution for research on exceptional children	The first institution for research on exceptional children opened at the University of Illinois.
1954	Brown v. Board of Education & Social Security Act Amendment	The Supreme Court ruled that separating children in public schools on the basis of race unconstitutional. It signaled the end of legalized racial segregation in the schools of the United States, overruling the "separate but equal" principle set forth in the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson case.

1955	Council for the Exception Children's Journal.	Council for the Exception Children's Journal made a case for ending the segregation of disabled students.
1961	President's Panel on Mental Retardation	President John F. Kennedy appointed a special President's Panel on Mental Retardation.
1963	Association for Children with Learning Disabilities	Parents joined forces at a national conference held in Chicago in 1963 and formed the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities
1964	Civil Rights Act	Made discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin, and other characteristics illegal
1965	Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) & Amendments	President Johnson's legislative plan termed, "War on Poverty" established that children from low-income homes required more educational services" The act proved to be a catalyst for future educational legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Bilingual Education Act, and the Goals 2000: Educate America Act.
1966	Elementary and Secondary Education Act Amendments of 1966	National Advisory Council on Adult Education and Bureau of Education for the Handicapped established.
1968	Elementary and Secondary Education Act Amendments of 1968	Established programs to improve special education.
1970	Elementary and Secondary Education Act Amendments of 1970	Established a core grant program for local education agencies. Revised statement of purpose to include adults who had attained age 16 and had not graduated from high school.
1971	Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children, along with parents of children with mild to severe disabilities, sued the state and won their case to establish a free and appropriate education (FAPE) for all children with mental retardation between the ages the ages of 6 and 21 in Pennsylvania
1972	Mills v. District of Columbia Board of Education	The Mills suit brought on behalf of over 18,000 children in the District based on the 14th amendment and claimed that children with disabilities were excluded

		from public education without due process.
1973	Rehabilitation Act	The Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs conducted by Federal agencies, in programs receiving Federal financial assistance, in Federal employment, and in the employment practices of Federal contractors.
1974	Elementary and Secondary Education Act Amendments of 1974	Appropriate education for all children with disabilities. Community school program was added, State allotment revised, State plan expanded to include institutionalized adults.
1975	PL-94-142 - Education for All Handicapped Children Act	The EAHCA was intended to provide administrators with proof of compliance, teachers with formalized plans, parents with a voice, and students with an appropriate education. Along with assurances of nondiscriminatory evaluation, individualized educational planning, and education in the least restrictive environment.
1979	Armstrong v. Kline	Extended School Year (ESY) services: Armstrong v. Kline determined that the undisputed policy and practice of the Pennsylvania Department of Education of refusing to provide or fund the provision of a program of special education and related services in excess of 180 days per year to any handicapped student was in violation of Public Law 94-142.
1981	Espino v. Besteiro	Espino v. Besteiro concluded that placement in a "cube" was not the maximum extent appropriate to achieve peer interaction nor was the placement to the maximum extent practicable.
1982	Board of Education of Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley	Parents do not have a right to compel a school district to provide specific programs. The Rowley case is often cited by school districts for the general proposition that the school district or

		municipality need not provide "optimum" services, and need only provide services, which are "appropriate." FAPE
1983	Education for All Handicapped Children Act Amendments of 1983 Roncker v. Walter	This law allows for federal funding to create parent training and information centers (PIC) so that parents could learn how to protect the rights that PL 94-142 guarantees their child. PL 98-199 also provided financial incentives to expand services for children from birth to age 3 and the initiatives for transition services from school to adult living for students with disabilities.
1984	Hurry v. Jones & Irving ISD v. Tatro	State must give free door-to-door transportation service to the education program in which a student is enrolled. Medical Services are only excluded if they have to be administered by hospital or physician. Developed two-step analysis to determine related services
1986	Education for All Handicapped Children Act Amendments of 1986 & Alama Heights ISD v. State Board of Education & Max M. v. Illinois State Board of Education & Regular Education Initiative.	<p>Extended the guarantee to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to children with disabilities, ages 3-5.</p> <p>Established Early Intervention Programs (EIP) for infants and toddlers with disabilities, ages 0-2.</p> <p>Developed an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for each family with an infant/toddler with disabilities.</p> <p>Required ESY if a child experienced severe or substantial regression during the summer months in the absence of a summer program.</p>
1987	A.W. v. Northwest R-1 School District & Talking Textwrite	Congress provided limited resources to the states to implement the policy of educating all disabled students, and the sufficiency of that education must be evaluated in light of the available resources.
1988	Lachman v. Illinois State Bd. Of Ed. & Honig v. Doe & Spielberg v. Henrico	"stay put" provision prohibits schools from excluding students from classrooms for misconduct that is due

