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The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of public school leaders about principal leadership for special education in ten leadership categories: understanding law and policy, using data to improve teacher performance, using data to improve student performance, creating an inclusive culture, collaborating with families, participating in the IEP process, scheduling and service delivery, differentiated practices, allocating resources, and hiring and supporting quality personnel. A survey was developed and deployed to all principals and directors of special education program in the public schools of North Carolina.

Participants were asked to provide a rating of the knowledge and skills of principals in each area as well as to respond to two open-ended questions within each category of leadership. Twenty-nine major themes emerged in the ten leadership categories from the responses of 183 principals and fourteen directors of special education programs.

Five thematic categories were identified: IEP Process, Collaboration, Data Analysis, Planning for Service Delivery and Implementation, and Personnel Development. The findings of this study inform the body of research about what principals do to be effective in the area of principal leadership for special education and the knowledge and skills that principals need in order to be more effective.

**PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION:  
PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPALS AND DIRECTORS  
OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**by**

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**Approved by**

**Dr. Carl Lashley  
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To my parents, Julius R. (Sonny) Bost and Janice Hinson Bost.

Thank you for everything.

To my sister, Julie I. Bost, my inspiration and a true model of exemplary leadership for special education.

To Dr. Carl Lashley, for keeping his promise to never give up on me.

To Rick Duncan and our beautiful daughter, Addison Leria Duncan.

This “little dissertation” is done.

## APPROVAL PAGE

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Overview**

In an ideal leadership situation, principals could plan for the perfect context and content for schooling. They would have unlimited human and physical resources, time would not be a limiting factor, and they would know everything about the students and teachers for whom they were preparing to lead. Decisions would be carefully made based on what is good and student-centered; high-stakes testing would not negatively impact this process. Form would truly follow function.

Form should follow function. School decisions should be based on what we believe is good, and on what we know is effective for enhancing student academic, social, and moral development. But too often our imported theories of schooling provide us with ready-made forms for organizing, developing curriculum, planning for teaching and learning, providing for teacher development, and for making other school decisions. With form already in place, our job is then to figure out how we can craft goals and develop strategies that fit. Function follows form. (Sergiovanni, 1996, p. 119).

Schools are not set up to afford principals the situation described above. Even the greatest leaders, however that might be measured, constantly grapple

with keeping form from driving function so that student needs come first. Facilities, staffing, budgets, curricular resources, disciplinary procedures, and capital outlay tend to drive the decision making instead of the other way around. All of these areas are realities for a school principal and they will not be successful without attending to them.

As if the issue were not already complicated enough, add high stakes testing, accountability models, ever-changing policy and procedure, and more. Next, consider the impact of this function follows form approach for students with special needs. It is not difficult to imagine how far removed from the student that decision-making becomes. What principals need to know and be able to do to prevent a function follows form reality from hindering strong, effective leadership requires a closer look than ever before.

*Ten years ago when I became a high school assistant principal I had very little background in special education. My supervisor assigned me, along with transportation, discipline, and facilities, oversight of the special education department. My knowledge and ability to provide leadership for the special education department at a high school of around twelve hundred students was minimal. Thankfully, I did not have the sense to be scared. I did what I thought was best with the resources I had. In a very frightening way, function followed form, as I reflect now upon that experience.*

*I did receive enough training during my time as a building level*

*administrator to keep me out of the courtroom. That seemed to be the main topic of professional development for special education leadership: avoiding legal blunders. We were to learn from what other people did wrong. Not a bad idea, but the approach was blaringly shallow. The other areas that a leader needs to develop skills and knowledge in order to prepare leadership seemed to be missing – inclusive culture, instructional oversight, human resource management, and more.*

*When I was offered a principalship of a school entering its first year of sanctions for failing to meet adequate yearly progress, I knew that the quality of the services to students with exceptionalities was an area of major concern. Once again, I found myself in a role providing key leadership in the area of special education. I had managed to be in an administrative role for a number of years with no formal attention to the skills and knowledge I needed to be effective. But I was in charge of a school that the federal government had deemed low-performing and I had to do what I needed to do with what I had. Function followed form.*

*Clearly, my effectiveness was compromised due to what I did not know that I did not know. Moreover, I was in good company. I networked closely with my principal colleagues and found that they were in the same situation. We were not even clear, I believe, on what our responsibilities were for the education of students with disabilities.*

A principal's responsibilities for the education of students with disabilities cannot easily be separated into a checklist, as the reflections above indicated. This contributes to the complexity of the task of providing effective leadership in this area. A major piece of the complex puzzle, however, is his or her responsibility to shape, foster, and maintain a culture in which the educational needs of students with disabilities are identified and met in an inclusive environment. (McLaughlin, 2008). An inclusive environment is not a place, a classroom, or a resource setting; it is a total school environment that a principal consistently monitors for its inclusiveness and quality. All other responsibilities are connected to this culture piece. Decision-making in all other areas is reflective of and impacted by the cultural leadership that the principal provides.

Principals are responsible for ensuring that research-based interventions are used in the service delivery options provided to students with disabilities. The NCLB Act puts a special emphasis on determining what educational programs and practices have been clearly demonstrated to be effective through rigorous scientific research (NCLB, 2002). Each intervention should be carefully chosen based on evidence of its success and continuous monitoring of the success of the intervention with the student is essential. Principals must ensure that this is monitored carefully and must set the stage for it to be a priority in their buildings.

Principals are responsible for knowing about specific learning needs and the role of assessment, placement, and other disability issues. Although NCLB

covers numerous federal education programs, the law's requirements for testing, accountability, and school improvement receive the most attention (NCLB, 2002). While some of the responsibilities in these areas can be delegated and leadership for it can be distributed, accountability rests on principals and they should be knowledgeable in these areas. Understanding the categories of exceptionality and how students' educational experiences are impacted is critical in special education leadership.

Principals are responsible for ensuring that behavior supports and strategies are in place (Bateman & Bateman, 2006). Discipline is not about referrals and suspensions. Principals must provide leadership for building level and classroom level processes that ensure a positive, bully-free environment where learning and teaching can thrive. This is hard work and requires a persistent monitoring of school climate. It also calls for a deliberate approach to professional development that will equip staff with the skills needed to make this paradigm shift.

For the appropriate education of students with disabilities, principals must monitor instruction and provide feedback aimed at consistently improving the quality of teaching in their schools. The NCLB Act requires that all public school teachers who teach core academic subjects be "highly qualified" (NCLB, 2002). A degree, a passing score on a subject-matter test, and certification are important indicators of teacher ability, but they are only part of the picture.

Monitoring, effectively done, is not drive-by monitoring; it is a meaningful, supportive, data-gathering process.

Principals must be savvy enough to avoid common pitfalls that can afflict leaders who are inadequately prepared to provide leadership in the area of special education. Foregoing policy and procedure because of a busy schedule, telling a parent that funds are not available for a service delivery option, using last year's schedule because the teachers loved it, selecting modifications and accommodations haphazardly, not involving all stakeholders in decision-making are some examples of errors that compromise the quality education that students with disabilities deserve.

The above, while accurately reflecting my thoughts about principals' responsibilities, could also serve as an account of my "trial by fire" experiences. I often missed the marks that I describe while attempting to provide the best leadership I knew how for students with disabilities. I am concerned about other well-intended leaders who lack the knowledge and skills necessary to perform effectively in this area. I also see hope for the potential of leaders to become great leaders for special education if proper attention is given to its importance.

### **The Problem**

In addition to expectations for effective instructional leadership, principals face many other non-instructional responsibilities.

Principals, like other managers of individual units of organizations, are responsible for a wide variety of tasks. They must set goals and develop plans; build budgets and hire personnel; lead the organization of work (in

this case, curriculum and instruction); select structures and coordinate time use; evaluate staff and assess student learning at the school level; organize improvement efforts and develop processes for working with clients, customers, and community; and understand and reinforce positive organizational cultures. In sum, they must both maintain the routine functioning of the schools and provide vision and motivation; they must both manage and lead. (Deal and Peterson, 1994, p. 358)

Of all the initiatives that principals have had to lead and manage, perhaps the most daunting has been the introduction of high-stakes accountability and all of its implications for school leadership. At the heart of NCLB is an increased emphasis on accountability. The law mandates, along with other provisions, that state ensure that all groups of students make adequate yearly progress toward the state's proficient levels of academic achievement in reading and mathematics no later than the end of the 2013-2014 school year (NCLB, 2002).

In addition, many traditional responsibilities, such as school safety, finance, and discipline, have become increasingly complex. At the same time, considerable decision-making has been decentralized to local schools, with little specificity about which are the most important for effective leadership. Given the complexity of their roles in this age of accountability, we need to ask: what is it that principals need to know and do to effectively lead?

### **The Principalship**

In their national study of the principalship, Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach (2003) conducted in-depth interviews and school visits with educators in 21 schools in four cities across four states. They concluded that regardless of school type schools need leadership in seven critical areas: instructional,

cultural, managerial, human resources, strategic, external development, and micropolitical. These seven critical areas would later comprise the North Carolina Standards for School Executives and represent competencies upon which are evaluated.

In the section of their report devoted to these seven critical areas, Portin et al. (2003) explain that the seven areas do not present a formula or map for leadership. Conversely, they point to key areas in which all leaders – building level and others – perform a variety of actions to move their school toward accomplishing its goals. They further state that there are no universally “correct” ways to address the competencies in each area. In the schools they studied, the critical areas were performed differently.

The state of North Carolina has adopted an evaluation instrument that requires principals to reflect upon their leadership in these key areas:

- Instructional Leadership: Assuring quality of instruction, modeling teacher practice, supervising curriculum, and assuring quality of teaching resources.
- Cultural Leadership: Tending to the symbolic resources of the school (e.g. its traditions, climate, and history).
- Managerial Leadership: Tending to the operations of the school (e.g., its budget, schedule, facilities, safety and security, and transportation).

- Human Resource Leadership: Recruiting, hiring, firing, inducting, and mentoring teachers and administrators; developing leadership capacity and professional development opportunities.
- Strategic Leadership: Promoting a vision, mission, goals, and developing a means to reach them.
- External Development Leadership: Representing the school in the community, developing capital, public relations, recruiting students, buffering and mediating external interests, and advocating for the school's interests.
- Micropolitical Leadership: Buffering and mediating internal interests, maximizing resources (financial and human).

Barnett & Monda-Amaya (1998) state that principals should possess knowledge and skills in effective instruction, assessment, and discipline to provide support and feedback to teachers when working with all children, especially children with special needs. Perhaps the most important responsibility of a principal is *ownership* of the education of students with disabilities – not because 100% of students with disabilities must be proficient on the state test by 2013-14 but because decisions should be made on what is good for students. As a principal, it was not until I decided to take responsibility of my learning and that of those that I led that I began to see true improvement for all student groups – especially students with special needs. It is very convenient to delegate, even ignore, this responsibility but the costs are very high. If a principal does not take

control of what defines his/her role and the school as a leader – including what s/he knows and is able to do – someone else or some group will.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was, by capturing the perspectives of practicing administrators, to truly discover the leadership practices that must occur in order to address the awareness and capacity of principals to provide effective leadership for special education. Returning to Sergiovanni's (1996) advice: "With form already in place, our job is then to figure out how we can craft goals and develop strategies that fit." Our students come to us just as they are. This study is critically important because students with special needs deserve the very best we can give them and principals deserve opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge to perfect the process of crafting goals and developing strategies that fit – this benefits *all* students, not just students with exceptionalities.

Given the context of the principalship and programs for students with disabilities, the purpose of this research study is to investigate the leadership and management knowledge and skills that principals must have to lead the special education programs in their schools in a time of increasing accountability for student performance. I have focused on the following as key questions that I would like to answer:

- How do principals and directors of special education programs perceive the effectiveness of principals in major categories of school leadership?

- What do principals and directors of special education programs say that principals do that contributes to principal effectiveness in major categories of school leadership?
- What do principals and directors of special education programs say that principals do that contributes to principal effectiveness in major categories of school leadership?

In this chapter, an introduction to the purpose of this study was provided along with background information about the accountability landscape within which principals must provide leadership for all students. The next chapter provides a review of the current literature regarding principal leadership and the major categories of leadership that emerged as a result of the extensive literature review. These leadership areas are explored and important findings from the current literature are shared.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

One-size-fits-all generalizations about what principals need to know and be able to do – no matter how carefully crafted – ultimately misrepresent the situation in many schools. After an extensive review of the literature on this research topic, the literature was revisited and analyzed for key ideas or themes. (See Appendix B) Ten categories related to principals' knowledge and skills in the area of special education emerged that warranted further exploration:

- 1) Understanding Law and Policy
- 2) Using Data to Improve Teacher Performance
- 3) Using Data to Improve Student Performance
- 4) Creating an Inclusive Culture
- 5) Collaborating with Families
- 6) Participating in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Process
- 7) Scheduling and Service Delivery
- 8) Differentiated Practices
- 9) Allocating Resources
- 10) Hiring and Supporting Qualified Personnel

These ten categories are significant because they were the major areas of leadership that emerged after a content analysis of the most current research

about the topic of principal leadership for special education. They are also aligned with the standards called for in the evaluation instrument for North Carolina principals.

### **Understanding Law and Policy**

In their review of the No Child Left Behind legislation, Wakeman, Browder, Meier, and McColl (2007) stated

“As NCLB has become a catapult for reform in the field of education, the impact on the field of special education has been extensive. Title I of NCLB holds special education students and teachers to new and higher expectations, which equates to a significant addition to the value of education for these students. These new expectations bring uncharted possibilities for students with disabilities.” (p. 23)

For principals, NCLB and IDEA call for leadership knowledge and skills that attend to meeting the needs of all students.

#### *The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975*

The precursor of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), this federal law required states to develop and implement policies to assure a free appropriate public education to all children with disabilities. States were directed to establish procedures for identification, evaluation, and placement and were introduced to the concept of educating students in the least restrictive environment. It also required the provision of related services and transition plans. This law also provided criteria for developing, implementing, and monitoring Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and required shared decision making and procedural safeguards (IDEA, 2004).

### *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA)*

Congress codified the Education of All Handicapped Children Act as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990. This law is revisited by Congress every five years. The term “handicapped children” was removed and replaced with the terminology “individuals with disabilities” in order to recognize the student first and the condition second. In addition, “disability” replaced the term “handicapped”.

This original law is now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the main federal statute that authorizes federal aid for the education of more than six million children with disabilities nationally. The two key components of the statute are due process provisions detailing parental rights and a permanently authorized grant program that provides federal funding to the states. A free appropriate public education to all students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment is required to be provided by states that receive federal funds (IDEA, 2004). IDEA called for a special education process that has three major components: Assessment, Programming, and Evaluation (Yell, 2006).

Principals face challenges with adhering to federal, state, and local special education mandates. The role of the building principal has drastically altered as a result of special education rules and regulations (Davidson & Gooden, 2001). Principals are required to manage special education under a massive set of rules and regulations while maintaining a leadership role for regular education

programs. Davidson and Gooden conclude administrators are frustrated with the IDEA provisions because of a lack of sufficient knowledge to assure compliance with the regulations. This complicates the issue even further. As McDonnell, McLaughlin, & Morison (1997) noted, newer legislation presents a striking difference for students with disabilities because standards-based reform stresses accountability to apply uniform standards, whereas past legislation stressed compliance to apply individualized goals and instruction.

Understanding law and policy presents an area of leadership that holds more meaning for a principal than just staying out of legal trouble; it has implications for proactive leadership for instructional improvement more than ever before with the advent of NCLB and IDEA. Knowing what it means to be effective in this area of school leadership is key to being successful as a principal.

### **Using Data to Improve Teacher Performance**

It is the action around assessment – the discussion, meetings, revisions, arguments, and opportunities to continually create new directions for teaching, learning, curriculum, and assessment – that ultimately have consequences. The ‘things’ of assessment are essentially useful as dynamic supports for reflection and action, rather than as static products with value in and of themselves. (Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Falk, 2005, p. 31)

The principal’s role is critical to the assessment process. Using data to drive instruction often requires making significant changes in curricula,

scheduling, and staff. In order to accomplish this, principals should have a comprehensive knowledge of how to collect, analyze, and interpret data.

This comprehensive knowledge must be grounded in standards for excellent instruction. Principals cannot make assumptions about what quality teaching is; they must know exactly what to look for in every classroom. A group of actively engaged students, for example, does not necessarily mean that excellent instruction is taking place. Using data to improve teacher instruction requires collecting the data that will yield the information necessary to do so. According to the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2005), some key areas that must be examined for data collection are:

- Alignment of programs to curriculum
- Alignment of instruction to curriculum and standards
- Extent to which instructional materials support the curriculum
- Alignment of lesson planning to instructional objectives
- Extent to which all students have equal access to content

All five of the key areas listed above have implications for all students and are particularly relevant to students with exceptionalities.

In their study of how instructional leadership for special education occurs in elementary schools, Bays & Crockett (2007) concluded that in providing meaningful support to teachers, principals could differentiate supervision to meet the needs of educators at varying degrees of professional competence. Tenured teachers in their study did not value the observation and evaluation process, a

primary means of supervision in schools. The research team concluded that continued research addressing the implementation of and sustained use of effective instructional practices is needed to help principals identify teachers who need considerable assistance and better ways of providing them with support. It is important to note, however, that principals must use data to make these decisions in order to accurately determine what teachers need to improve and in what areas they need to improve.

The important, but very difficult, task of evaluating teacher and other staff is perhaps even more integral in the area of special education. Students with special needs deserve the best teachers and paraprofessionals and this requires a focus on continuous improvement. Every component of the evaluation process – from preconference to post conference – should have improvement as its focus. Leaders in the area of special education understand that this requires relationship-building along with expertise in how to coach and leverage resources so that teachers get the support they need to improve. Senge (1999) made this point when he stated that although change does not “start at the top”, executive leadership is vital:

The real role of executive leadership is not in “driving people to change,” but in creating organizational environments that inspire, support, and leverage the imagination and initiative that exists at all levels. (p. 566)

## **Using Data to Improve Student Performance**

Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom (2004) state that when we think about “successful” leadership, it is easy to become confused by the current evidence about what that really means. They offer three conclusions about the different forms of leadership found in the literature:

- 1) Many labels used in the literature to signify different forms or styles of leadership mask the generic functions of leadership.
- 2) Principals, superintendents and teachers are all being admonished to be “instructional leaders” without much clarity about what that means.
- 3) “Distributed leadership” is in danger of becoming no more than a slogan unless it is given more thorough and thoughtful consideration.

(pp. 9-10)

While a more thorough analysis of each of the three conclusions from Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom (2004) is required to fully understand the author’s points, their findings point to the notion that it is necessary to focus on what successful principals actually do; not what they might or should do. Before endeavoring to decide what effective leadership entails, it is important to establish the true relationship between leadership and student achievement. Does leadership really matter, effective or not?

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) conducted meta-analysis research on school-level leadership with a review of nearly every study published since the early 1970s examining the relationship between school leadership and achievement of students. Waters, Marzano, & McNulty (2003) issued three major findings that support the claim that school-level leadership matters with regard to student achievement:

- 1) The average effect size of leadership on student achievement is .25, indicating that a one standard deviation improvement in principal leadership is associated with a ten percentile difference in student achievement on a norm-referenced standardized test.
- 2) Sixty-six leadership practices are used by principals to fulfill 21 responsibilities that have statistically significant relationships with student achievement. The five responsibilities with the highest average effect size are situational awareness, flexibility, outreach, monitors/evaluates, and discipline.
- 3) Leaders can also have a negative impact on student achievement. This relates to the differential impact of school leadership.

Of the above findings, it is important to note that not all have the same implications for each individual or stakeholder group (Waters & Grubb, 2004). Since special education presents one of the major challenges facing school leaders in this area of comprehensive school reform (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas,

2003), a focus on what successful leaders actually do in the area of special education instead of what they should or might do warrants attention.

Weick (1987) noted:

Reliability is invisible in at least two ways. First, people often don't know how many mistakes they could have made but didn't, which means they have at best only a crude idea of what produces reliability and how reliable they are....Reliability is also invisible in the sense that reliable outcomes are constant, which means there is nothing to pay attention to. (p. 118)

In schools focused on achieving high reliability in annual measures of student learning, detecting problems early means identifying students who are struggling or falling behind soon enough for the school to respond effectively. It would seem that schools could do this easily because of all the data that they have. However, school structures, schedules, and staff skills all limit the effective use of data in most schools. "Although fully developed failures may be well documented in annual assessments, emerging learning problems often go unnoticed, building at the edges until failures are inevitable" (Bellamy, Crawford, Marshall, & Coulter, 2005, p. 392).

Bellamy, Crawford, Marshall, & Coulter (2005) go on to propose four techniques for early detection, stemming from diverse views of teaching and learning:

- a) periodic assessments of student learning,
- b) teacher referrals,
- c) students' monitoring of their own learning, and

d) collaborative analysis of student work.

Successfully administered special education programs require a focus on the appropriate use of student achievement data, both formative and summative. This focus calls for authentic use of data, not just for accountability purposes. Instructional decision-making is driven by data and occurs naturally because the leader understands how, what, when, and why data are important. (Guskey, 2003)

Assessments can be a vital component in our efforts to improve education. But as long as we use them only as a means to rank schools and students, we will miss their most powerful benefits. We must focus instead on helping teachers change the way they use assessment results, improve the quality of their classroom assessments, and align their assessments with valued learning goals and state or district standards. When teachers' classroom assessments become an integral part of the instructional process and a central ingredient in their efforts to help students learn, the benefits of assessment for both students and teachers will be boundless. (Guskey, 2003, p.11)

The instructional leader ensures that there is an appropriate alignment between the curriculum and the accountability models that must be followed. Attention is appropriately afforded to special education and accountability, not because of subgroup status but because each student must be a meaningful part of the student assessment program. Data are gathered and analyzed in a purposeful way and multiple measures are used to determine student success.

### **Creating an Inclusive Culture**

Influencing, or shaping, a school's culture is a paramount task. Furthermore, it requires a skill set that might look very different from the ones

required for managerial or instructional leadership. It also requires a value set, as described below:

The most effective principals operate from a value system that places a high priority on people and relationships. This orientation communicates itself both subtly and powerfully to staff, students, and the public, sending the message that everyone's voice counts and everyone's feelings are important. The principal's person-to-person relationships reverberate throughout the culture of the school. (Donaldson, Marnik, and Ackerman, 2009, p. 17)

Beliefs and attitudes that principals hold towards special education are key factors in implementing inclusive school programs. Guzman (1997) identified common factors among successful inclusive school leaders. Those principals had the ability to:

- Establish a communication system that allows for rich dialogue
- Be actively involved in the IEP process
- Be personally involved with parents of students with disabilities
- Collaboratively develop philosophies regarding inclusion
- Articulate clear policies for addressing discipline issues
- Implement professional development around inclusive practices
- Demonstrate skill in data gathering and problem-solving

Hall and George (1999) contend that the principal's beliefs about school climate and instruction may have a significant influence on the culture of the school and individual classrooms. A principal's beliefs about access and

inclusion may be especially critical to a school's climate and, consequently, the relationship between knowledge and beliefs is very important.

Nagle, Hernandez, Embler, Mclaughlin, & Doh (2006) analyzed their findings from a cross-case analysis of the educational and organizational characteristics of rural elementary schools that are effective for students with disabilities and revealed the following four school-level characteristics:

- 1) Emphasis on high standards for student performance and behavior and access to the general curriculum
- 2) Stability within the school community and a willingness to work together
- 3) Close ties between the school, parents, and the community
- 4) Flexible school instructional arrangements, creative use of resources, and support for at-risk students

Ensuring that these characteristics thrive in a school is the chief responsibility of the principal. Along those same lines, Green (2008) describes it as creating environments of possibilities when principals and special education administrators who embrace federal, state, and local mandates for education reform as opportunities to work together for the good of all children.

Kugelmass and Ainscow (2004) studied schools that were providing integrated or inclusion services to special education students. Their goal was to identify leadership practices that increased the delivery of educational services to

students with exceptionalities. Regardless of the differences among the schools themselves, certain elements held true for all:

- Cultural symbols and language transmitted beliefs and values
- Staff and children are engaged in collaborative practices
- Educators adamantly believed in the inclusion initiative
- Educators comprehended the social and political nature of inclusion
- Staff and students viewed their differences as a resource
- External forces supported the original impetus for the initiative
- Leaders engaged in collaborative practices with staff on a regular basis
- Leaders encouraged and supported their staff in a collaborative process of school development
- Leaders regarded students and staff as full members of the school community
- Organized special education services were an integral part of the school structure

A culture in which practices support the success of students with special needs is an essential piece of the leadership puzzle. Whether it is embracing inclusive practices or following paperwork protocols, ensuring that the climate is conducive to meeting students' needs is the responsibility of the chief leader. Effective leaders understand that it is not just what you know, but also how you interact with others that shape influence. Changing a toxic school culture into a

healthy school culture that inspires lifelong learning among students and adults is the greatest challenge of instructional leadership. (Barth, 2002)

### **Collaborating with Families**

Lashley and Boscardin (2003) offer an explanation of the changing role of the special education administrator. It has direct implications for building-level leaders, as well:

Special education administrators are now at a crossroads in the field. Their challenge will be introducing flexibility to how the curriculum is conceptualized, advocating for access to the general education curriculum and assessments with appropriate accommodations and modifications, and promoting collaboration between general and special education teachers and administrators to assure that high quality education programs are accessible to all students (p. 3).

Tackling this challenge requires a host of knowledge, skills, and competencies. It is not enough for district level leaders to rise to the challenge; school principals must address these issues as well.

As agents of change and instructional leaders, principals should possess several important competencies (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998):

- Knowledge and skills in effective instruction, assessment and discipline to provide support and feedback to teachers when working with all children, especially students with special needs
- Skills in establishing and supporting instructional teams
- Willingness to support collaborative group interactions

- Clear vision that results in a commitment from the school and community

Each reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* has strengthened Section 1118, which in *No Child Left Behind* mandates parent involvement. Research-based requirements supporting active involvement by families have been mandated to enhance student success. *No Child Left Behind* establishes the need for parent partnerships, two-way communications, and opportunities for parent input. Gardiner, Canfield-Davis, and Anderson (2008) reported that all six principals in their study of how practicing school principals responded to the *No Child Left Behind* law stated the importance of strong school-family-community connections and identified ways to draw in families. The strategies identified, however, were focused mainly on connecting to families in traditional ways. A gap persists in the literature about specifically how to meet the requirements of *No Child Left Behind* that mandate parent involvement, especially for parents of students with disabilities.

### **Participating in the IEP Process**

The demands to improve the educational outcomes of students with exceptionalities are greater than ever. Delegating the role of maintaining high instructional standards is no longer an option if effective leadership is to be provided for all students. An effective principal in the area of special education understands issues surrounding access to the general education curriculum. The Curriculum Continuum (McLaughlin, 2008) is an example of a framework

that would guide principal decision-making. Ranging from the general curriculum with no accommodations or modifications to special education services with alternate achievement standards, effective leadership reflects the knowledge of this continuum.

Principals who exhibit strong leadership for special populations understand the difference between accommodations and modifications and ensure that this understanding is prevalent throughout the school. The culture reflects high standards for all students, even students with special needs, with ethical practices around the issue of leveling the playing field when it is necessary and appropriate. A critical piece of this planning is conducted within the context of planning for Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). (Yell, 2006)

As the Local Educational Agency (LEA) representative for the school, the principal is responsible for understanding development goals for Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and for providing leadership for the IEP process. This requires a keen understanding of the paperwork and procedural processes and, even more importantly, how to promote collaboration among the necessary stakeholders. It is reasonable that this can be delegated to another member of the principal's administrative staff if they have the knowledge and skills required and they understand that the IEP team's primary job is to plan a program of special education and related services (including needed modifications and accommodations in the general education classroom) that is reasonably calculated to provide meaningful education benefit. (Yell, 2006)

McLaughlin (2008) outlines three reasons for principals to be mindful of in IEP development:

- 1) Principals must understand the critical role of the IEP in the instruction of students with disabilities.
- 2) Principals are responsible for ensuring that these students are held to high expectations and receive a high-quality curriculum.
- 3) Principals are accountable for improving the performance of all students in your building.

These three reasons, or expectations, speak to the importance of the principal's role in understanding and being active in the curriculum and instruction for students with exceptionalities. In the age of heightened accountability, these issues have risen to the top. More importantly, as has always been the case, these reasons are aligned with what is right for students.

### **Scheduling and Service Delivery**

Scheduling for the success of students with disabilities is a critical responsibility of the principal. From inclusion models to resource settings, scheduling of students with exceptionalities should take priority and their participation in general education activities should be equally important.

Returning to the importance of high quality staff, principals are responsible for ensuring that general educators understand how to meet the needs of students with disabilities. From the physical education teachers to the media specialist, all members of the instructional staff are teachers of students with exceptionalities

and principals should stress their important role in special education. (Villa & Thousand, 2005)

School structure and class scheduling have affected the success of students with disabilities being able to access general education curricula. Typical school schedules have not been conducive to individualized instruction and assessment that actively engages students in the learning process. It also does not provide time for the collaboration and common planning activities between general and special educators. Stodden, Galloway, & Stodden (2003) noted that how scheduling reforms are implemented is as important as which reforms are attempted. For example, some schools that have converted to block scheduling have experienced a decrease in discipline problems but increased challenges for some students with disabilities and their teachers. A longer class period with no adjustment of instructional planning can result in students not being able to attend or digest large amounts of information. In contrast, where block scheduling was implemented as an integrated process where specific initiatives in general and special education were not polarized, positive results were realized for all student groups.

### **Differentiated Practices**

Wormelli (2006) describes differentiated practices as doing what's right for students. He goes on to say that it requires doing different things for different students in order for them to learn when the general education classroom

approach does not meet student's needs. It is highly effective teaching.

Tomlinson (2005) offers this perspective on differentiation of instruction:

"What we share in common makes us human. How we differ makes us individuals. In a classroom with little or no differentiated instruction, only student similarities seem to take center stage. In a differentiated classroom, commonalities are acknowledged and built upon, and student differences become important elements in teaching and learning as well. Students have multiple options for taking in information, making sense of ideas, and expressing what they learn. In other words, a differentiated classroom provides different avenues to acquiring content, to processing or making sense of ideas, and to developing products." (p. 231)

In McREL's Balanced Leadership Framework (Waters & Cameron, 2006), four components were identified to help with learning and applying the responsibilities for instructional leadership: leadership, purposeful community, magnitude of change, and focus of change. In thinking about providing support for students with special needs, these four components offer points of reflection as well as a foundation for possible professional development. Perhaps even more compelling, however, is McREL's program for developing deeper knowledge (Lyons, Schumacher, & Cameron, 2008). The authors offer a taxonomy for developing professional knowledge, a knowledge taxonomy that emphasizes the types of knowledge that leaders need to develop true professional wisdom:

- Declarative: knowing *what* to do
- Procedural: knowing *how* to do it

- Contextual: knowing *when* to do it
- Experiential: knowing *why* it is important

Effective leaders go beyond the first two types of knowledge and are able to skillfully apply contextual and experiential knowledge (Lyons, Schumacher, & Cameron, 2008).

To prepare leaders to perform beyond the declarative and procedural levels, McREL has found that case methodology can be an effective strategy. This is also known as case method analysis or problem-based learning. According to the study, this process is integral to the preparation of lawyers, medical doctors, and business executives. This strategy allows school leaders, like other professionals, to benefit from the opportunity to critically deliberate about actual cases with their colleagues, exposing each other to new problem-solving approaches.

“Principals can no longer afford to ignore instruction for certain groups of students, nor can they manage their schools according to personal or political whim” (Lashley, 2007). Great principals in the area of special education have a plan for the success of their students; they know how their students with special needs achieved success and have processes in place for them to continue to do so.

Supporting the delivery of instruction for students who have exceptional learning needs has serious implications for teachers and students. Inadequate administrative and supervisory support has been linked to the lack of high-quality

instruction offered to students who have disabilities. The term “special education” is defined in IDEA as specially designed instruction in which the content, methodology, or delivery is specifically adapted to address unique needs and ensure access to the general curriculum so that the student can meet educational standards that apply to all children. (Bays, D. & Crockett, J., 2007)

### **Allocating Resources**

In their study of how principals use resources in the context of their organizations, Drago-Severson, E.E. & Pinto, K.C. (2009) noted that “by perceiving resources more broadly than a budget, teacher learning can become ongoing and collegially based. This requires that a program be more than a program; it must make a school into a professional learning community” (p. 190). Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) describe professional learning communities as not merely an assemblage of teams but living communities and lively cultures dedicated to improving the lifelong learning of students and adults.

“High-performing school leaders have a gift for acquiring, allocating, and using resources to strengthen student learning” (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007, p. 190) Two critical dynamics are in play in high-performing schools. First, principals link resource allocation and use to the mission and goals of the school. Second, effective leaders use the dimensions of work including management, politics, organization, and finance to strengthen the quality of the instructional and curricular program and enhance student learning.

In every area of leadership is an element of resource allocation, the most precious of which is the human resource. Carefully and strategically planning for and utilizing resources in ways that meet the needs of students must be deliberately and thoughtfully attended to by the principal. There seems to be a gap in the literature about what it is that principals do to ensure that resources are used effectively.

### **Hiring and Supporting Quality Personnel**

The five most commonly reported challenges noted by state directors of special education are:

“general education teachers’ lack of knowledge about appropriate accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities; the need for professional development for general education and special education teachers to learn strategies for meeting the needs of all students, including students with disabilities, in their classrooms; low expectations for students with disabilities; special education teachers lack of knowledge about general education curriculum; and the time needed for co-planning and meaningful collaboration between general and special education personnel across levels (i.e. school, district, state).” (The Access Center, 2008, p. 56).

A school leader must make it his or her priority to recruit and retain high-quality, effective instructional staff. A key measure of the quality and effectiveness has to be their ability to meet the diverse needs of students. Closely related, inseparable from in fact, to the assignment of staff is the provision of results-oriented professional development. Effective leaders in the area of special education identify, in collaboration with stakeholders, professional development needs and then create opportunities for them to occur and be

sustained. The results-oriented piece is critically important; there must be some ongoing measure of the effectiveness of the professional development and its impact on learning and teaching. (Guskey, 2000)

The important, but very difficult, task of evaluating teacher and other staff is perhaps even more integral in the area of special education. Students with special needs deserve the best teachers and paraprofessionals and this requires a focus on continuous improvement. Every component of the evaluation process – from preconference to post conference – should have improvement as its focus. Leaders in the area of special education understand that this requires relationship-building along with expertise in how to coach and leverage resources so that teachers get the support they need to improve. This requires a redistribution of resources and a willingness to recognize expertise. (Marzano, 2010)

Given the context of the principalship and programs for students with disabilities, this chapter provided an extensive review of the current literature on the topic. Categories of leadership emerged that became the framework for investigating the leadership and management knowledge and skills that principals must have to lead the special education programs in their schools in a time of increasing accountability for student performance. The use of these leadership categories as part of a carefully planned research methodology are presented in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Given the context of the principalship and programs for students with disabilities, the purpose of this research study is to investigate the leadership and management knowledge and skills that principals must have to lead the special education programs in their schools in a time of increasing accountability for student performance. In this chapter, a thorough explanation of the methodology of the study is provided.

#### **Research Questions**

The research focus that is referenced over the course of this study is the awareness and capacity of principals to provide effective leadership for special education. The ultimate purpose was to delve deeply enough into the problem that solutions emerged for addressing how, what, why, and when leadership practices must occur. The participants for this study were a group of practicing administrators who are charged with providing leadership for special education. This group was selected because of their intricate connection to the issue of strong leadership and the needs and perspectives of the individuals that comprise the group will provide wide ranging possibilities for adding complexity to the study.

Research questions included:

- How do principals and directors of special education programs perceive the effectiveness of principals in major categories of school leadership?
- What do principals and directors of special education programs say that principals do that contributes to principal effectiveness in each of the major categories of school leadership?
- What do principals and directors of special education programs identify as needs or supports that would assist principals in enhancing their leadership for special education in the identified areas?

The research questions, along with an extensive literature review that was provided in Chapter 2, guided the research process to ensure that the questions were answered. Literature related to special education leadership, leadership preparation, leadership knowledge and skills, and leadership standards and evaluation were thoroughly explored. Particular emphasis was placed on the research from the Mid-continental Research for Education and Learning, whose work led to the development of the North Carolina Standards for School Executives (see Appendix A).

### **Instrumentation**

The Principals' Survey (Appendix D) and the Directors' Survey (Appendix E) that were used in this study were developed by the researcher to fully

investigate the research questions. Both survey instruments contained rating questions and open-ended questions. A five-point Likert-type scale was used as the response mode for the questions that required principals and directors to provide ratings.

### **Study Participants**

The participants were practicing pre-kindergarten through grade 12 public school administrators in the state of North Carolina. Directors of special education programs in North Carolina school systems and principals actively serving as leaders of public schools in North Carolina as of January, 2010 were invited to participate. Email addresses for principals were obtained from a link provided on the website hosted by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction at [www.ncpublicschools.org](http://www.ncpublicschools.org). Email addresses of directors of special education programs were obtained by searching each NC public school system's website.

### **Deployment of Survey and Response Rates**

Invitations to complete the survey were sent to 2,466 public school principals in North Carolina and 83 directors of special education programs in North Carolina. Measures were taken to protect the confidentiality of participants. The survey was sent via email with an introduction that clearly and precisely described the purpose of the study and protections that would be employed should principals and directors choose to participate. Details required by the university's Institutional Review Board were also shared in the email's

introduction, so principals and directors were made fully aware of the purpose of the study. Individual names were not asked, and all other personally identifiable information were not requested or used in the study.

The survey software utilized for the data collection in this study contains a function that was selected to mask principals' and directors' Internet Service Provider (ISP) addresses, and the data were securely stored under password protection within the software. Since absolute confidentiality of data provided through the Internet cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access, participants were encouraged to close their browsers when they completed the survey, to further protect confidentiality.

Shortly after the email invitations were sent for the principal survey, representatives of four school systems in North Carolina sent separate emails regarding the need to secure approval from their Local Education Agencies prior to their employees being able to participate in the survey. A response was sent to each individual describing the unintended noncompliance with their LEA policy and an assurance that all measures would be taken to ensure that no data would be used from their districts if principals had already participated. No additional correspondence was received from those school systems. The UNCG Institutional Review Board for the protection of Human Participants in Research approved this study. Further consultation with IRB officials indicated that the study was conducted in full compliance with UNCG policy.

Using technical support from the survey software company, any

responses that could be traced from those four school systems were deleted. In addition to deleting responses from the school systems in question, no reminders were sent about the survey to those who had not completed it yet. Although this limited the ability to increase the response rates, it was done as an added measure to ensure that no additional contacts were made to the four districts in question. Table 1 represents the responses after the process of deleting unusable responses was completed.

**Table 3.1: Response Rates from Each Participant Group**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Total Invitations</b>	<b>Total Completed</b>	<b>Total Partially Completed</b>
Principals	2,466	183 (7%)	233 (9%)
Directors	87	13 (15%)	16 (18%)
All	2,553	196 (13%)	249 (10%)

The invitation to directors of special education programs was sent after the principals' survey. In keeping with the assurance made to the four districts who had communicated their requirements for participation, directors in those systems were not included in the invitation to directors. Another factor contributing to the low number of directors' survey was the unavailability of their email addresses. Each email address was searched for individually resulting in

97 email addresses located. Of those, ten were undeliverable resulting in a total number of 87 delivered director surveys.