		their disability.
1989	Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education & Timothy W v. Rochester, NH School District & Hendricks v. Gilhool & Goals 2000 Summit.	Determines the least restrictive environment when segregated placement is appropriate. "Zero Rejection" Special Education classrooms have to be comparable to facilities available for children in regular classrooms.
1990	Education for All Handicapped Children Act Amendments of 1990 & Americans with Disabilities Act	EHA named changed to Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications. *P.L. 101- 336 Americans with Disabilities Act prevents discrimination based on ability
1993	Oberti and Rachel H. & Florence County S.D. four v. Carter & Zobrest v. Catalina Foothills S.D.	The central issue in this case concerns the appropriateness of an IEP which recommended placement of the child in a "segregated" program outside the child's "home" district.
1994	Parents of Student W	Due Process: Ten Day Rule. When a student poses a potential threat to others he may be suspended for up to 10 days. When suspension totals more than 10 days, this constitutes a change in placement. In addition, schools will have to judge whether handicapping condition is the cause and if so whether the student's current program and placement is appropriate. (Manifestation Determination)
1995	Poolaw v. Bishop	Requirement that schools provide individualized programs tailored to the needs of each child with disabilities must be balanced.
1997	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments Of 1997	Expanded parents right to be involved in decision-making and role in their child's IEP.

1999	Cedar Rapids Community School District v. Garret F.	Nursing as a related service. Services that can be provided in school by a nurse or layperson are excluded as medical services
2000	Children's Health Act	A long term study of children's health and development
2001	President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education	Recommended policies for improving the education performance of students with disabilities
2001	No Child Left Behind Act	<p>NCLB supports standards-based education reform based on the premise that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education.</p> <p>The Act requires states to develop assessments in basic skills. To receive federal school funding, states must give these assessments to all students at select grade levels. NCLB expanded the federal role in public education through further emphasis on annual testing, annual academic progress, report cards, and teacher qualifications, as well as significant changes in funding.</p>
2004	Assistive Technology Act & Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act	The "Tech Act," as it is sometimes called, funds 56 state programs designed to address the assistive technology needs of individuals with disabilities.
2010	Chapter 103 of the Laws of 2010 - APPR	A new Education Law §3012-c, establishing a comprehensive evaluation system for classroom teachers and building principals. The 2010 law required each classroom teacher and building principal to receive an annual professional performance review (APPR) resulting in a single composite effectiveness score and a rating of "highly effective," "effective," "developing," or "ineffective." Based upon student growth on State

		assessments or other comparable measures of student growth (20%), locally-selected measures of student achievement that are determined to be rigorous and comparable across classrooms as defined by the Commissioner (20%) and other measures of teacher/principal effectiveness consistent with standards prescribed by the Commissioner in regulation (60%).
2012	Race to the Top (RTTT)	Offers incentives to states willing engage in systemic reform to improve teaching and learning in America's schools, particularly in raising standards and aligning policies and structures to the goal of college and career readiness. RTTT included new, higher standards for all students, initiatives to improve teacher effectiveness, and the use of data to evaluate student, teacher, and administrative success.