### **Data Collection**

The participants participated in an electronic survey that asked them to assess the importance of each of the ten identified key leadership areas:

- 1) Understanding Law and Policy
- 2) Using Data to Improve Teacher Performance
- 3) Using Data to Improve Student Performance
- 4) Creating an Inclusive Culture
- 5) Collaborating with Families
- 6) Participating in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Process
- 7) Scheduling and Service Delivery
- 8) Differentiated Practices
- 9) Allocating Resources
- 10) Hiring and Supporting Qualified Personnel

For each of the above leadership categories, quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the participants in order to obtain a rich data set that would permit the researcher to correlate principals' perceptions and directors' perception about principal leadership for special education. The survey asked participating principals and directors of special education to demonstrate, using a rating scale, their perceptions of how effective principals are at providing leadership for special education in each of the ten areas. In addition, for each of

the ratings that the participants were asked to provide, they responded to two open-ended questions. The first open-ended question asked them to identify the things they do in that particular area that make them effective. The second open-ended question requested that they provide narrative about what they need to know and be able to do to more effectively perform in that area. All responses were anonymous. The survey questions were designed with the standards for North Carolina School Executives in mind, but they were written to specifically address skills for effective special education leadership. The literature review on special education leadership was used to identify essential skills in this area, as they relate to the seven standards, and resulted in the survey items.

### **Data Analysis**

The results of the survey were gathered and analyzed according to priorities for what to analyze and why. Following the theoretical proposition that principals must do certain things well to be effective special education leaders allowed a proper focus of attention on the data that helped organize a response to that proposition. Coding and categorizing the narrative text that were gleaned from the electronic survey resulted in emerging themes. This allowed the data to determine the direction of what is deemed important and why by principals and special education directors.

“Reading and reflecting on data records, you see your project document by document. But your project requires you to see across the data, and above the individual documents, to themes and ideas. Usually it also requires you to gather all the data on a topic, to think about it and rethink

it. To gather everything on a topic, you need to code.” (Richards, 2009, p. 93)

The reader is, in a sense, taken on a journey that begins with a description and moves forward into an explanation of findings and evidences to support the explanation. Of critical importance was the notion of moving beyond any perceptions about special education leadership and share the evidence collected while still maintaining a relationship between the two.

The study needed to determine what relationships existed between the essential skills for special education leadership and the responses of practicing school administrators. The data to be collected were based on individual principal perspectives of their effectiveness and needs for special education leadership. To accurately measure perspectives in relation to actual performance, additional data would need to be collected via future studies. For example, perceptual data from teachers, parents, students and other constituents may be able to add another dimension to evaluate how principal perceptions match up with other participants in special education. The purpose of this study was to discover what principals need to know and be able to do with regard to leading the special education programs in their schools. No attempt was made to determine whether principals were actually effective at these elements in their administrative practice.

Quantitative and qualitative data from financial sources, student achievement, teacher performance, master schedules, parent surveys or

interviews, and other sources may yield important information that helps connect principal perspectives to outcomes. Essentially, any and all data related to the seven standards could contribute to more valid conclusions. Yet, the purpose of this study is simply to query building level administrators about their perspectives of special education leadership strengths and needs for special education leadership.

Specifically, the survey instrument was designed to collect data that are directly related to the school executive standards and the identified correlating skills and knowledge needed for effective special education leadership.

### **Ethical Issues**

Since the survey was disseminated to public school principals in North Carolina, measures were taken to protect the confidentiality of participants. The survey was sent via email with an introduction that clearly and precisely described the purpose of the study and protections that would be employed should principals choose to participate. Details required by the University's Institutional Review Board were also shared in the email's introduction, so principals are made fully aware of the purpose of the study. Individual names were not asked, and no other personally identifiable information was not requested or used in the study.

### **Limitations of the Study**

While this study researched North Carolina principal perspectives of effective special education leadership, the generalizability of results may be a

limitation. Even with a high response rate, it may be difficult to generalize responses to the national population of building level administrators.

The research results must also consider possible regional differences in responses, since different states and localities within each state provide varying levels of support to building level administrators with the implementation of special education policies and procedures. In addition, different states use different evaluation instruments for principals which may have variations from the standards used in North Carolina. Yet, to counter these limitations, the survey questions are based, not only on North Carolina standards but on the literature on effective special education leadership.

Even though local variations in special education policies and procedures exist, there are general skills and understandings that principals must have in order to provide effective special education leadership. Since special education policies are based on federal legislation, all states accepting IDEA funding must comply with the regulations. While requisites for following federal mandates do not necessarily equate with effective leadership practices, there may be certain skills and knowledge that all principals must possess and execute in order to provide effective special education leadership. So, though this study's data collection may be limited to North Carolina principals, application of results to principals across the country may be viable. Educational leadership has generalizability, so special education leadership may well follow suit.

While this study gathered data regarding principals' perceptions of their effectiveness and needs for special education leadership, it was not designed to measure how the perceptions related to actual effectiveness. Principals were asked to reflect on practices that made them effective and to report on skills and knowledge they needed to become more effective, but the study did not validate the results of the perceptual data by comparing them to actual outcomes at the building level.

Future studies may address this limitation by analyzing principals' perceptual data to outcome data from various sources that yield additional qualitative and quantitative data. The data collected and analyzed from this study could inform future studies that further delve into effective leadership practices for students with exceptional needs. Students' needs continue to evolve and become more diversified, and educational leadership skills and knowledge continue to morph along with greater societal changes that impact our students. The wealth of special education knowledge is no longer relegated to a select few. Building-level administrators must possess a breadth and depth of knowledge about student needs that is all-inclusive. Perhaps a school leader's effectiveness in special education has application to leadership in all arenas of education.

In this chapter, a description of the methodology used in this research project was presented. The research questions, the instrumentation, study participants, survey deployment and response rates, data collection and analysis, and limitations of the study are all critical considerations. The next phase of this

research study focuses on the results and what they reveal with regard to the purpose of this study.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS**

The purpose of this chapter is to report the findings of this study. A presentation of the purpose and research questions is followed by a summary of the return rate and demographic variables. Finally, the findings from the gathering of data for this study are depicted. Throughout the presentation of findings, results from the principal survey are followed by results from the director survey for each of the eleven categories that were a part of the survey.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of principals and directors of special education programs about principal leadership for special education. The following research questions guided the investigation:

- How do principals and directors of special education programs perceive the effectiveness of principals in major categories of school leadership?
- What do principals and directors of special education programs say that principals do that contributes to principal effectiveness in each of the major categories?
- What do principals and directors of special education programs identify as needs or supports that would assist principals in

enhancing their leadership for special education in the identified areas?

The major categories around which the questions were designed for the survey were:

1. Understanding Law and Policy
2. Using Data to Improve Teacher Performance
3. Using Data to Improve Student Performance
4. Creating an Inclusive School Culture
5. Collaborating with Families
6. Serving as the LEA Representative
7. Scheduling for Special Education and Related Services
8. Supporting Teachers in Differentiating Instruction
9. Arranging for and Justifying the Use of Resources
10. Selecting and Supporting Successful Personnel

These ten areas emerged from an extensive review of the literature on the topic of leadership for special education (see Appendix B). In addition, the ten key areas were analyzed for correlations with the North Carolina Standards for School Executives (see Appendix A) to further substantiate the categories selected as worthy of inclusion in the study.

### **Summary of Responses**

Survey participants were asked what region of North Carolina they served as principal or directors. Figure 4.1 shows which regions were included in the

response selections. As indicated in Table 4.1, the highest percentage of participation was from the Piedmont-Triad/Central region for both principals and directors. The regional participation rate ranged from 5% to 3% for principals and from 0% to 24% for directors.

**Figure 4.1: Geographic Regions**



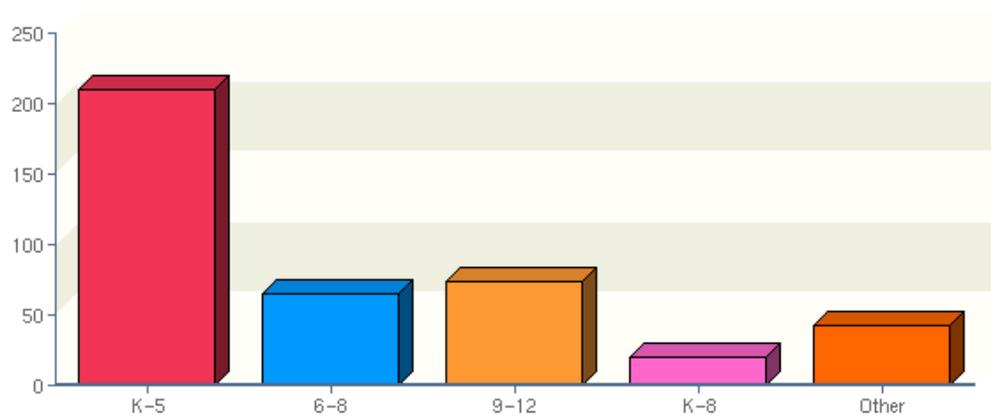
**Table 4.1: Response Rates by Geographic Region**

	<b>PRINCIPALS</b>	<b>DIRECTORS</b>
<b>Piedmont-Triad / Central</b>	152 (38%)	7 (24%)
<b>Southeast</b>	52 (13%)	5 (17%)
<b>Western</b>	47 (12%)	5 (17%)
<b>Northwest</b>	42 (10%)	3 (10%)
<b>Southwest</b>	39 (10%)	3 (10%)
<b>Northeast</b>	28 (7%)	4 (14%)
<b>Sandhills / South Central</b>	24 (6%)	0
<b>North Central</b>	20 (5%)	2 (7%)

Figure 4.2 and Table 4.2 demonstrate the grade levels of the schools where the principal respondents serve. The majority of the respondents who at

least partially completed the survey are principals of K-5 schools. Principals of 9-12 schools and 6-8 schools were very close in number, 73 and 63 respectively.

**Figure 4.2: Grade Level Reported by Principals**

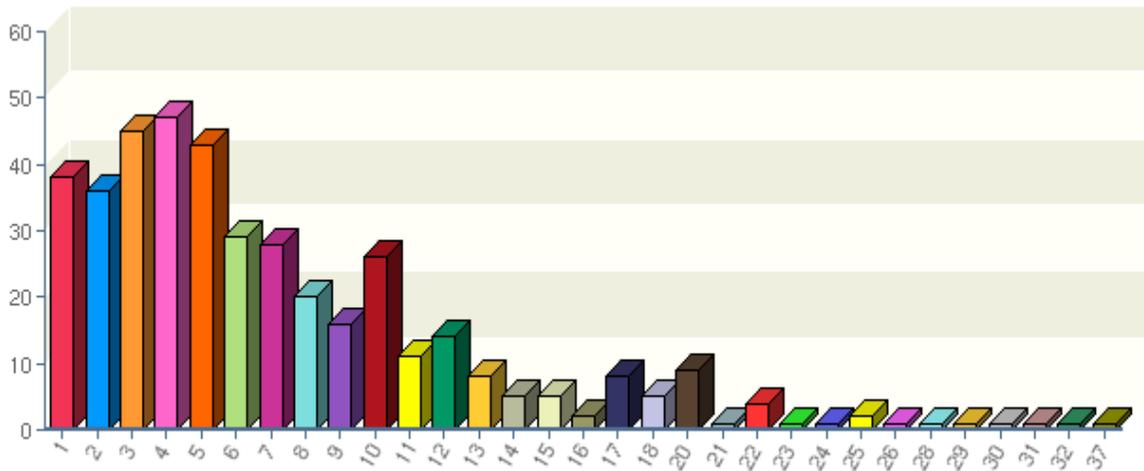


**Table 4.2: Grade Level Reported by Principals**

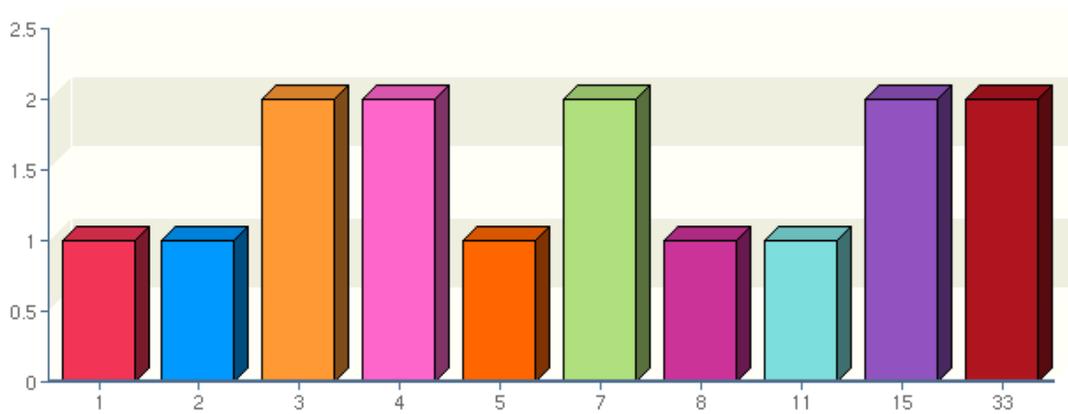
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>K-5</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>9-12</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>6-8</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>K-8</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5%</b>

The majority of the principals who at least partially responded reported having one to ten years experience as a principal (see Figure 4.3). The range of experience was between one and 37 years, with four years, three years, and five years being the most frequently reported number of years of experience. The number of years of experience reported by directors ranged from one to 33 (see Figure 4.4).

**Figure 4.3: Number of Years Experience Reported by Principals**



**Figure 4.4: Number of Years Experience Reported by Directors**



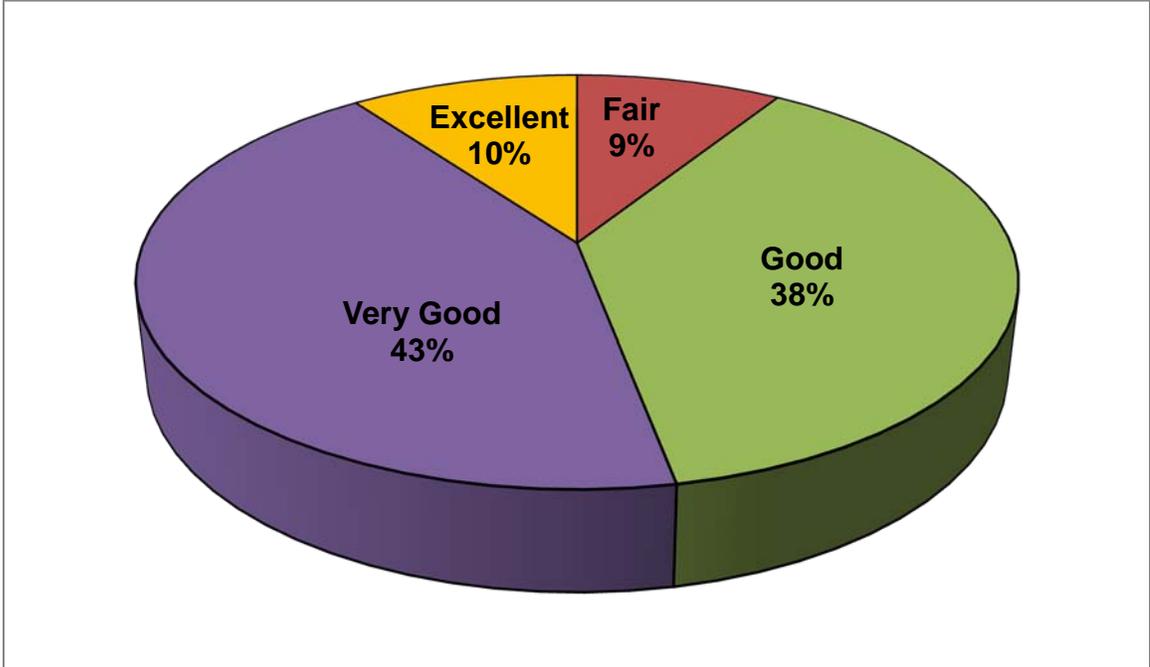
**Understanding Law and Policy**

A total of 410 principals rated their understanding of law and policy related to the education of students with disabilities. Figure 4.5 summarizes their

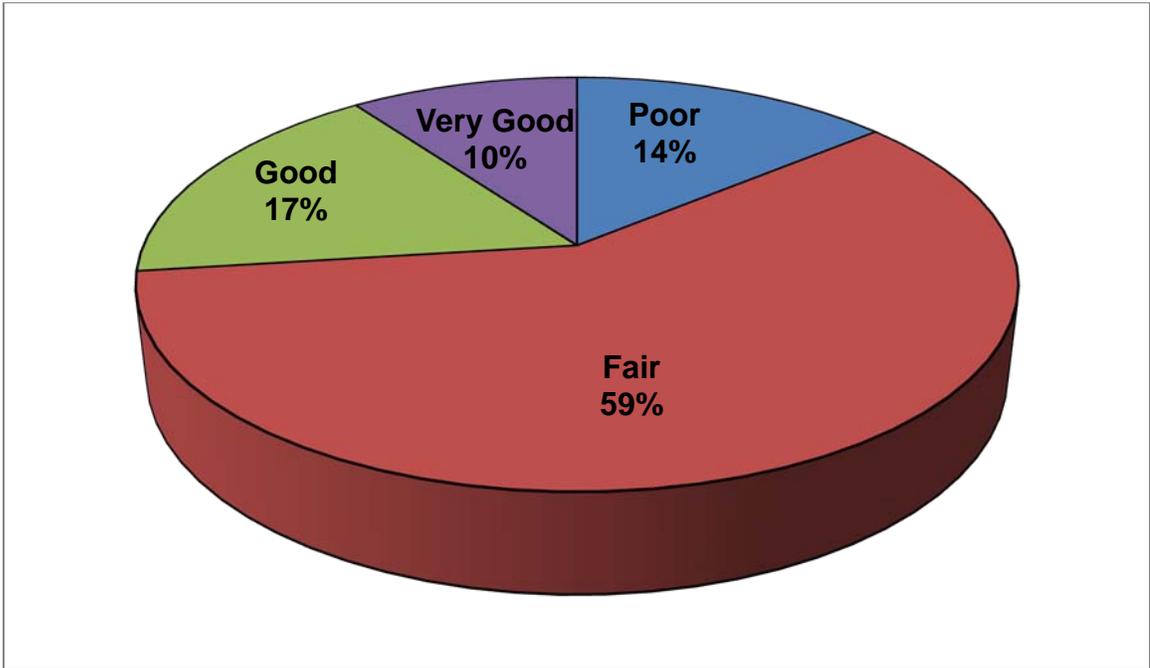
responses. Eighty-one percent of the responding principals rated themselves as good or very good in the area of law and policy. Ten percent, or 41 principals, perceive their leadership to be excellent in this area. No principals reported a rating of poor. The average rating of all principals was 3.54.

Seventeen of the 29 Directors of Special Education Programs who responded to the question rated principals' understanding of law and policy as fair. Seventeen percent of the directors rated principals' understanding in this area as good and fourteen percent assigned a rating of poor. The average rating by directors was 2.24. Figure 4.6 provides a summary of directors' ratings in this category.

**Figure 4.5: Principals' Ratings / Understanding Law and Policy**



**Figure 4.6: Directors' Ratings / Understanding Law and Policy**



### *Understanding Law and Policy: Open-Ended Responses*

Four major themes emerged from the narrative responses from principals and directors regarding the understanding of law and policy: Professional Development / Preparation, Individualized Education Plans / Serving as LEA Representative, and Collaboration with Others. One theme emerged in the directors' responses that did not emerge in the principals responses: Student Discipline.

#### *Theme 1: Professional Development / Preparation*

The most prevalent topic emerging from the responses in this category dealt with professional development. This held true for both questions; *what do you do that indicates that you have an effective understanding of law and policy related to the education of students with disabilities?* and *what knowledge and skills do you need to learn to develop an effective understanding of law and policy related to the education of students with disabilities?* Many principals reported professional development on policy and law as contributing to their effectiveness and, even among those same respondents; the need for additional training appeared numerous times. References to specific training needed were very limited, though, and included training on the Comprehensive Exceptional Children Accountability System (CECAS), Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA), Responsiveness to Intervention (RtI), and the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process. The lack of reference to specific training was the

major reason for professional development to emerge as a major theme instead of being embedded into more specific themes.

Although the respondents remained very general in their identification of training needs, a large number of principals indicated that the professional development needed to be ongoing and accessible in different formats and from different venues. In addition, principals tended to report that professional development in this area needed to be had by all, not just the principal and/or special education personnel. A sampling of the responses is below.