Appendix 4

Letters of Consent – Rascoe and Williams

From: Patricia Auletta [mailto:patricia.auletta14@my.stjohns.edu]
Sent: Sunday, March 19, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Rascoe, Patricia (DOE)
Subject: Dissertation survey instrument

Ms. Rascoe,

My name is Trish Auletta and I am a doctoral student at St. John's University in New York. I am writing my dissertation on secondary school administrator's perceptions of their preparedness in the area of special education (implications for administrative training programs in NY).

I have read (and referenced) your 2007 dissertation on High School Principals Educational Background, Knowledge and Perceptions Related to Special Education, and was excited to see that your survey instrument not only mirrored many of the questions that I had come up with, but had so much more content that I believe would be very helpful in my study.

I was wondering if I could have your approval and permission to use your survey instrument in my study.

Thank you very much,

Trish Auletta
 Special educator & ESY principal
 Sachem Central School District, NY
 (631) 471-1789 (office)
 (631) 681-8664 (cell)

RE: Dissertation survey instrument
 Rascoe, Patricia (DOE) <Patricia.Rascoe@doe.virginia.gov>

Thu 3/23, 2:56 PM
 Patricia Auletta
 Survey Permissions

Ms. Auletta,

I am honored that you have reviewed my research. You have my permission to use my instrument as is or revised as necessary to suit your needs. Good luck with your program and let me know if I can assist you further.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Rascoe, Ed.D.
 Education Coordinator
 Office of Special Education Program Improvement
 Virginia Department of Education
 P. O. Box 2120
 Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120
 804-786-0581
 804-371-8796 (FAX)

From: Patricia Auletta [mailto:patricia.auletta14@my.stjohns.edu]
Sent: Saturday, April 8, 2017 8:10 PM
To: Kimberly_A_Williams@mcpsmd.org
Subject: Dissertation survey instrument

Good evening.

I am a doctoral candidate at St John's University on Long Island, NY writing my dissertation for Educational Leadership and Supervision. My topic is *The extent to which secondary school building administrators in NY public schools perceive that they were adequately trained for special education specific programs, student, and issues in their mainstream buildings.*

I have read with interest and cited your dissertations. As your topic was so relevant, I was wondering if I could adapt and use parts of your survey instruments in my research.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my request.

Trish Auletta
 Special educator & ESY principal
 Sachem Central School District, NY
 (631) 471-1789 (office)
 (631) 681-8664 (cell)

.....
 Williams, Kimberly A <Kimberly_A_Williams@mcpsmd.org>

Yesterday, 8:25 PM
 Patricia A. Auletta;

You are more than welcome to use any and all parts of my survey. Best wishes and don't hesitate to let me know if there's anything I can help you with.

Dr. Kimberly A. Williams, Principal
Stone Mill Elementary
301-279-4975

Sent from my iPhone

Appendix 5

Long Island, New York School Districts

Amityville UFSD	Island Park Public Schools
Babylon UFSD	Island Trees School District
Baldwin Schools	Islip School District
Bayshore Schools	Jericho School District
Bayport-Bluepoint Schools	Kings Park CSD
Bellmore-Merrick Central HS District	Lawrence UFSD
Bethpage Schools	Levittown UFSD
Brentwood UFSD	Lindenhurst Public Schools
Bridgehampton School District	Little Flower School
Carle Place School Place	Locust Valley CSD
Center Moriches School District	Long Beach Public Schools
Central Islip UFSD	Longwood CSD
Cold Spring Harbor CSD	Lynbrook USD
Commack School District	Malverne UFSD
Comsewogue School District	Manhasset Schools
Connetquot CSD	Massapequa UFSD
Copiague Schools	Mattituck-Cutchogue UFSD
Deer Park School District	Middle Country CSD
East Hampton UFSD	Miller Place UFSD
East Islip UFSD	Mineola UFSD
East Meadow School District	Montauk UFSD
East Moriches UFSD	Mount Sinai UFSD
East Rockaway School District	North Babylon UFSD
East Williston UFSD	North Shore CSD
Eastport-South Manor CSD	Northport-East Northport UFSD
Elwood UFSD	Oceanside School District
Farmingdale School District	Oyster Bay-East Norwich CSD
Fishers Island School	Patchogue-Medford UFSD
Freeport Public Schools	Plain Edge School District
Garden City Public Schools	Plainview-Old Bethpage CSD Port
Glen Cove City School District	Jefferson UFSD
Great Neck Public Schools	Port Washington UFSD
Green Point UFSD	Riverhead CSD
Half Hollow Hills CSD	Rockville Centre UFSD
Hampton Bays Public Schools	Rocky Point UFSD
Harborfields CSD	Roosevelt UFSD
Hauppauge School District	Roslyn UFSD
Hempstead UFSD	Sachem CSD
Herricks Public Schools	Sag Harbor UFSD
Hewlet-Woodmere Public Schools	Sayville UFSD
Hicksville Public Schools	Seaford UFSD
Huntington Public Schools	Sewanhaka Central HS District