Keeping current on utilizing websites for clarification

Professional development around special education laws, IEPs, and goal setting for students with disabilities. I would like this not only for my EC teachers, but also for my regular education teachers.

I would like to have more training as the laws change and the paperwork changes especially in the area of accountability.

I need sustainable staff development that keeps me abreast of changes in the laws.

Become an active learner in Spec. Ed. curriculum and new or changing laws governing E.C.

Participate in training on how to be an LEA Rep

*Theme 2: Individualized Education Plans / Serving as LEA Representative*

Both director and principal groups provided answers that specifically identified the IEP process and serving as LEA representative as an indicator of effectiveness and a key issue for knowledge and skill development for principals. A very large number of principals cited participation in IEP meetings as indication of their effective understanding of law and policy. Many of them also reported that they ensure appropriate IEP implementation. Directors tended to emphasize an understanding of IEPs and active participation in IEP meetings. Below are some responses from both groups.

Help to create rosters for classes based on IEP's and work with the staff to write goals that are beneficial, understandable, and attainable.

I would like to understand the forms a bit more.

I monitor teacher implementation of IEP accommodations and modifications.

Ensure that teachers are following IEPs and keeping paperwork compliant.

Monitor IEP accommodations and modifications across all settings.

Understand legal implications of violation of the IEP process.

### *Theme 3: Collaboration with Others*

Among the principal responses, many references were made to people and groups with whom they collaborate and go to for assistance in the area of law and policy. These included the director of exceptional children, school exceptional children chair, lead teacher for exceptional children, teacher, lead psychologist, school system attorney, external and internal agencies, Department of Public Instruction, Exceptional Children's staff, compliance officer, superintendent, and Exceptional Children's process manager. The directors posted similar responses that related to this theme, such as:

They refer to their special education teaches and the EC Director when making decisions.

Call for help before doing something rash.

They call me.

Follow advice of Special Education Program Specialists.

Do not expect principals to know everything – they need to know who to ask and what to ask.

I do not expect principals to KNOW all the laws – that gets us in trouble – but to have enough knowledge to know when they need help.

#### *Theme 4: Student Discipline*

Though not emerging as a theme in principal responses, student discipline was an issue that most responding directors reported as significant. The three excerpts below are a sampling of director responses.

If a student has discipline issues, they need to involve the correct staff to determine whether the child needs MD, BIP, etc.

The biggest area of weakness is in the area of discipline particularly at the upper levels. Even with an effective understanding of law and policy, there are often times this desire to follow a different set of rules...one that is more fitting to the school or that principal in particular rather than in conjunction with the law. Principals desperately need to learn what to say and what not to say to keep the system out of legal jeopardy.

Principals have limited understanding of the laws and policies related to the education of SWD, especially discipline issues.

#### *Overview of Responses: Understanding Law and Policy*

To capture the perceptions as reported in relation to the major research questions, Table 4.3 provides a summary of the responses in this leadership category according to the respondent's role as principal or director. Table 4.3 presents the survey responses in this category in a format that delineates what principals do and what principals need to learn. Some of the responses included in this overview may be part of the themes reported above but some are included

because the table is intended to capture specific things that principals and directors reported that principals do and need to learn.

**Table 4.3: Response Overview / Understanding Law and Policy**

	<b>What Principals Do</b>	<b>What Principals Need to Learn</b>
<b>PERCEPTION OF PRINCIPALS</b>	IEPs (LEA Rep, compliance, monitoring)	Training (CECAS, Rtl)
	Read updates	Make it a priority
	Attend training on topic	Communication with EC staff
	Refer/collaborate to/with others	Listen, set aside personal feelings and deal with the facts
	Subscribe to LEXIS	Rtl Process
	Graduate coursework	Forms
<b>PERCEPTION OF DIRECTORS</b>	Participate in IEP meetings	Discipline
	Confer with others	Procedures provided by NCDPI
	Involve correct staff	FAPE
	Attend training	How the IEP committee works
	Monitor IEPs	IEP process
	Nothing	Placement process
	Follow procedures for placements, reevaluation, and suspensions	Eligibility process

Four major themes emerged from the narrative responses from principals and directors regarding the understanding of law and policy: Professional Development / Preparation, Individualized Education Plans / Serving as LEA Representative, and Collaboration with Others. One theme emerged in the directors' responses that did not emerge in the principals responses: Student Discipline.

This overview of responses is notable because principals and directors differ over their perceptions about what principals need to know and be able to do in the area of understanding law and policy to some extent. Directors perceive the need for a focus on acquiring more knowledge and skills in the area of student discipline. Principals tended to focus more on the Individualized Education Plan process and keeping abreast of legal changes. Directors and principals did both believe, based on their responses, that more professional development is needed in the area of understanding law and policy. In addition, directors and principals had in common their perceptions that collaborating with others is important in order to effectively lead in this area.

### **Using Data to Improve the Performance of Teachers**

A total of 325 principals rated their understanding of using data to improve the performance of teachers. Figure 4.7 summarizes their responses. Seventy-eight percent of the responding principals rated themselves as good or very good in the area of using data to improve the performance of teachers. Twelve percent, or 41 principals, perceive their leadership to be excellent in this area.

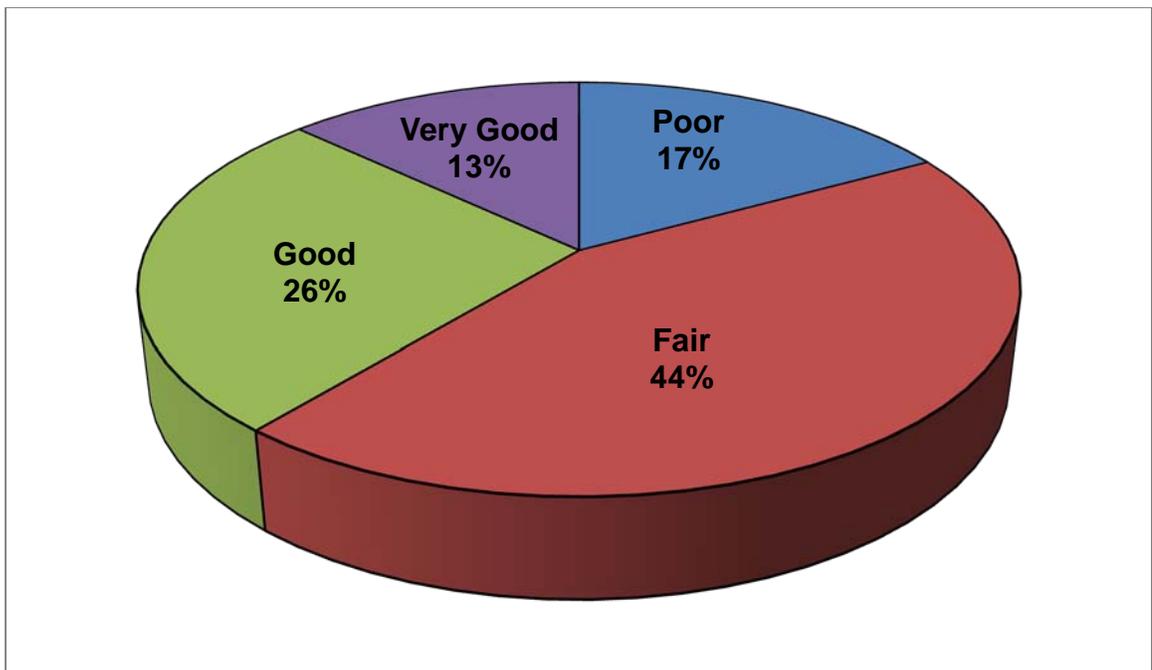
No principals reported a rating of poor. The average rating of all principals was 3.58.

In the category of using data to improve the performance of teachers, seventy percent of the 23 Directors of Special Education Programs who responded to the question rated principals' use of data to improve teacher performance as fair or good. No directors rated principals as excellent and seventeen percent reported a rating of poor. Thirty-nine percent, or nine, of the directors rated principals as good or very good in this category. The average rating was 2.35. Figure 4.8 provides a summary of directors' ratings in this category.

**Figure 4.7: Principals' Ratings/Using Data to Improve Teacher Performance**



**Figure 4.8: Directors' Ratings / Using Data to Improve Teacher Performance**



### *Using Data to Improve Teacher Performance: Open-Ended Responses*

Two major themes emerged from the narrative responses from principals regarding the use of data to improve the performance of teachers as it relates to educating all students, including those with disabilities: Using Data Analysis Tools and Linking Data to Instruction. From the directors on this topic, the following themes emerged: Depth of Understanding and Linking Data to Instruction.

#### *Theme 1 - Principals: Using Data Analysis Tools*

Many principals cited specific data tools and resources that they either use to be effective or need to know more about. These included EVAAS, iSparta, Excel, AIMS Web, ClassScape, AM, AR, STAR, DRA, Children's Progress, MAP, Data Wise, SIOP, TPRI, My Access, Discovery, Tetra Data, Letterland, DIBELS, Blue Diamond, SRA, CC-Port Assessment, pivot tables, TeachScape, ClassWorks, CPAA, DASH, CBM, Number Worlds, V-Math live, and Academy of Reading. This theme emerged as significant due to the large number of responses that cited a program or tool to collect and/or analyze data. Some of the references to specific programs or tools were accompanied by a next step and some were listed in isolation. Below are examples:

Access Isparta, access SAS EVAAS, and developing a spreadsheet related to the performance skills of students by teacher/grade

Our district is purchasing access to AIMS Web to assist in the documentation, recording, and reporting of Rtl progress monitoring data. Analyze EVAAS, ClassScapes, AM, AR, STAR, DRA, and Children's Progress assessments to group children for differentiation in instruction. I disaggregate data using EOG test scores, EVAAS reports, data gathered from mock/practice EOGs given throughout the year, monitor STAR reading reports, grades, and PLC notes leading instruction. I review all formative assessment data including ClassScapes, My Access, EVAAS, report cards, attendance records, and grade level planning notes.

Within this same theme, some responses to the question about what knowledge and skills do you need to learn to use data to improve the performance of teachers were:

I need to actually use the data more to gain a better understanding of what the data tells me and how to communicate next steps to teachers. I need a better understanding particularly of the reports generated by EVAAS.

How to read and interpret data, training on what trends to look for, instruments that are best used to collect accurate data

With the new teacher evaluation process beginning next year, I need to thoroughly understand the process and use data from observations, walk-throughs, teacher individual growth plans and progress to determine areas of need.

## *Theme 2 – Principals and Directors: Linking Data to Instruction*

Both principal and director groups provided numerous responses that related to making connections between data and instruction. Only responses that suggested *changes in instruction as a result of reviewing data* were included in this response category. To the question about what principals do to be effective in this area, some examples of the responses included:

I collect and analyze data from multiple sources and require teachers to reflect on data and show how it affects instruction.

Our grade level teams have weekly data meetings where they analyze specific current data to determine differentiated instruction.

We have conversations and changes in teaching practices based on data that has been collected.

We disaggregate the data with small groups of teachers and encourage regrouping, remediation, and reteaching in flexible ways to meet the needs of students.

Among the principal responses about what knowledge and skills they need to learn to use data to improve the performance of teachers were:

I need to learn how to better use daily formative assessment to make changes in instruction and monitor teachers' use of data to improve instruction.

How to read available data. How data relates to students in school, district, and state. What changes in instruction occurred due to assessments. How much growth is observed? What objectives need to be retaught and reviewed?

More discussion with my staff directly, not whole group.

Directors' perceptions of principal leadership in the area of using data to improve teacher performance included the following comments about instructional practices:

They are actively using data to plan reinforcement and reteaching of skills.

Principals, and others, must learn that totally different strategies may be needed with the most severely impaired learners and that it is okay to veer away from teaching the curriculum as is to meet the needs of students with disabilities. They must learn to instill in regular and special education staff that curriculum modifications and accommodations are not only mandatory in accordance with an IEP but also essential for many students with disabilities to ensure their ability to acquire and retain material over time.

### *Theme 3 - Directors: Depth of Understanding*

A theme that surfaced from the responses of special education directors was the need for a more in-depth understanding of data and in order to use it to improve performance of teachers. This did not emerge in the principals

responses as a theme. The responses below provide some examples of the findings that support this theme:

They need to learn more about what the data means and how to be an instructional leader in their schools.

In my opinion they need a lot more background in tests/measurements – they pretty much get graphs and interpretations and accept them at face value. Would like to see them more knowledgeable about how the conclusions are made.

How to interpret multiple sources of data and not rely on one piece of evidence to make decisions.

*Overview of Responses: Using Data to Improve the Performance of Teachers*

The three themes – Using Data Analysis Tools, Linking Data to Instruction, and Depth of Understanding – that were identified through coding the responses of directors and principals to the questions about what principals do and need to know and understand in the area of using data to improve teacher performance are also embodied in Table 4.4. In addition to the themes that emerged, other responses were included in the overview that either did not align squarely with a theme or crossed more than one theme, such as Response to Intervention.

Table 4.4 presents the survey responses in this category in a format that delineates what principals do and what principals need to learn. Some of the

responses included in this overview may be part of the themes reported above but some are included because the table is intended to capture specific things that principals and directors reported that principals do and need to learn.

**Table 4.4: Response Overview / Using Data to Improve Teacher Performance**

	<b>What Principals Do</b>	<b>What Principals Need to Learn</b>
<b>PERCEPTION OF PRINCIPALS</b>	Access data	New data and information generated by NCDPI
	Provide data to teachers	Better understanding of tools
	Rtl Process	Rtl Process
	Analyze and disaggregate data for lesson planning	Organization of the large volume of data into usable formats
	Meetings with staff to share data and the implications for instruction	How to read available data and determine changes in instruction
	Use formative and summative assessment data	Knowledge of effective best practices related to assessments
<b>PERCEPTION OF DIRECTORS</b>	Actively use data to plan reinforcement and reteaching of skills	Details of the data and how to utilize it to drive instruction
	Helping to implement appropriate best practices and strategies	Monitor analysis and utilization in planning and differentiated instruction
	Data awareness	Multiple sources of data, not one piece of evidence
	Structuring instructional intervention/tiers to address all learners	Background in tests and measurements
	Understanding and utilization of new progress monitoring and benchmark assessment data tools that target intervention areas	Research based instructional practices, processes, and student performance data

Two major themes emerged from the narrative responses from principals regarding the use of data to improve the performance of teachers as it relates to educating all students, including those with disabilities: Using Data Analysis Tools and Linking Data to Instruction. From the directors on this topic, the following themes emerged: Depth of Understanding and Linking Data to Instruction.

The information obtained from the overview of responses in this area of school leadership, using data to improve the performance of teachers, is noteworthy because directors perceive that principals need an approach to using data that has more depth while principals expressed the need for more tools for data analysis. Both groups were in agreement about the need for making instructional improvements based on data.

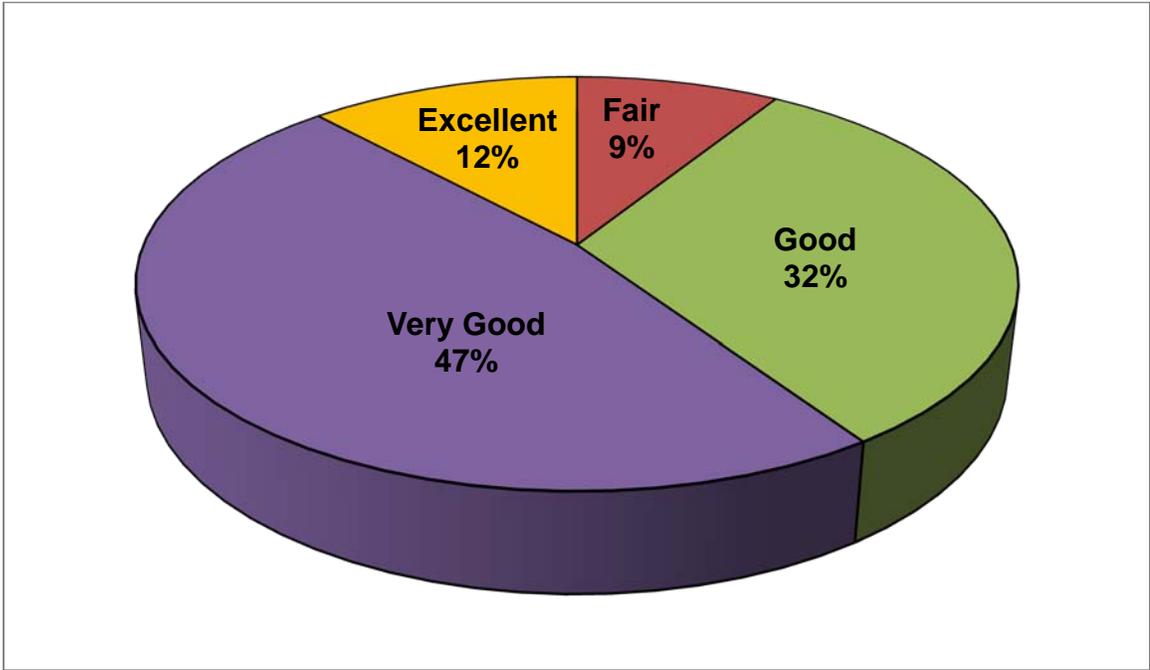
### **Using Data to Improve the Performance of Students**

A total of 278 principals rated their understanding of using data to improve the performance of students. Figure 4.9 summarizes their responses. Eighty percent of the responding principals rated themselves as good or very good in the area of using data to improve the performance of students. 11.5 percent, or 5 principals, perceive their leadership to be excellent in this area. No principals reported a rating of poor. The average rating of all principals was 3.62.

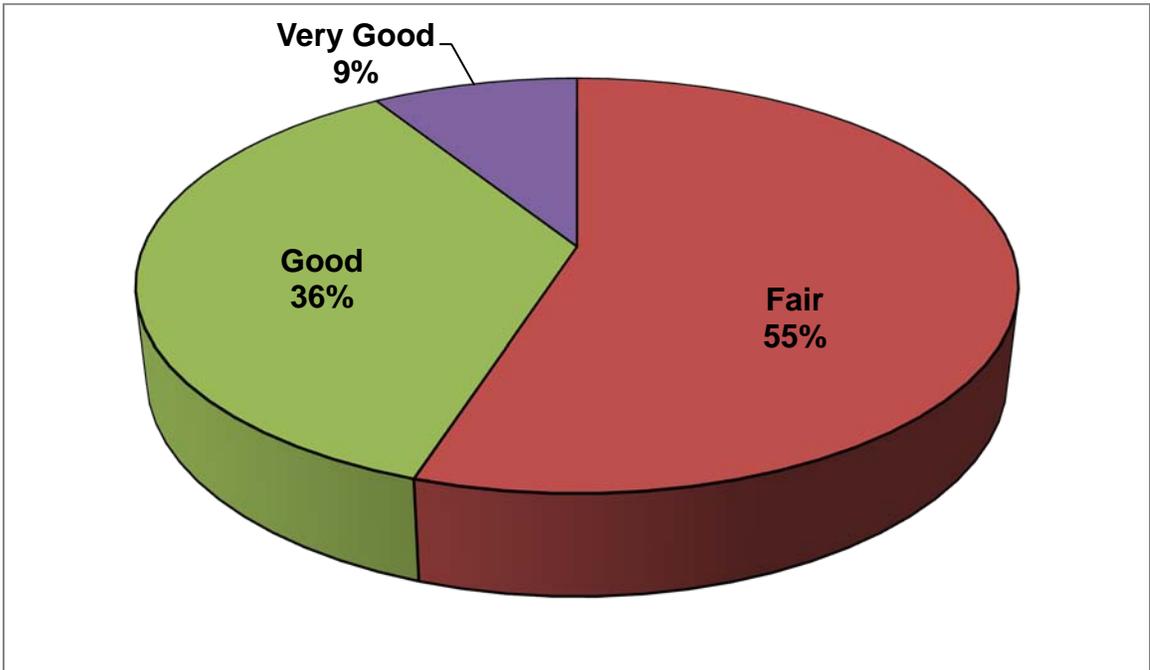
Among the 22 directors of special education that responded to this question, fifty-five percent of them rated principals' knowledge and skills in this

area as fair. Thirty-six percent, or 8 directors, assigned a rating of good and two directors perceive principals' knowledge and skills in this area as very good. The average rating by directors was 2.5. Figure 4.10 provides a summary of these ratings.

**Figure 4.9: Principals' Ratings / Using Data to Improve Student Performance**



**Figure 4.10: Directors' Ratings / Using Data to Improve Student Performance**



### *Using Data to Improve the Performance of Students: Open-Ended Responses*

In the area of using data for improving the performance of students, responses provided by principals and directors revealed three major themes. The first theme, Tools for Collecting and Analyzing Data, emerged from principal responses. The second theme, Intervening Based on Data, was evident in both principal and director responses. From directors only, the theme of Individual Growth and Performance evolved.

#### *Theme 1 – Principals: Tools for Collecting and Analyzing Data*

Principals gave a number of programs and approaches to collecting and analyzing data for improving the performance of all students, including those with disabilities. Among them were EVAAS, Running Records, Renaissance Place, AimsWeb, ClassScape, DataWise, NCWISE, STAR, Lexiles, PEPs, CBM, NWEA MAP, DIBELS, DBM, pivot tables, Math Foundations, Foundations, Letterland, Wilson, Number Worlds, Voyages, Investigations, and Successmaker. Some of these programs and processes are instructional in nature with a data gathering component. Specific programs, with the exception of one mention of EVAAS, were not noted by directors in their responses.

#### *Theme 2 – Principals and Directors: Intervening Based on Data*

For both principals and directors, a prevalent theme was using data to provide interventions for students. Among the responses from both groups, some examples were:

Follow up on what they learn at workshops. There is not follow-up.

Designing and implementing programs based on data.

Analyze data quarterly. Develop a plan of action for those students who do not meet the quarterly benchmark. Move students among the tiers of Rtl based on their performance.

Monitor instruction and small group formations based on the data.

Study data and share results with the faculty. Manage the budget to support intensive intervention.

Using data to develop learning and action plans for all students.

How to take data as both a pre and post measure. How to take the measure and allow it to help guide instruction not just show what instruction does.

Improved performance for students with disabilities should be used for everyday instructional decision making, not just for AYP.

The responses in the 'what do you do category' did not vary much from the 'what do you need to know' category in this area of leadership. The results suggest that there is both a tendency for principals to use data to provide intervention based on data to improve student performance as well as a need to know more about the topic.

### *Theme 3 - Directors: Individual Growth and Performance*

A dominant theme in the director responses in the category of using data to improve the performance of students was attending to individual student growth and performance. Their answers, some of which are included below, were linked to the individualized education plan that students with exceptionalities require.

I am very concerned that we are so focused on the scores and what to drill and practice and reteach and teach again based on the group scores that we lose sight of what EC kids need to meet IEP goals. For example, if a student scores poorly on reading comprehension on EOG tests (or benchmarks) we drill that when poor vocabulary may be the real issue and the focus of the IEP.

Create data walls, know the individual growth needed by each student. True progress monitoring based on level of student ability not the standards of all students combined.

### *Overview of Responses: Using Data to Improve the Performance of Students*

To summarize this category of leadership by looking at the two groups as well as the two questions within the category, Table 4.5 provides an overview of what principals do and what they need to know and do to be more effective. Table 4.5 presents the survey responses in this category in a format that delineates what principals do and what principals need to learn. Some of the responses included in this overview may be part of the themes reported above

but some are included because the table is intended to capture specific things that principals and directors reported that principals do and need to learn.

**Table 4.5: Response Overview / Using Data to Improve Student Performance**

	<b>What Principals Do</b>	<b>What Principals Need to Learn</b>
<b>PERCEPTION OF PRINCIPALS</b>	Use data to prove that students are progressing	How to choose instructional strategies that match the needs of the students
	Use data to make changes	How to disaggregate data and use it to help group students and place them with strong teachers
	Find methods that help EC students access curriculum	How to utilize a team approach to make the best plan for students to be successful
	Compare formative assessment data to EVAAS data to target students for remediation	Strategies to motivate students to take responsibility in helping to progress monitor their learning
	Monitor PEPs and make sure students are receiving appropriate interventions	How to use data to help guide instruction, not just show what instruction does
	Weekly grade level meetings to discuss how to analyze data, sort data, and utilize it for effective instructional practices	How to choose the most effective pieces of data to help drive planning, instruction, and student learning
<b>PERCEPTION OF DIRECTORS</b>	Attend staff development on Rtl and other areas	Improved performance should be a part of everyday decisions, not just AYP
	Improve EOG scores and SWD subgroup for AYP	Look at data in context, not in isolation
	Assist teachers with providing appropriate interventions and strategies	True progress monitoring
	Know individual growth needed by each student	Interpreting data and designing and implementing programs based on data
	Classroom and school wide analysis of data	More technical training – EVAAS, etc.

In the area of using data for improving the performance of students, responses provided by principals and directors revealed three major themes. The first theme, Tools for Collecting and Analyzing Data, emerged from principal responses. The second theme, Intervening Based on Data, was evident in both principal and director responses. From directors only, the theme of Individual Growth and Performance evolved.

The results in this area are notable for several reasons. Using data to make instructional improvements was reported by both directors and principals, which was the same finding in the response summaries that addressed improving teacher performance. The most compelling finding in this overview was the expressed need on the part of both principals and directors to authentically use data to monitor progress and make necessary changes.

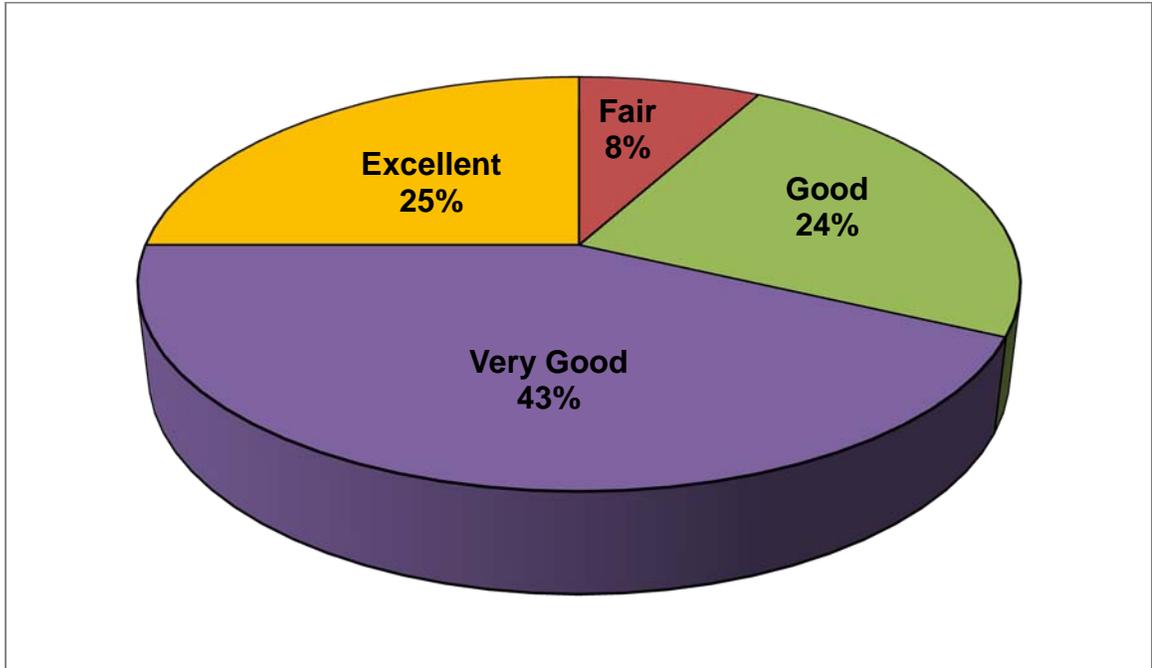
### **Creating an Inclusive School Culture**

A total of 242 principals rated their ability to create an inclusive culture. Figure 4.11 summarizes their responses. Sixty-eight percent of the responding principals rated themselves as very good or excellent in the area of creating an inclusive culture. Thirty-two percent, or 5 principals, perceive their leadership to be good or fair in this area. No principals reported a rating of poor. The average rating of all principals was 3.83.

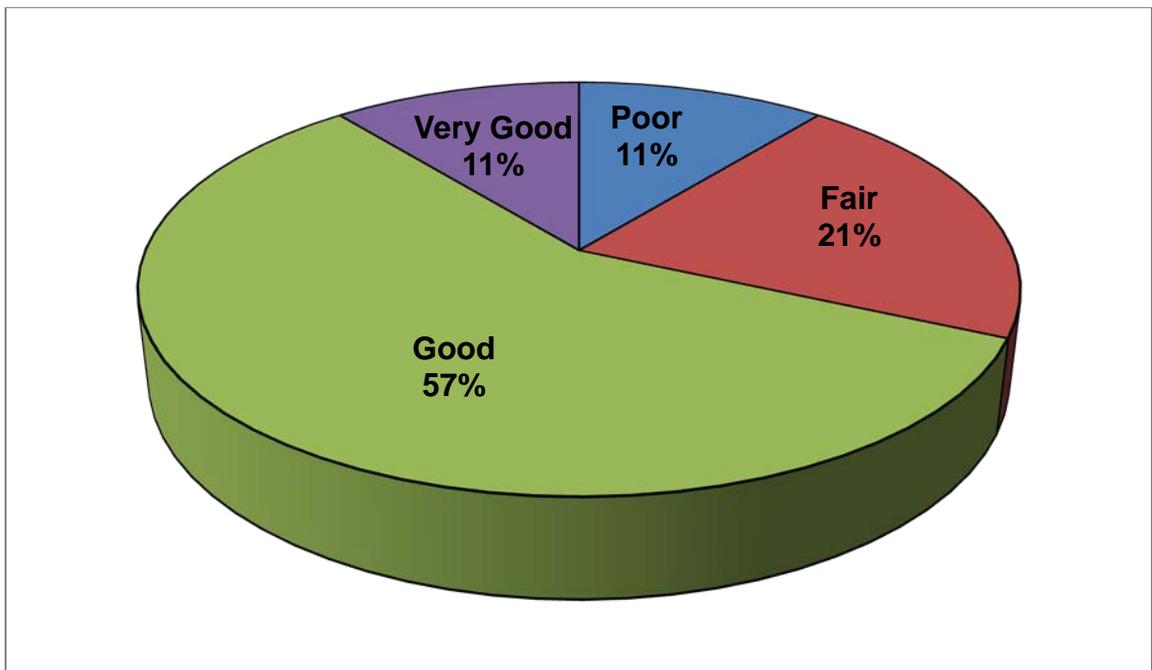
Nineteen directors of special education programs answered this question. The majority, almost 58%, rated principals' ability to create an inclusive school

culture as good. None reported an excellent rating. The average rating among directors was 2.68. Figure 4.12 demonstrates these findings.

**Figure 4.11: Principals' Ratings / Creating an Inclusive School Culture**



**Figure 4.12: Directors' Ratings / Creating an Inclusive School Culture**



### *Creating an Inclusive School Culture: Open-Ended Responses*

In the area of creating an inclusive school culture in which all students, including those with disabilities, are full participants in the academic and social environment of the school, several themes emerged across both categories. The amount of responses that belonged in each theme for each participant group varied, however. For principals, the most prevalent theme was scheduling for effective inclusive practices. For directors, the most prevalent theme was access for all students to an inclusive environment. From the responses of both directors and principals, four total themes surfaced: Access to Total School Environment, Effective Co teaching, Scheduling, and Beliefs / Mindsets. In the reporting below by thematic category, a notation is made about whether the theme emerged in the responses from one group or both.

#### *Theme 1 – Directors: Access to Total School Environment*

In the directors responses to the area of leadership for creating an inclusive school culture, a theme unique to them was the notion of ensuring that access means everything that the school offers to all children, including but not limited to instruction, and the way those decisions are made. For example:

Students are allowed access, but the access at times is not designed to meet the needs of students.

They include all students in all aspects of the school program expecting the best performance from all students.

They assign students with disabilities to general education classes and hold teachers accountable for all students.

EC students need to be included in the social environment.

### *Theme 2 – Principals: Effective Co-teaching*

The area of co-teaching as a component of an inclusive culture was included in numerous responses by principals, with many of them indicating that they and their teachers need additional training and support in the area. Responses that mentioned inclusion but not specifically the implementation of co-teaching as an inclusion model were not included in this theme because it was not clear that the responses were referencing the true inclusive approach of co-teaching. The theme of effective co-teaching was limited to responses that provided indication that the principal had an understanding of what co-teaching is. For example:

We will be incorporating more inclusion and collaboration next year instead of having EC subject area courses, so we will need to understand how these models work and how to differentiate more for these students. How colleagues can effectively plan instruction in the inclusion classroom. You need to know how to create an environment that fosters teacher interaction in planning and addressing student needs.

More knowledge about co-teaching and ways to make it work more effectively.

Continue to support teachers who deliver instruction through inclusion. Teachers need opportunities to attend staff development together.

We have conducted inclusion training for our teachers. We pair teachers based on their ability to work with each other. In a recent survey conducted by outside resources, our teachers in the inclusion model were implementing multiple teaming strategies and the school was deemed as the best inclusion model in the district. Eighty-five percent of our EC students in the inclusion model passed the EOG.

### *Theme 3 – Principals: Scheduling*

A consistent area of concern for principals evidenced in the responses in the category of creating an inclusive school culture was scheduling. Though it appeared as a response to both questions (what do you do that indicates your effectiveness and what knowledge and skills do you need to learn), it appeared much more in the latter category as an area for growth. Below are some responses that principals gave:

I need scheduling help.

Ability to master schedule and know who to pair in the inclusive model for success.

Creating the master schedule with all student needs in mind.

Need to learn to be more creative with high school scheduling when we are understaffed.

More about scheduling inclusively and still having flex time to meet individual student needs.

Scheduling is key in making sure that this happens and having the proper support for those student in all opportunities and classes.

One thing I need is help in scheduling – how to have the best practice of “co-teaching” but also to be sure there is always a resource teacher available in the classroom for those children who get a large amount of service time due to high needs.

We use our EVAAS system and NCWISE to assist with scheduling students to meet their needs.

#### *Theme 4 – Principals and Directors: Beliefs and Mindsets*

Directors and principals provided many responses that addressed the beliefs and mindsets as an area that indicates effectiveness and an area for gaining knowledge and skills. These responses tended to reflect the attitudes and dispositions of leaders and others. Commonly used words were acceptance, fears, expectations, thoughtfulness, empathy, and understanding. Some of the responses were:

Ninety-nine percent of principals I've encountered still believe in separate classes for EC – less the students are seen the better.

Strong academic knowledge, leadership, and a strong belief that all students should perform at high levels.

People skills, ability to listen to teachers who are stressed and help them problem solve.

Ability to change the mindset of some teachers that do not feel that EC students have a place in the regular classroom.

All students can learn. That belief must be inherent in all decisions and everything that is done at school.

The knowledge to understand and know what an inclusive school looks and feels like.

We value and respect all students and their strengths and areas for growth.

It really is about the attitude of the adults.....kids are inclusive by nature if we set the tone.

You need to have an open mind and look for teachers who have an open heart

*Overview of Responses: Creating an Inclusive School Culture*

Table 4.6 presents the survey responses in this category in a format that delineates what principals do and what principals need to learn. Some of the responses included in this overview may be part of the themes reported above but some are included because the table is intended to capture specific things that principals and directors reported that principals do and need to learn.

**Table 4.6: Response Overview / Creating an Inclusive School Culture**

	<b>What Principals Do</b>	<b>What Principals Need to Learn</b>
<b>PERCEPTION OF PRINCIPALS</b>	Include all students in all activities and classes	What an inclusive school feels and looks like
	Use inclusion as a model for instruction	Knowledge and understanding of scheduling
	Provide common planning opportunities	Positive Behavior Supports
	Monitor lessons of teachers	Best inclusive practices
	Use grade level meetings and staff meetings to have conversations to change old ways of thinking	How to be a more effective change agent
	Ongoing character ed program	More ability to target specific math areas
<b>PERCEPTION OF DIRECTORS</b>	Communicate expectations	Design access to meet needs of students
	Hire teachers who understand the needs of their children	Review data about student achievement in inclusive classes
	Hold general ed teachers accountable for all students	Knowledge and understanding of various co-teaching models
	Coordinate school activities and environments that support differentiated instruction	Understanding of the 14 disability categories and the continuum of services
	Endorse interventions by all and for all students with learning and/or behavior difficulties	Set and create a climate of acceptance that allows for, supports, and celebrates individual differences

In the area of creating an inclusive school culture in which all students, including those with disabilities, are full participants in the academic and social environment of the school, several themes emerged across both categories. The amount of responses that belonged in each theme for each participant group varied, however. For principals, the most prevalent theme was scheduling for effective inclusive practices. For directors, the most prevalent theme was access for all students to an inclusive environment. From the responses of both directors and principals, four total themes surfaced: Access to Total School Environment, Effective Co teaching, Scheduling, and Beliefs / Mindsets.

The results in the area of creating an inclusive school culture were noteworthy because they were indicative of the complexity of this topic. Effective leadership in the area of creating an inclusive school culture means so many things depending upon the perspective, as evidenced by the findings in this section. A wide range was reflected in directors' and principals' perceptions – from co-teaching to positive behavior supports to holding teachers accountable and more.

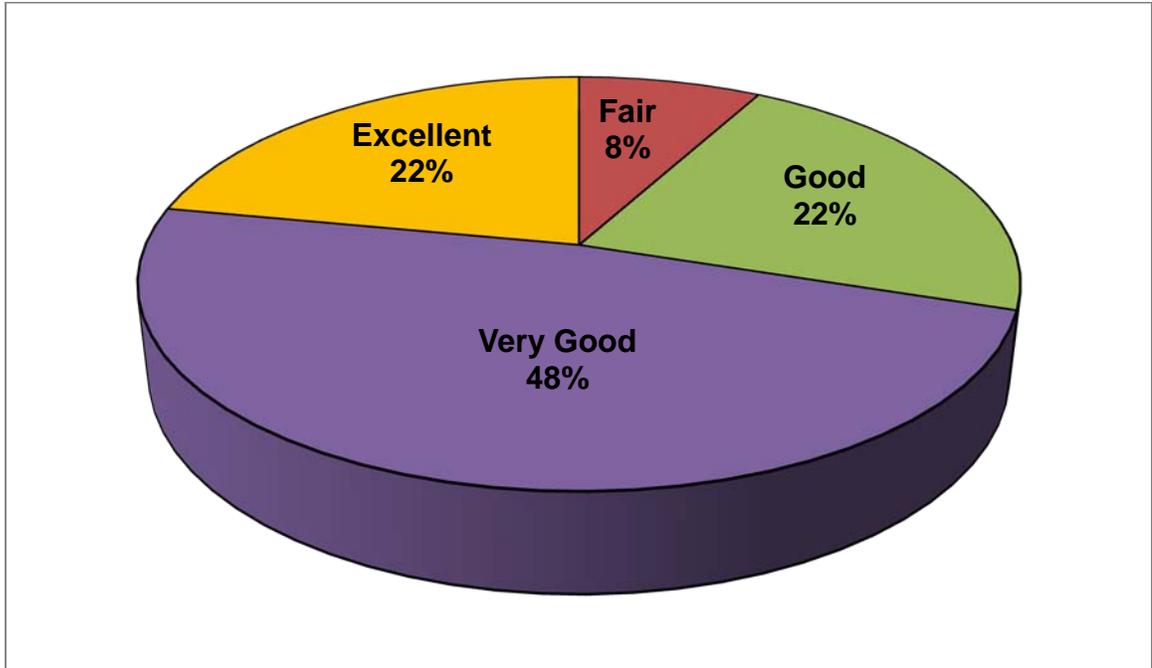
### **Collaborating with Families**

A total of 228 principals rated their ability to create an inclusive culture. Figure 4.13 summarizes their responses. Seventy percent of the responding principals rated themselves as good or very good in the area of collaborating with the families of students with disabilities to include them in the educational decision making regarding their children. Twenty-two percent, or 5 principals,

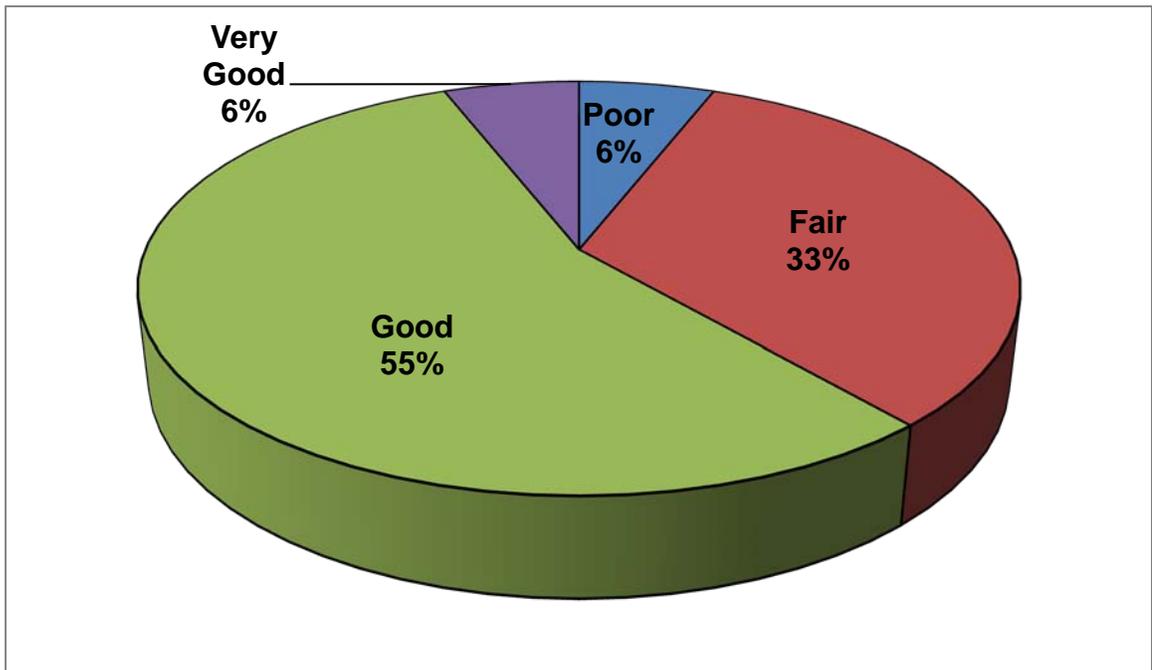
perceive their leadership to be excellent in this area. No principals reported a rating of poor. The average rating of all principals was 3.83.