Shelter Island UFSD
 Shoreham-Wading River CSD
 Smithtown CSD
 South Country CSD
 South Huntington UFSD
 Southampton UFSD
 Southold UFSD
 Syosset CSD
 Three Village CSD
 Uniondale UFSD

Valley Stream Central HS District
 Wantagh UFSD
 West Babylon UFSD
 West Hempstead UFSD
 West Islip UFSD
 Westbury UFSD
 Westhampton Beach UFSD
 William Floyd School District
 Wyandanch UFS

Long Island, New York School Districts (No secondary buildings)

Amagansett UFSD
 Fire Island
 East Quogue
 Elmont
 Floral Park
 Franklin Square
 Merrick UFSD
 New Hyde Park-Garden City UFSD
 New Suffolk Common School District
 North Bellmore UFSD
 North Merrick UFSD
 Oysterponds UFSD
 Quogue UFSD
 Remsenburg-Speonk UFSD
 Sagaponack Common SD
 Springs UFSD
 Tuckahoe Common SD
 Valley Stream UFSD #13
 Valley Stream UFSD #24
 Valley Stream UFSD #30
 Wainscott Common SD

Appendix 6

New York Colleges and Universities

(offering Advanced Certification in School Building Leadership Programs)

ADELPHI UNIVERSITY	PONTIF CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
BANK STREET COLLEGE OF ED NEW YORK	RELAY GRAD SCHOOL OF EDUC
CANISIUS COLLEGE (*)	SARAH LAWRENCE COLLEGE
COLL NEW ROCHELLE	ST BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SAINT ROSE	ST JOHN FISHER COLLEGE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY	ST JOHN'S UNIVERSITY
CUNY BARUCH COLLEGE	ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE
CUNY BROOKLYN COLL	ST LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY
CUNY CITY COLLEGE	ST THOMAS AQUINAS COLLEGE
CUNY COLL STATEN ISLAND	SUNY BROCKPORT
CUNY HUNTER COLLEGE	SUNY BUFFALO
CUNY LEHMAN COLLEGE	SUNY CORTLAND
CUNY QUEENS COLLEGE	SUNY FREDONIA
D'YOUVILLE COLLEGE	SUNY NEW PALTZ
DOWLING COLLEGE (**)	SUNY OSWEGO
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY	SUNY PLATTSBRG
HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY	SUNY ALBANY
IONA COLLEGE	SUNY BINGHAMTON
LE MOYNE COLLEGE	SUNY BUFFALO
LIONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY	SUNY STONY BROOK
C W POST	SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
MANHATTAN COLLEGE	TEACHERS COLLEGE
MANHATTANVILLE COLLEGE	THE NEW SCHOOL
MERCY COLLEGE	THE SAGE COLLEGE
MOLLOY COLLEGE	TOURO COLLEGE
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY	UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER
NIAGARA UNIVERSITY	UTICA COLLEGE
NY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY	WAGNER COLLEGE
PACE UNIVERSITY	YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Appendix 7

Survey Invite



Survey of Secondary School Administrator's Perceptions of Their Administrative Training in Special Education-Specific Topics.