Eighteen directors of special education programs provided their perception of principals' knowledge and skills in the area of collaborating with the families of students with disabilities. Most of them assigned a rating of good followed by fair ratings from 33% of the directors. The average rating among directors was 2.61. None reported principals as excellent in this area and only one rated them as poor. Figure 4.14 reports the ratings by directors.

**Figure 4.13: Principals' Ratings / Collaborating with Families**



**Figure 4.14: Directors' Ratings / Collaborating with Families**



### *Collaborating with Families: Open-Ended Responses*

Two themes evolved from the responses of principals and directors regarding collaborating with parents and families. The first involves relationship building, with communication a key component, and the second had to do with IEP meetings as a context for family involvement. These two themes were parts of responses in almost every survey participant who offered their perspectives in the area of collaborating with families. Other issues such as equity and barriers to collaboration surfaced but were not as prevalent. Two responses pointed to the notion that principals do not know what they do not know about collaborating with parents and families, expressing their need for strategies. A summary of the two major themes is below. Unlike the previous categories, the following statements surfaced that are not pertinent to either theme but noteworthy:

I've never had any formal training on this. It's likely that I don't know what I don't know.

I really am ignorant of what more we can do.

Below is a summary of each theme followed by an overview that depicts the responses separated by what principals do and what they need to do and know in order to be more effective.

#### *Theme 1: Relationship Building*

The responses that informed the identification of relationship building as a theme included words like listening, people skills, respect, conversations, following up, collaboration, and more. Principals and directors provided

numerous responses aimed at the importance of constant, consistent communication. In addition, how to do it well and effectively was an issue that emerged. Examples of specific responses were:

Anything that would help us learn to develop our relationships with our parents from where they are now (positive, but not very proactive) to a more collaborative working relationship would help us.

I would love to know how other schools are developing opportunities for communication with parents.

Meet with the families on a regular basis even outside the IEP meetings.

Make myself available to hear their concerns and work with them to develop strategies that will help their child.

Principals need to learn how to build relationships with families. They need to talk calmly and openly with families in a manner that is respectful and understanding.

Principals need to have knowledge about how to support parents in difficult situations.

### *Theme 2: IEP Meetings*

A great number of responses specifically identified IEP meetings as an indicator of effectiveness in collaborating with the families of students with disabilities. Some elaborated on the topic, as evidenced below:

Participate in the IEP meetings.

Meet with the families on a regular basis even outside of the IEP meetings.

I serve as the LEA rep for the majority of our IEP meetings.

I don't think we do enough of this. As far as "what I do",.... I attend the IEP meetings as the LEA representative. I am sad to say that is about it as far as collaborating with families of students with disabilities to include them.

Willingness to prioritize IEP meetings.

Principals actively participate in IEP meetings and support parents as team decisions are being made.

Principals attend meetings, but are not taking a leadership role in the meetings when it comes to making educational decisions about students in their buildings.

#### *Overview of Responses: Collaborating with Families*

Table 4.7 presents the survey responses in this category in a format that delineates what principals do and what principals need to learn. Some of the responses included in this overview may be part of the themes reported above but some are included because the table is intended to capture specific things that principals and directors reported that principals do and need to learn.

**Table 4.7: Response Overview / Collaborating with Families**

	<b>What Principals Do</b>	<b>What Principals Need to Learn</b>
<b>PERCEPTION OF PRINCIPALS</b>	Communicate	Effective strategies for parent involvement
	Meet with families on a regular basis outside of the IEP meetings	How other schools are developing opportunities
	Build relationships	Better dialogue with parents
	Survey parents to get feedback	Student learning needs which are appropriate for disability
	Designated communication folder day, Connect Ed	Strategies for building consensus
	Limit jargon so parents can understand the process and don't feel intimidated	Strategies for conducting needs assessments
<b>PERCEPTION OF DIRECTORS</b>	Prioritize IEP meetings	Take leadership role in meetings
	Give parents a voice	How to get parent perspective
	Say supportive things and reach out to families	People skills, listening skills
	Regard families as knowledgeable and equal participants	What to say and not to say
	Make follow up contacts	Skills with working as equal partners with parents

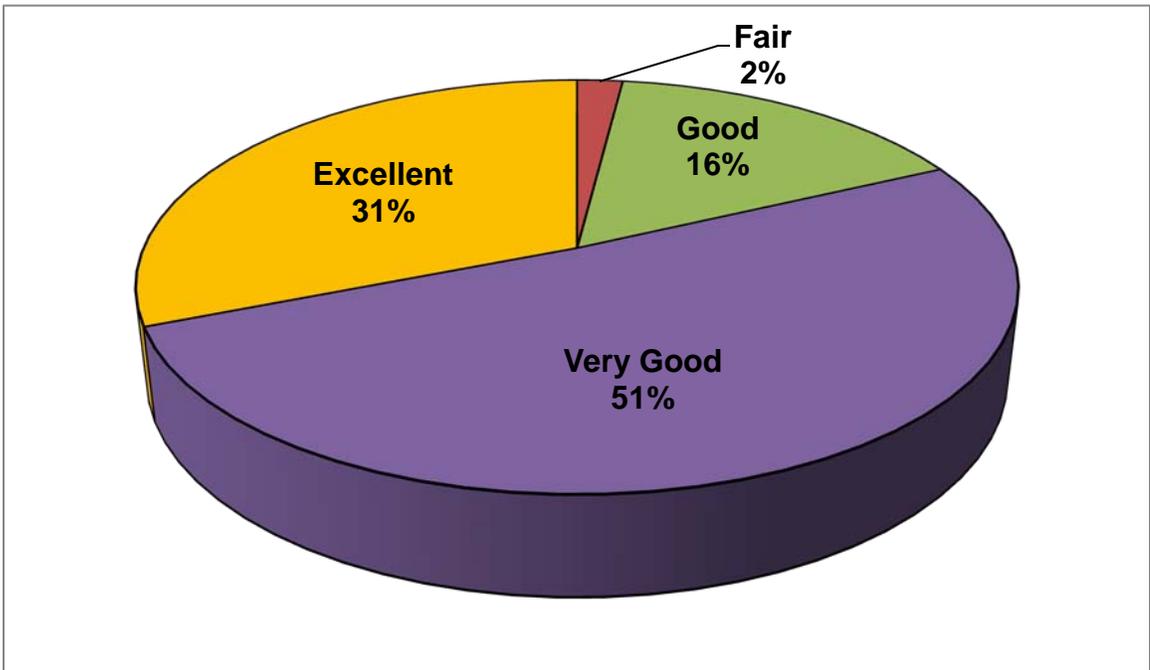
Directors and principals perceived relationship building and IEP meetings to be very important to effective principal leadership in the area of collaborating with families. This was the area in which both groups' responses were the most aligned; while articulated slightly differently they both responded along the same lines regarding the need to involve parents as equal partners and make IEP meetings meaningful.

### **Serving as the LEA Representative at IEP Meetings**

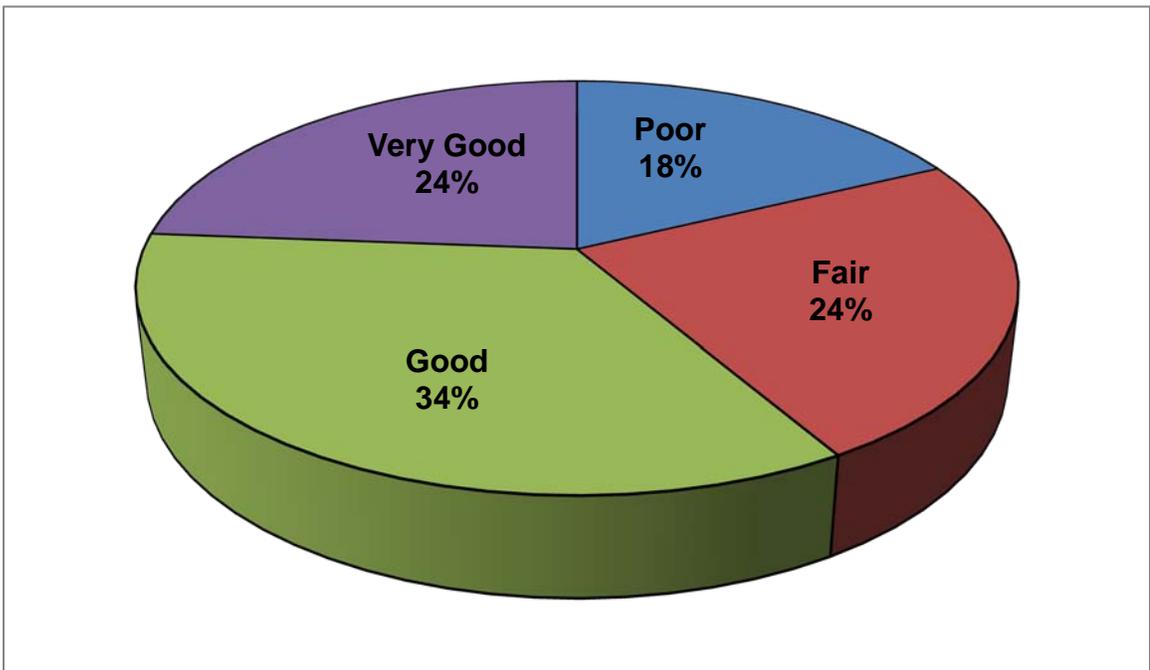
A total of 226 principals rated their ability to serve as the LEA representative. Figure 4.15 summarizes their responses. Eighty-two percent of the responding principals rated themselves as very good or excellent in the area of serving as LEA representative. Eighteen percent, or 5 principals, perceive their leadership to be fair or good in this area. No principals reported a rating of poor. The average rating of all principals was 4.11.

Among the 17 directors of special education that responded to this question, fifty-nine percent of them rated principals' knowledge and skills in this area as good or fair. Thirty-five percent, or 8 directors, assigned a rating of good and two directors perceive principals' knowledge and skills in this area as very good. The average rating by directors was 2.67. These results are shown in Figure 4.16.

**Figure 4.15: Principals' Ratings / Ability to Serve as the LEA Representative**



**Figure 4.16: Directors' Ratings / Ability to Serve as the LEA Representative**



### *Serving as LEA Representative: Open-Ended Responses*

The responses to the open ended questions in the category of serving as LEA representative from both principals and directors resulted in the emergence of the following major themes: 1) Active Participation in IEP Meetings, 2) Knowledge of Regulations (Law and Policy), and 3) A Clear Understanding of Expectations of an LEA Representative. The first two themes dealing with law and policy and active participation were present in both the directors and principals responses. The third theme regarding expectations of an LEA representative, appeared, with the exception of one response from a director, in principal responses and in a very large number of answers from that group. A summary of each major theme follows.

#### *Theme 1 – Principals and Directors: Active Participation in IEP Meetings*

A variety of words were used to describe the same phenomena – engaging in IEP meetings as an active participant. Contributing, genuinely concerned, good listening, and participate fully were commonly used terminology among responses that dealt with this theme. Some responses identified this as something principals do well and others pointed to active participation as an area in which principals lack knowledge and understanding. Though this theme was more readily found in the first question, ‘what do you do that indicates your effectiveness in serving as the LEA representative’, it also appeared in responses to the second open ended question ‘what knowledge and skills do you

need to learn to be more effective at serving as the LEA representative at IEP meetings'. Some responses to both are included below.

They are alert, awake, open, and genuinely concerned.

They are overwhelmed and overworked so IEP meetings become a chore that needs to be hurried through. They lack empathy and understanding at times, and parents read not only their verbal language but also their body language. They appear disinterested. They need to learn to make time.

Attend the meetings and stay the entire time. Take minutes. Participate in the meeting, asking questions and familiarizing myself with the student's EC files before the meeting.

Attend the meetings, listen attentively, make suggestions, ask questions. I feel that as the LEA rep I can serve as mediator in situations when parents enter meetings with complaints or concerns regarding one or more of their child's teachers. It is my role to listen to all sides and ensure that the outcome focuses on what is in the best interest of the child.

I have created meeting agendas that put emphasis on relationships and student rather than on paperwork.

### *Theme 2 – Principals and Directors: Knowledge of Regulations (Law and Policy)*

The second major theme based on responses about principals' ability to serve as the LEA representative dealt with all of the policies, procedures, and

laws that LEA representatives shoulder and implications for practice. While it was mentioned in several responses by directors, it was a dominant theme for principals. In most cases, it was simply stated as the need to have more legal updates. More specific responses related to this them are below.

Program criteria and available services changes.

Awareness of guidelines and rules for financial support.

The paperwork and protocols of the process are the things I worry the most about.

What a complete and properly completed IEP looks like for the various disabilities and service models.

Administrators in particular are not nearly provided with the proper background to have the legal responsibility to sign off on IEP documents.

In the absence of a competent, well-experienced EC facilitator, this process could be disastrous.

*Theme 3 – Principals and Directors: Clear Understanding of the Expectations of the LEA Representative*

Directors and, even more predominantly, principals reported the need for principals to understand the role and expectations of an LEA representative.

Answers that addressed specific IEP processes were not included in this theme.

Only responses, of which there were a large number, that reference serving as the LEA representative in a general context were included as part of this theme.

A sampling of the answers in this category follows.

Updates on the responsibilities of the LEA representative.

I would like information on what is considered best practice for LEA reps.

What are the expectations of an LEA?

I need to know what guidelines dictate effectiveness as an LEA rep.

Principals are provided with NO guidance in our district about LEA expectations. I have experienced on the job training in this area.

#### *Overview of Responses: Serving as the LEA Representative*

Table 4.8 presents the survey responses in the category of serving as the LEA representative in a format that delineates what principals do and what principals need to learn. Some of the responses included in this overview may be part of the themes reported above but some are included because the table is intended to capture specific things that principals and directors reported that principals do and need to learn.

**Table 4.8: Response Overview / Serving as the LEA Representative**

	<b>What Principals Do</b>	<b>What Principals Need to Learn</b>
<b>PERCEPTION OF PRINCIPALS</b>	Active participant in IEP meetings	Knowledge of EC regulations
	Collaboration with central services representatives	Paperwork and protocols
	Attend training	How to move parents and teachers more towards the inclusion model
	Become familiar with modifications and accommodations that are needed	Communication skills
	Follow up with parents and teachers to ensure process is being followed	Awareness of SCoS and Differentiated Instruction
	Do research before the IEP meeting	Research based interventions
<b>PERCEPTION OF DIRECTORS</b>	Contribute in IEP meetings	Policies and procedures
	Awareness of guidelines and rules for financial support	To make time
	Support special educators in developing goals and discussing student placement	Knowledge of EC paperwork
	Show genuine concern; listen	Effective strategies and programs that can be used for interventions

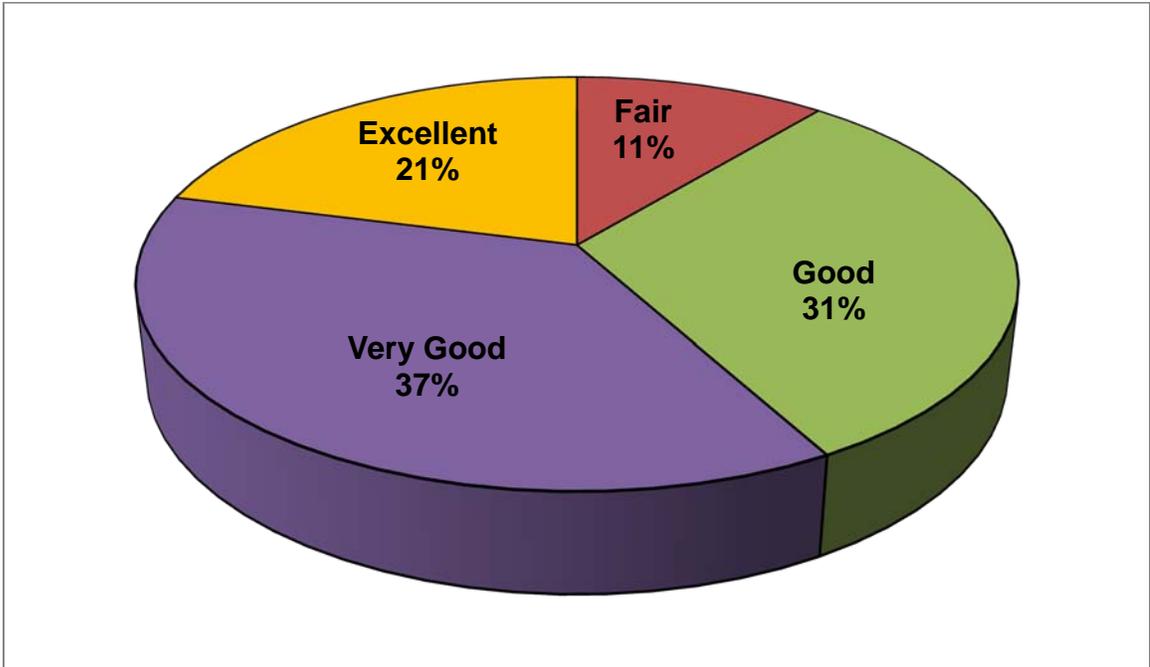
To summarize, the responses from principals and directors were similar around the topics of active participation in IEP meetings and knowledge of law and policy. The perceptions of principals and directors differed in this section regarding the expectations of an LEA representative. The difference was not because they countered one another; it is a notable difference because the issue of acquiring a deeper understanding of what being an LEA representative really means emerged from the principals. This is compelling data because it suggests that directors might believe principals understand their role in the process when, at least according to principals' perceptions, there is a need for more understanding.