Date: February 1, 2018

Dear Principal / Assistant Principal:

My name Patricia Auletta and I am a doctoral student at St. John's University. For my dissertation, I am examining the perceptions of secondary school principals and assistant principals in regard to the extent to which participants perceive that their administrative accreditation program adequately prepared them for the special education-specific issues they encountered in mainstream, public secondary schools on Long Island.

You are being invited to participate in this research because you are a secondary school principal or assistant principal in a Long Island high school. Your answers are very important to help yield a scientifically valid analysis of the information I am collecting.

While your participation in filling out this survey is completely voluntary, I would greatly appreciate your assistance in exploring this important topic. The link below will lead you to the survey which utilizes a Likert Scale format and should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer, or discontinue the survey at any time. There is no compensation for responding to this survey nor is there any known risk. Results of this survey will be reported in the aggregate, and your identity and answers will remain anonymous and completely confidential. No names, email addresses, IP addresses or other identifying information will be collected, reported, or stored.

Clicking on the link below and completing the survey will serve as your consent to participate.

CLICK THIS LINK TO BEGIN: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MCZNVVW>

I hope you will be willing to complete the survey at your earliest convenience. If you require any further information about the survey, please do not hesitate to contact me at **(631) 681-8664** or email patricia.auletta14@stjohns.edu. You may also contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Rene Parmar at (718) 990-5915 or parmarr@stjohns.edu.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University's Institutional Review Board, St. John's University, Dr. Raymond DiGiuseppe, Chair digiuser@stjohns.edu 718-990-1955 or Marie Nitopi, IRB Coordinator, nitopim@stjohns.edu 718-990-1440.

Sincerely,

Trish Auletta
 Doctoral Student
 St. John's University

Appendix 8
Survey Instrument



Secondary Administrator's Perceptions of their Preparedness in the Area of Special Education:
Implications for School Administrative Preparation Programs.

Section 1: Demographics

Please choose the answers that best reflect your current position within a public school:

* 1. Your position

- Secondary Principal
- Secondary Assistant Principal
- Special Education Director/Coordinator
- Other (please specify)

* 2. School Level

- High School
- Middle School / Junior High School
- District Office

* 3. Your Gender

- Male
- Female

* 4. Previous Position (If applicable)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Administrator at another building, level, or district | <input type="radio"/> Teacher - General Education |
| <input type="radio"/> Secondary Principal | <input type="radio"/> Teacher - Special Education |
| <input type="radio"/> Secondary Assistant Principal | <input type="radio"/> Teacher - Special Area (reading, art, music, P.E., etc) |
| <input type="radio"/> Department Chairperson | <input type="radio"/> Related Service Provider (speech, OT/PT, social worker, psychologist) |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) | |

* 5. How many years have you been in education?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 1-5 years | <input type="radio"/> 16-20 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 6-10 years | <input type="radio"/> 21-25 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 11-15 years | <input type="radio"/> 25+ years |

* 6. How many years have you been in your current administrative position?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 1-5 years | <input type="radio"/> 16-20 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 6-10 years | <input type="radio"/> 21-25 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 11-15 years | <input type="radio"/> 25+ years |

* 7. What is the highest degree you have attained?

- Bachelor's
- Master's
- Professional Diploma (School Building/District Administrator (SBL / SDL)
- Doctorate

* 8. Do you hold any degree or endorsement in Special Education?

- Yes
- No

* 9. I receive most of my information concerning special education from:

(select one)

- Information directly from the State Department of Education
- Special Education Department Lead teacher / Chairperson
- Memos from Central Office
- Workshops / Seminars
- Memos from an Office of Student Services located at Central Office
- Peers
- In-service training
- Other (please specify)



Secondary Administrator's Perceptions of their Preparedness in the Area of Special Education:
Implications for School Administrative Preparation Programs.

SECTION 2: Formal Training - College / University

Please choose the answers that best describe your formal training in education:

* 10. Did you have any experience with individuals with disabilities before your formal training in education?

- Yes: family member or close friend with a disability
- Yes: I have had non-educational, volunteer/work experience with individuals with disabilities
- Yes: during experiences in student teaching / substitute teaching
- No
- Other (please specify)

* 11. What is(are) the area(s) of your **UNDERGRADUATE** degree(s)?
(Check all that apply).

- General Education: Elementary
- General Education: Secondary (any subject)
- Special Education: Elementary
- Special Education: Secondary
- Vocational / CTE
- Other (please specify)

* 20. I have had **MANDATORY** in-service / professional development to support me in meeting the specific needs of students with disabilities.

Yes

No

* 21. I have taken **OPTIONAL / VOLUNTARY** in-service / professional development to support me in meeting the specific needs of students with disabilities

Yes

No



Secondary Administrator's Perceptions of their Preparedness in the Area of Special Education:
Implications for School Administrative Preparation Programs

SECTION 4: Perceptions & Attitudes

Indicate your responses to the following situations by marking "Strongly agree", "Agree", "Not Sure", "Disagree", or "Strongly Disagree"

- * 22. I believe that my educational background adequately prepared me to administer special education programs, staff, and students with disabilities.

Strongly Disagree Neutral Strongly Agree

- * 23. There is a need for more on-going professional development for school administrators in the area of special education in my school district.

Strongly Disagree Neutral Strongly Agree

- * 24. Special Education programs receive funding entitlements that take away from other programs at my school.

Strongly Disagree Neutral Strongly Agree

- * 25. The inclusion of students with disabilities is a core practice and valued in my school.

Strongly Disagree Neutral Strongly Agree

* 26. I strive to ensure that local and state curriculum standards are a part of the general education curriculum and that all students with disabilities are included.

Strongly Disagree Neutral Strongly Agree

* 27. Administering the rights, accommodations, and entitlements for students with disabilities is necessary, but burdensome.

Strongly Disagree Neutral Strongly Agree

* 28. Students with disabilities are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities in my school.

Strongly Disagree Neutral Strongly Agree

* 29. The practices and accommodations for students with disabilities in my school exceed legal limits.

Strongly Disagree Neutral Strongly Agree

* 30. The frequent changes in laws and legislation regarding students with disabilities are difficult to stay current with.

Strongly Disagree Neutral Strongly Agree



Secondary Administrator's Perceptions of their Preparedness in the Area of Special Education:
Implications for School Administrative Preparation Programs.

SECTION 5: Special Education Knowledge

Indicate your responses to the following statements by selecting "True", "False" or "Not Sure":

* 31. Once a student is determined to be eligible for special education services, an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) must be developed within 30 calendar days.

- True
 False
 Not Sure

* 32. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), even if a student is classified with an emotional disability (ED), if they are found possessing something like a Swiss Army knife in school, they must be unilaterally removed from the school.

- True
 False
 Not Sure

* 33. If a parent/guardian disagrees with the recommendations of the Committee on Special Education (CSE), the school may place the student in the CSE requested placement until such time as the parent/guardian agrees or until an impartial hearing is held.

- True
 False
 Not Sure

* 34. A student with an IEP who is in general education, mainstream classes is be held to the same rules of conduct and is disciplined according to the same procedures as his/her non-disabled peers.

- True
- False
- Not Sure

* 35. A Manifestation Determination Hearing is conducted after a student with a disability has violated school conduct rules multiple times. The purpose of the hearing is to review the reason for the behavior and consider a change in service or placement instead of the dicsipline that would be given to a non-disabled student for the exact same conduct.

- True
- False
- Not Sure

Vita

Name: *Patricia A. Auletta*

Date of Birth: *August 12, 1958*

High School: *Sachem High School
Lake Ronkonkoma, New York
Class of 1976*

Baccalaureate Degrees: *Bachelor of Arts
St. Joseph's College
Patchogue, New York
Elementary Education
Secondary Education: English
Graduated: May 1993*

Other Degrees: *Master of Science
Dowling College
Oakdale, New York
Major: Special Education
Graduated: May 1996*

*Advanced Certificates
Dowling College
Oakdale, New York
School Building Leader
School District Leader
Graduated: May 2003*