### **Scheduling Special Education and Related Services**

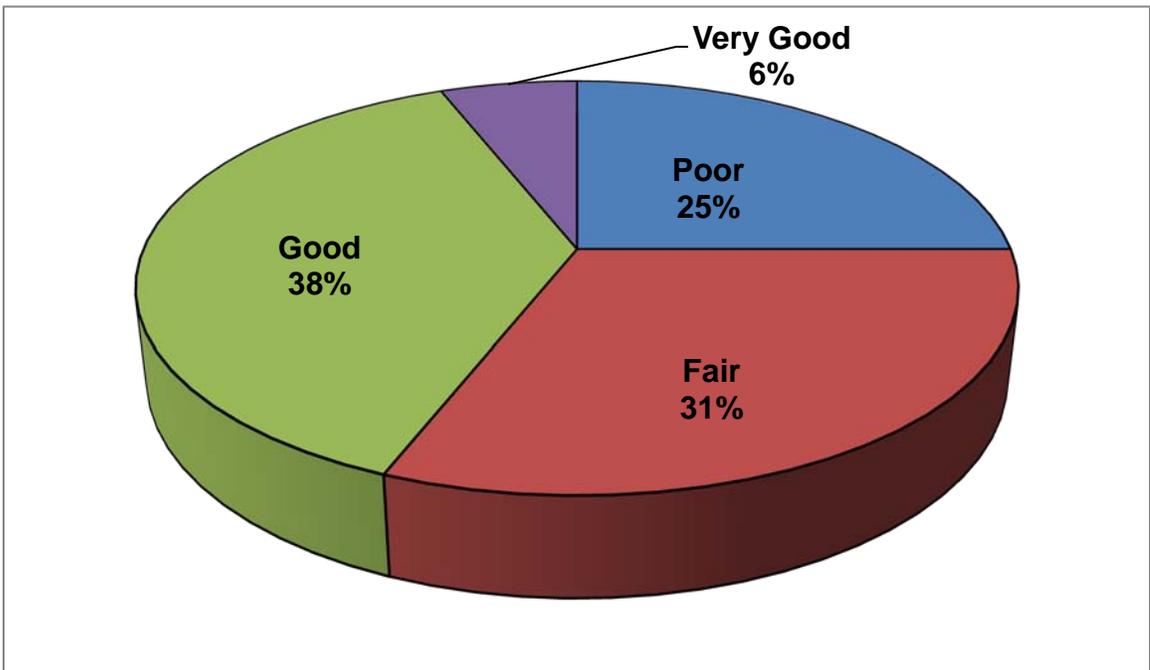
A total of 218 principals rated their knowledge and skills in the area of scheduling as it relates to providing special education and related services in their schools. Figure 4.17 summarizes their responses. Sixty-eight percent of the responding principals rated themselves as good or very good in this area. Twenty percent, or 5 principals, perceive their leadership to be excellent in this area. No principals reported a rating of poor. The average rating of all principals was 3.67.

Nine of the sixteen directors of special education who responded to this question rated principals' knowledge and skills in the area of scheduling as it related to providing special education and related services as fair or poor. The average rating by directors was 2.25. Figure 4.18 summarizes these findings.

**Figure 4.17: Principals Ratings / Scheduling Special Ed & Related Services**



**Figure 4.18: Directors' Ratings / Scheduling Special Ed & Related Services**



### *Scheduling Special Education and Related Services: Open-Ended Responses*

One principal stated, in response to the open ended question about what knowledge and skills are needed to be more effective at scheduling special education and related services:

Scheduling is a skill related to your building grade levels. It has to be developed over time and honed each year. There are no special sets of skills other than understanding the process and making it work best in your setting.

Regarding the process of making scheduling work, three major themes evolved from the responses of directors and principals in the area of scheduling special education and related services. All three themes were evident in both principal and director groups. They were: Access to General Education Curriculum, Priority Given to EC Students' Schedule, and Human Resources. Among the responses in this category, numerous principals reported the desire to network with other principals for ideas in the area of scheduling.

#### *Theme 1: Access to General Education Curriculum*

One of the themes that emerged in the area of scheduling as it relates to providing special education and related services was the regular education curriculum and the students' access to it. Some responses were concerned with inclusive models as they relate to access to general education while others

attended to the issue of what a student might miss during pull out services.

Below are some of the responses that followed this theme.

I need new ways of scheduling to promote inclusion/co-teaching.

Care to ensure students do not miss essential skills in the regular education classroom, BEP classes, and other important “social” areas of the school.

Create a master schedule that offers inclusion services and pull-out services. Pull-out services in a time when no new core instruction is going on.

I don't know how to provide co-teaching – when it's considered best practice – when I have children who are supposed to be served four hours a day in a pull out situation. I feel that my teachers are being told two different things – be in the regular classroom, and be in the EC classroom.

### *Theme 2: Priority Given to EC Students' Schedule*

Another theme that evolved from the responses to the two open ended questions in the area of scheduling was a 'students first' attitude and approach. From hand-scheduling to ensure compliance with IEPs to building master schedules around the EC students, the responses that formed this theme are partially displayed below.

Build the master schedule around the needs of the EC students in the school.

The fact that to make an inclusive setting work in my building that we realize that EC drives the schedule.

Student needs are taken into account first, then staff ability to meet those needs.

We schedule our EC students first so that their individual needs are met.

Then we schedule the remainder of the students.

*Theme 3: Human resources*

A number of principals and directors cited human resource issues as an important matter when considering the effective scheduling of special education and related services. Some responses dealt with specific personnel issues such as certification problems while others mentioned personnel in general as an important consideration for scheduling. Some examples of the responses are:

Scheduling can sometimes be difficult when exceptional children's staff members only work at the school part time. It can make for a scheduling nightmare.

This coming year will be a challenge as most of our teachers are not considered HQ anymore due to the fact that they took a Praxis that is not recognized by NCLB. I need to know how the state is going to fix the mess with the SPED Praxis 511 and 542 in secondary.

Do not have enough EC teachers to do the job effectively.

Provide the teachers with schedules that allow for uninterrupted teaching time. Provide time for the regular classroom teacher to meet with EC teacher. Involve staff in the process.

New HQ status of EC teachers in CORE subjects will have great impact on regular education schedule.

Continue to maximize availability of support services while balancing the evaluation time frames.

*Overview of Responses: Scheduling for Special Education and Related Services*

To summarize this category of leadership by looking at the two groups as well as the two questions within the category, Table 4.9 provides an overview of what principals do and what they need to know and do to be more effective.

Table 4.9 presents the survey responses in this category in a format that delineates what principals do and what principals need to learn. Some of the responses included in this overview may be part of the themes reported above but some are included because the table is intended to capture specific things that principals and directors reported that principals do and need to learn.

**Table 4.9: Response Overview / Scheduling Special Ed & Related Services**

	<b>What Principals Do</b>	<b>What Principals Need to Learn</b>
<b>PERCEPTION OF PRINCIPALS</b>	Don't let the schedule drive instruction	Teacher certification
	Work toward flexible student grouping	IEP goals
	Establish EC schedule before master schedule	Researched practices on providing the best educational environment
	No pulling students during reading or math block	Inclusion models that are truly effective
	Students are pulled during reading time if they are served in reading.	Models for year round settings
	Communicate IEP needs and connect services to those needs	More understanding of the latest special education legal implications
<b>PERCEPTION OF DIRECTORS</b>	Allow EC scheduling first choice	Know what all IEPs say
	Keep kids in core content classes	How to effectively access and use special ed staff to help them schedule
	Balancing provision of services with access to general curriculum	How to group EC students in order for the EC teachers to serve the students more effectively
	Support teachers and provide training in co-teaching	Programming and scheduling skills

The findings in the area of scheduling for special education and related services revealed important information about the perceptions of directors and principals. Attention to managerial leadership is a notable topic because the tactical skills related to scheduling and ensuring student access emerged in many responses. The fact that directors' and principals' perceptions are aligned in this area is noteworthy as it could make efforts to address the professional development needs of principals more productive.

### **Supporting Teachers in Differentiating Instruction**

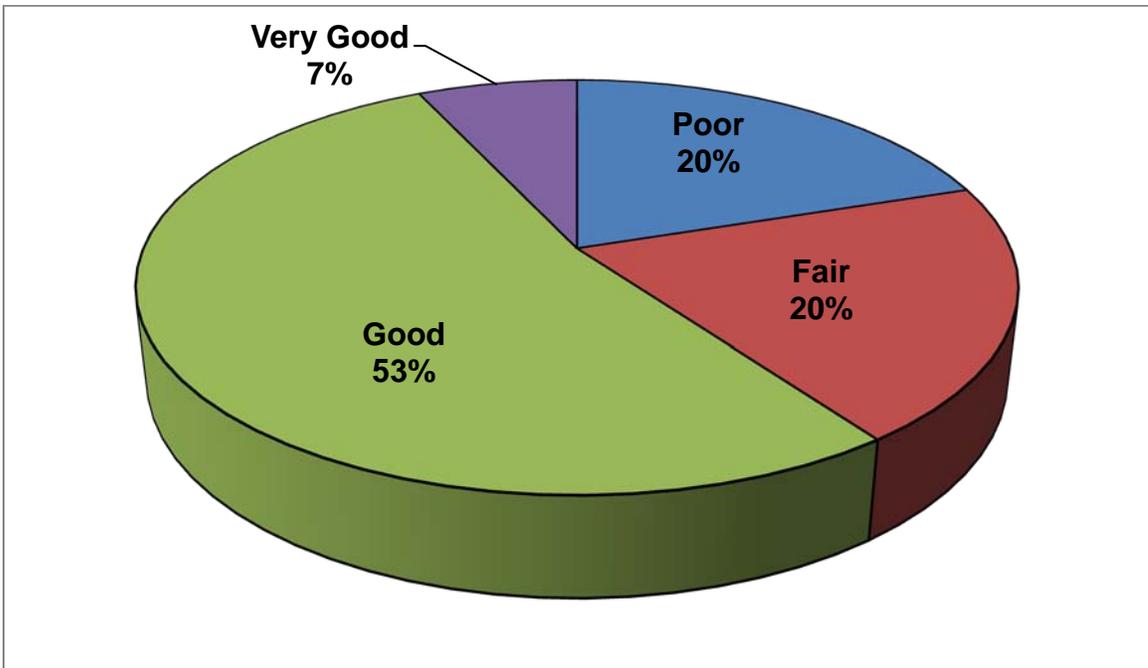
A total of 208 principals rated their knowledge and skills related to supporting teachers in differentiating instruction for all students, including those with disabilities. Figure 4.19 summarizes their responses. Seventy-seven percent of the responding principals rated themselves as good or very good in this area. Fifteen percent, or 5 principals, perceive their leadership to be excellent in this area. No principals reported a rating of poor. The average rating of all principals was 3.65.

Fifty-four percent of the Directors of Special Education Programs who responded to the question rated principals' knowledge and skills related to supporting teachers in differentiating instruction as good. Twenty-three percent of the directors reported a rating of fair. The average rating of directors based on all fifteen responses from directors was 2.54. Figure 4.20 provides a summary of directors' ratings in this category.

**Figure 4.19: Principals' Ratings / Supporting Teachers in Differentiating Instruction**



**Figure 4.20: Directors' Ratings / Supporting Teachers in Differentiating Instruction**



### *Supporting Teachers in Differentiating Instruction: Open-Ended Responses*

Based on the responses from principals and directors to the open ended questions about principals' support of differentiating instruction, two prevailing themes were identified: Research Based Practices and Professional Development. Relating to both themes and to the overall category of differentiating instruction, some responses from principals pointed to the need for administrators to understand what differentiated instruction is. Below is a summary of each of the two themes as they relate to the answers provided in this section of the survey.

#### *Theme 1: Research Based Practices*

This theme emerged due to the numerous responses that addressed the need to know curriculum and instructional programs to address student needs. The notion that principals need to know research based practices in order to encourage and monitor differentiated instruction was common among the responses. Embedded in this theme is the use of data as it relates to the use of research based practices. Some examples were:

Principals need to have a good curriculum base themselves and some experience or knowledge with reading and math programs.

I am quite knowledgeable of differentiation strategies including tiered assignments, modifications to assignments, cooperative learning strategies, and formative assessment data analysis.

I do support the teachers. The hard part in answering this question is that our teachers implement an SRA Reading program, as mandated by the school system. The teachers have zero control in implementing this scripted reading program.

I would like ongoing training about high-yield strategies. What works best with high risk students?

Participation in both NC SIP II Reading and Math projects, participation as pilot Rtl, Participation in state K-1 Handheld Assessment Program Training in Rtl, Letterland, Wilson, Reading Foundations, Math Foundations, Number Worlds, etc.

### *Theme 2: Professional Development*

A dominant theme in this leadership category was the need for professional development. In some responses, it was expressed as having already been sought or in the process of being pursued. In other responses, it was identified as a need on the part of both teachers and administrators. This theme encompasses all aspects of professional development, not just training, as evidenced in the examples below.

I have implemented an initiative to create a professional learning community that strives to provide differentiation.

Differentiation is a part of all classroom observations. Discussions of ways to differentiate take place during staff meetings and with individual teachers following classroom observations.

I can talk basic teaching and learning with all teachers. I don't have enough information about what "different" instruction looks like.

I believe I am knowledgeable about how to create and use the resources necessary to provide teachers with small group instruction time; however, I don't have the expertise to show them HOW to differentiate.

I need more "teacher training" on DI so that I know exactly what to look for as I observe my teachers.

The knowledge that you the principal do not know everything....and the knowledge that you do not know everything the staff needs to get better, and that they do have all the same needs....PD is not a one size fits all!....but differentiated instruction CAN'T be pulled off without great PD and support!

#### *Overview of Responses: Supporting Teachers in Differentiating Instruction*

To capture the perceptions as reported in relation to the major research questions, Table 4.10 provides a summary of the responses in this leadership category according to the respondent's role as principal or director. Table 4.10 presents the survey responses in this category in a format that delineates what principals do and what principals need to learn. Some of the responses included

in this overview may be part of the themes reported above but some are included because the table is intended to capture specific things that principals and directors reported that principals do and need to learn.

**Table 4.10: Response Overview / Supporting Teachers in Differentiating Instruction**

	<b>What Principals Do</b>	<b>What Principals Need to Learn</b>
<b>PERCEPTION OF PRINCIPALS</b>	Make sure teachers have proper resources and time to collaborate with their peers	Research based interventions
	PLCs that strive to provide differentiated instruction	What differentiating instruction is (administrative training)
	Support small group instruction with resources that are needed to do so	How to get buy in for differentiated instruction as a needed practice
	Differentiating all day across all content	How to use data to drive instruction
	Use teacher evaluation as a springboard	Know where your resources are and how to best use them
	Use data	Rtl process
<b>PERCEPTION OF DIRECTORS</b>	Support teachers in attending staff development	Diverse learners require more intensive instruction
	Meaningful observations	How to ensure fidelity of teacher implementation
	Use progress monitoring tools	Knowledge of reading and math programs
	Provide in house professional development	Knowledge of curriculum

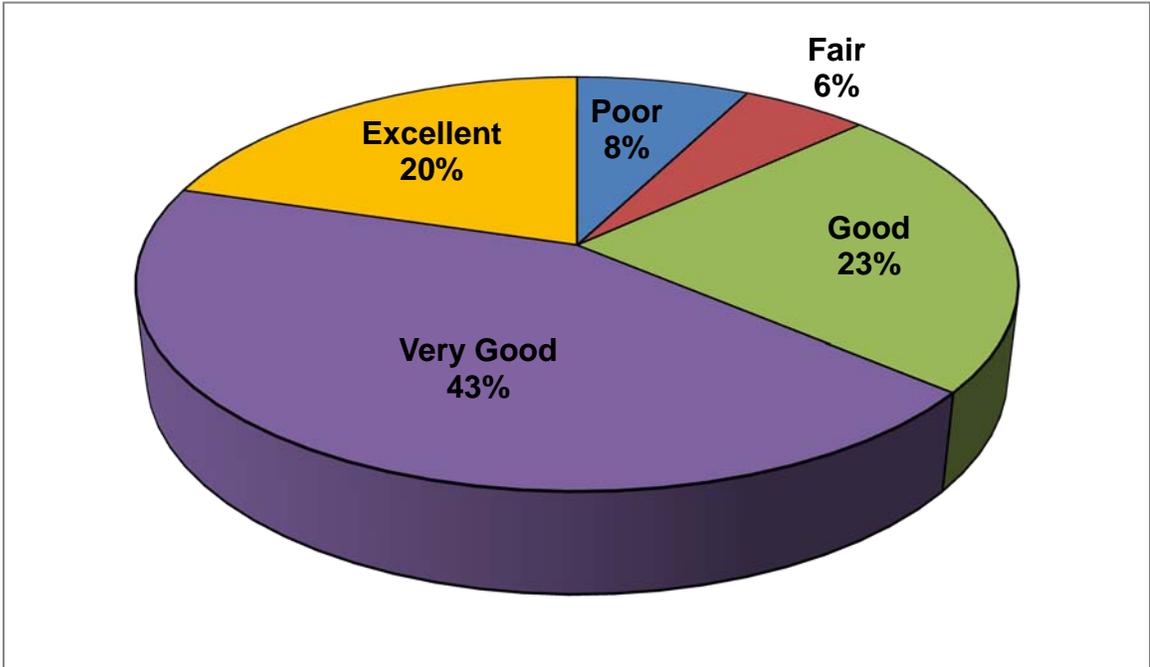
This overview of the perceptions of directors and principals in this area revealed important information about where principals are in their learning compared to where directors think they are. Principals express the need to know more about differentiating instruction, for example, while directors note the need for principals to ensure fidelity of teacher implementation. This disconnect occurs several other times in this section, highlighting the need for a better understanding among these two groups about what principals do and what additional professional development they need.

### **Arranging for and Justifying the Use of Resources**

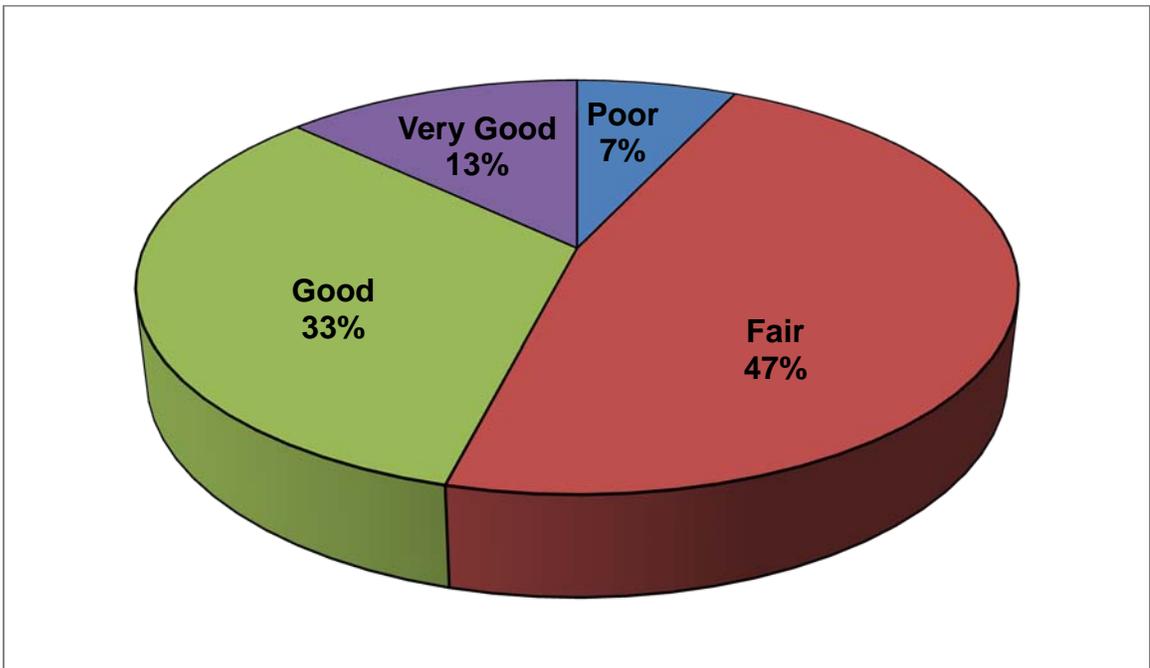
A total of 208 principals rated their knowledge and skills related to their ability to arrange for and justify the use of resources so that they address the needs of all students in their school. Figure 4.21 summarizes their responses. Seventy-two percent of the responding principals rated themselves as good or very good in this area. Twenty-two percent, or 43 principals, perceive their leadership to be excellent in this area. No principals reported a rating of poor. The average rating of all principals was 3.84.

Fifteen directors of special education programs answered this question. Forty-seven percent rated principals' ability to arrange for and justify the use of resources as fair. Forty-seven percent reported a rating of good or very good. None assigned an excellent rating in this category. Figure 4.22 depicts the ratings provided by directors in this category. The average rating among directors was 2.53.

**Figure 4.21: Principals' Ratings / Arranging & Justifying Use of Resources**



**Figure 4.22: Directors' Ratings / Arranging & Justifying Use of Resources**



### *Arranging for and Justifying the Use of Resources: Open-Ended Responses*

In this category of leadership, one principal stated, “I need to know what I don’t know.” Two major themes evolved from the responses of the principals and directors in the area of arranging for and using resources so that they address the needs of all students: Input from Others and Equitable Access. These two themes were apparent across both participant groups, with the notion of collaboration being found in both themes. In addition, using data was a common thread throughout both identified themes. Input from Others and Equitable Access emerged as the two different categories within this leadership area and therefore became the two areas for focus.

#### *Theme 1: Input from Others*

Ranging from school improvement teams to individual teachers to central office support staff, principals and directors highlighted the involvement of others in decision-making about resources as both what principals do to be effective as well as what knowledge and skills they need to learn more about. Another source that relates to this theme is networking with other principals who are successful in the area. Some examples of the responses that follow this theme are:

Require that School Improvement Team make budget decisions based on our school improvement goals.

Research resources proposed by teachers to determine the scope of the students that these resources can help.

Organizational skills and good debate skills when dealing with HR and EC departments at the system level.

We want to get our bookroom resources in our media system so that teachers can access these using several key searches online. I need to continue to gain feedback from teachers related to resources needed to more effectively teach the standards.

Principals need to budget resources in their school improvement plans with the assistance of all teachers and support staff input.

They utilize community agencies who can provide assistance. Know and understand the agencies available while connecting appropriate agencies with needs.

I don't do this well but I count on the advice from specialists and teachers. Most of this is handled at the county level.

### *Theme 2: Equitable Access*

Terms like equal, same, and fair were commonly used in responses from principals in the area of arranging for and justifying the use of resources. The theme of equitable access was not expressed the same way across all responses from directors and principals. Some responses tended to address equal access as the same for all while others approached equal access as a 'leveling the playing field' concept. Below are some responses from this theme.

All students treated equally.

I work with our School Improvement Team to fairly allocate all available resources to both regular and EC students.

I make sure my EC staff has the same equipment that regular staff members have. I try to make sure my inclusion classes have all they need to differentiate with manipulatives.

I make sure that all students receive equal treatment.

Children with disabilities receive the same resources as the regular education students in addition to the resources they may need to meet their individual needs.

Equal distribution to all themes and all classes.

Equitable allocation of resources.

For the district to be equitable.

Technology is equitably distributed for EC and regular students.

I think we do best with regular education students and students with disabilities are sometimes an afterthought.

Textbooks for EC students and teachers are still lacking.

*Overview of Responses: Arranging for and Justifying the Use of Resources*

To capture the perceptions as reported in relation to the major research questions, Table 4.11 provides a summary of the responses in this leadership category according to the respondent's role as principal or director. Table 4.11 presents the survey responses in this category in a format that delineates what principals do and what principals need to learn. Some of the responses included

in this overview may be part of the themes reported above but some are included because the table is intended to capture specific things that principals and directors reported that principals do and need to learn.

**Table 4.11: Response Overview / Arranging & Justifying Use of Resources**

	<b>What Principals Do</b>	<b>What Principals Need to Learn</b>
<b>PERCEPTION OF PRINCIPALS</b>	Allocate funds based on needs assessment	Research based interventions
	Develop long range plans for obtaining resources that are expensive but needed	Negotiation skills
	Use instructional money and professional development money to support the areas identified by the data	Principal 101 – Budget, Finance, Allotments, etc.
	Seek funding sources	To collaborate with central finance office
	Trust teachers and hold them accountable for how they use their resources and how they incorporate knowledge from staff development	Be aware of the newest technology and help teachers acquire this
	Use limited space and limited staff to maximum advantage	Understanding budgets and developing a budget
<b>PERCEPTION OF DIRECTORS</b>	Utilize community agencies	Which resources are the appropriate resources
	Consult with EC staff and EC Director	How to connect appropriate agencies with needs
	Use schedules of related services and use of physical resources	Programs that work with all students and students who are struggling
	Believe in using resources to address needs	Awareness of supports that can be used by all students

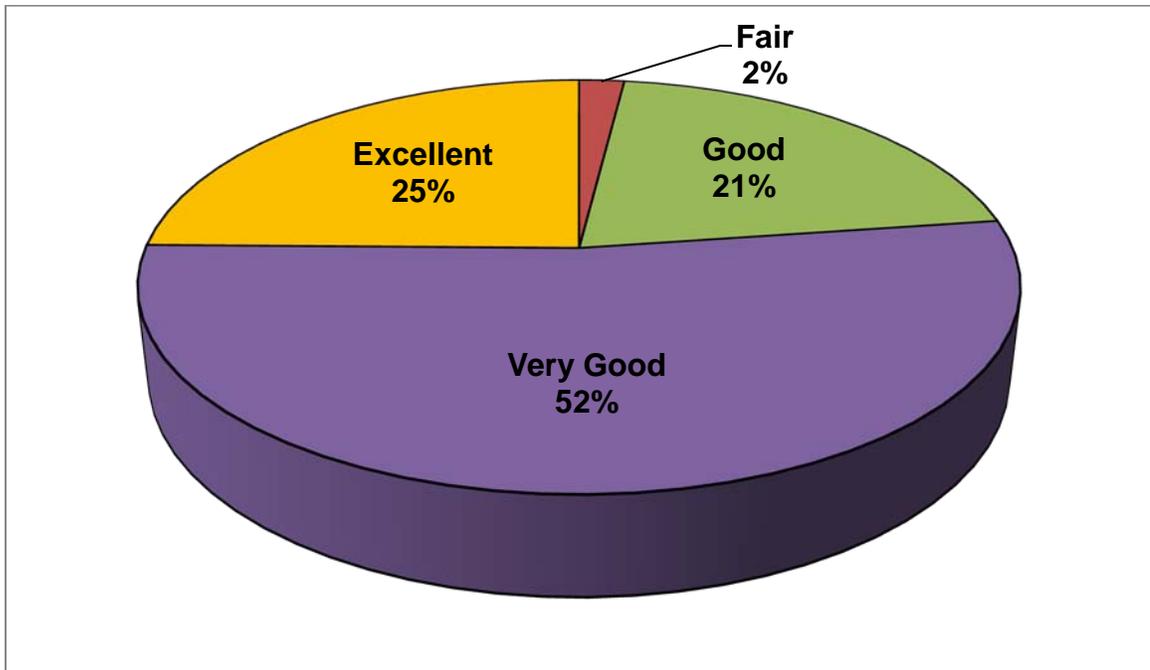
The consequences of these results are summarized best by the principals who provided responses similar to “I don’t know what I don’t know”. This is noteworthy because if others, directors of special education, in this case, perceive that they do then this could be counterproductive. At minimum, it leads to frustration when two groups whose efforts need to be aligned have countering perceptions of next steps for improving leadership. Principals and directors do agree on the importance of seeking input from others and striving for equitable access for all students.

### **Selecting and Supporting School Personnel**

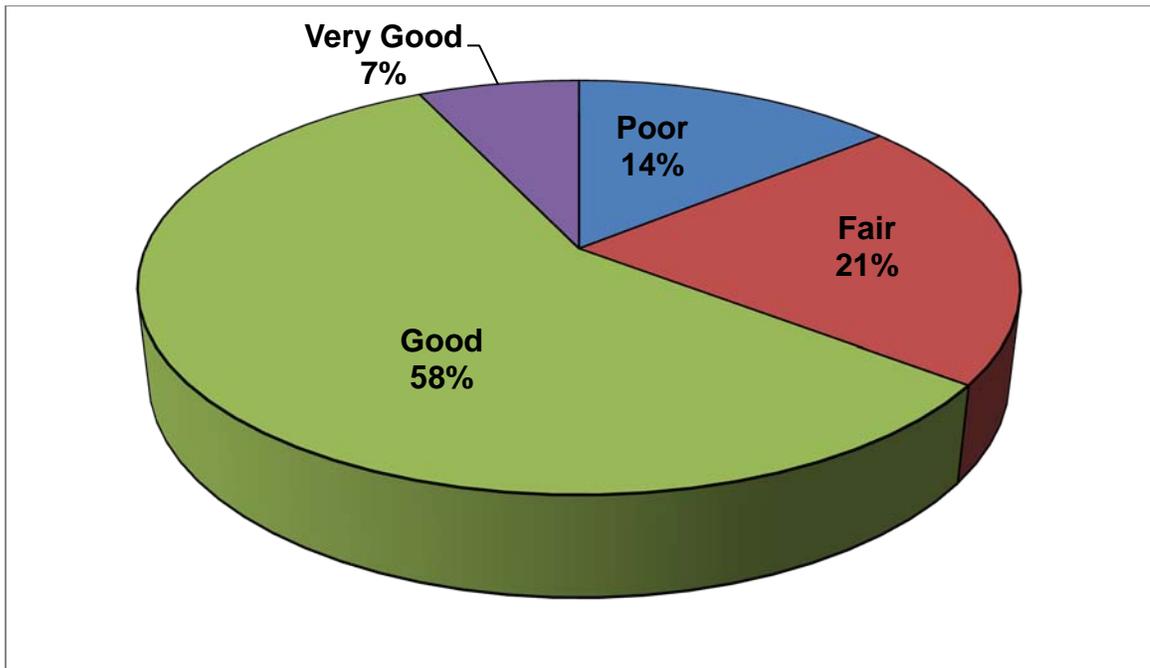
A total of 186 principals rated their ability to select and support school personnel who are successful at improving the performance of all students, including those with disabilities. Figure 4.23 summarizes their responses. Seventy-seven percent of the responding principals rated themselves as very good or excellent in this area. Twenty-one percent, or 39 principals, perceive their leadership to be good in this area. No principals reported a rating of poor. The average rating of all principals was 4.01.

Among the fourteen directors of special education that responded to this question, fifty-seven percent of them rated principals’ ability in this area as good. Five directors assigned principals a rating of fair or poor. The average rating by directors in this category was 2.57. Figure 4.24 depicts these data.

**Figure 4.23: Principals' Ratings / Ability to Select & Support Personnel**



**Figure 4.24: Directors' Ratings / Ability to Select & Support Personnel**



### *Selecting and Supporting School Personnel: Open-Ended Responses*

One principal offered the following response to the first open ended question about selecting and supporting personnel: “Hiring is the most critical job for a principal – Never leave to others to find good people.” Several other principals indicated that this was the most important thing they do. Across all responses from principals and directors, the themes that emerged were 1) Being able to recognize what effectiveness and quality are, 2) Improving or removing ineffective teachers and the supports that are needed and used, and 3) Hiring the right “fit” to meet the needs of the school and its students.

#### *Theme 1 – Principals: Recognizing Effectiveness and Quality*

The theme of being able to recognize what effectiveness and quality are was prevalent among principals who responded to these two questions about selecting and supporting personnel who are successful at improving the performance of all students. The responses that resulted in this being identified as a theme had to do with knowing what an effective teacher does and how to identify the best and most talented personnel. Some examples are:

Time and far reaching efforts to find the best and most talented.

I will not put someone in a classroom on a full-time basis just to have a warm body in the room. I have to be sure they will be effective.

Understanding what an effective teacher looks like.

More experience in hiring and working with high quality teachers.

Always looking for ways to identify the true stars.

We need to continue to employ effective teachers and I would love to know which college programs are seen as being the best for producing EC teachers.

Understanding qualities of effective teachers.

Characteristics that best serve students and skills to identify in candidates.

*Theme 2 – Principals: Improving or Removing Personnel and Efforts to Support Them*

Many responses from principals in this part of the survey referenced how to support personnel once their effectiveness or ineffectiveness has been determined. Responses ranged greatly in this theme, from the frustrations of dealing with a teacher that needed to be terminated to how to support high performing teachers. The overall spirit of this theme was about the behaviors that have to do with support, whether the teacher is effective or ineffective.

Some relevant responses were:

Teachers often come just to “vent”. I usually have a similar scenario I can share with them. Just listening is more supportive than anything!

Celebrate successes.

Give credit to the staff and celebrate accomplishments.

I'm a little concerned about the new Teacher Evaluation tool we are using in NC. It is very different and requires so much more time and reflection for every teacher.

I meet with teachers individually regarding their individual professional goals at the beginning of our year, at our mid-year, and as our year ends.

I am effective at choosing good teachers but I feel hampered by the system that makes it so difficult to remove teachers who have become too rigid to embrace change and grow as professionals.

Remove as many barriers that get in the way of teachers doing what you hire them for – teaching students. Being their biggest cheerleader and supporter – be visible in their classroom and around campus.

We have a model ILT program that supports new teachers.

You need to be able to lower barriers and have conversations about what teachers need and weaknesses they feel they have.

I support these folks with opportunities for additional training upon their request. I also encourage those that have strengths to model their strengths.

How do I support unbending teachers?

Inisist that staff focus on student learning rather than teaching. During supervisory conversations, I continue to redirect struggling staff to the

need to produce student academic growth. I reward those staff members who move in this direction through lots of praise and put increased pressure on those who do not seem to understand the importance.

I need more knowledge and skills in the area of “how” to more effectively support these individuals. Not more knowledge and skills from some academic that has never been in my position. Knowledge and skills from someone who knows the pitfalls and challenges in making this happen.

*Theme 3 – Directors and Principals: Hiring the Right “Fit” for the School and Its Students*

The issue of ensuring that personnel meet the needs of students was the main focus of the third theme that emerged in the category of selecting and supporting personnel. This theme was the most resounding of all the issues addressed in directors responses and was also commonly found in the principals responses. Below is a snapshot of some of the responses from both groups.

They are committed to hiring high quality staff with a diverse range of experiences and knowledge. They are committed to hiring someone who makes a good fit with the students and families.

Understanding the needs of the students and the appropriate characteristics needed by the person who will be responsible for the education of the students.

Being able to meet student needs is the first consideration in selecting and supporting staff.

Ensure that I only hire teachers that have a high level of understanding of students with disabilities. Give scenarios and snapshots of the different type of student learners they may encounter.

Hire those with common vision and mission. Think outside the box.

Hiring is the most critical job for a principal – Never leave others to find good people. Interviews need to be varied in terms of setting and involve other staff when you feel that the person interviewed could be a good fit for the school.

I conduct interview in a team fashion with other personnel who will be working with the person hired. I ask probing questions during the interview so I can gauge how the person will fit into the school environment as well as gauge their way of thinking and teaching. I will not hire someone if I do not think they are a good fit.

I have interview questions that are handwritten by the interviewing committee to address the look-fors in each position. I work aggressively during the interview process to determine “fit” for the team as well as the students.

#### *Overview of Responses: Selecting and Supporting Personnel*

To summarize this category of leadership by looking at the two groups as well as the two questions within the category, Table 4.12 provides an overview of

what principals do and what they need to know and do to be more effective.

Table 4.12 presents the survey responses in this category in a format that delineates what principals do and what principals need to learn. Some of the responses included in this overview may be part of the themes reported above but some are included because the table is intended to capture specific things that principals and directors reported that principals do and need to learn.

**Table 4.12: Response Overview / Selecting and Supporting Personnel**

	<b>What Principals Do</b>	<b>What Principals Need to Learn</b>
<b>PERCEPTION OF PRINCIPALS</b>	Pursue a wide variety of applicants	How to support teachers who won't change
	Call EC Depts and placement offices in higher ed	How other principals select personnel
	Check references - always	Licensure and certification
	Put needs of students first	How to see the whole picture instead of their individual needs
	Involve others in interview process	Dialogue with teacher ed programs
	Support personnel	New Teacher Evaluation Instrument
<b>PERCEPTION OF DIRECTORS</b>	Committed to hiring good fit	Understand the needs of the students
	Ask good questions during interviews	Good questioning and listening skills
	Truly check references	Licensure laws
	Involve E.C. staff when selecting personnel	Various schedule options

These results are notable because of the different perceptions of principals and directors. They agreed that hiring the right “fit” for the schools and its students was critical but principals offered perceptions about recognizing effectiveness and dealing with personnel that directors did not identify. This is very important because it raises the question of whether or not directors and principals are “on the same page” about the pieces involved in selecting and supporting personnel. This would be an important consideration for making decisions about professional development needs.

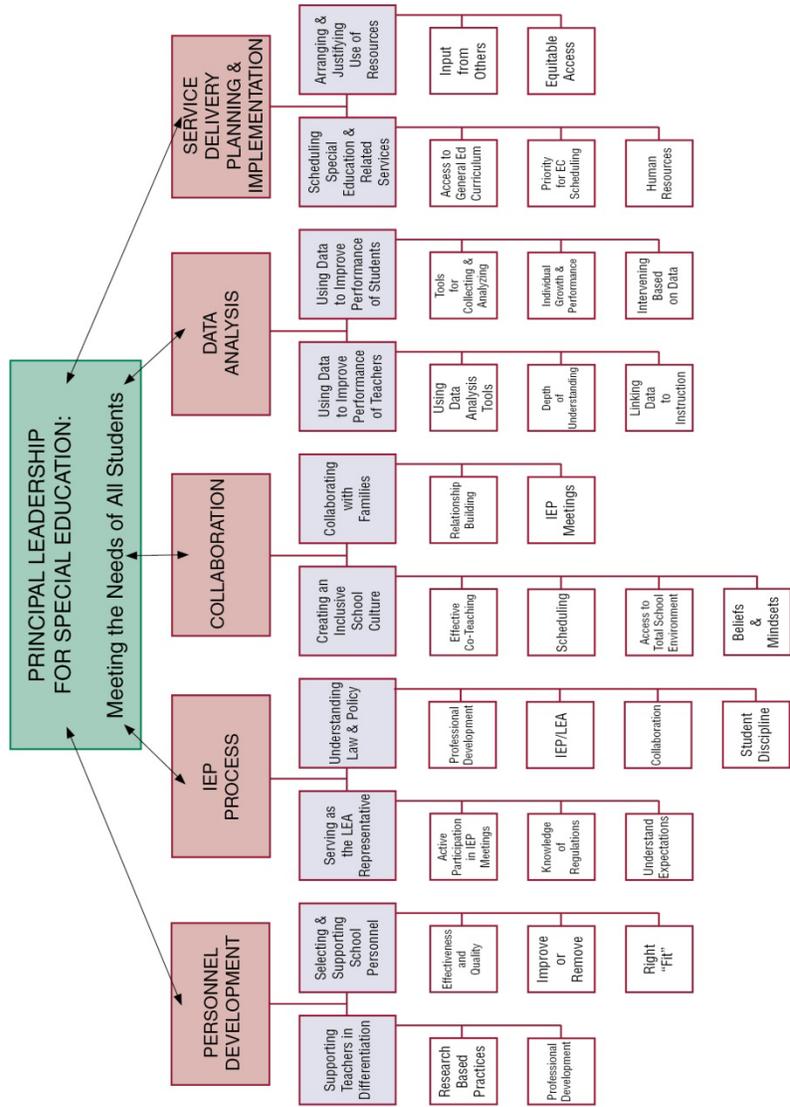
### **Summary**

In this chapter, the findings of the study were reported. They are represented in Table 4.13. In the next chapter, a discussion of the results will be based on what emerged from the data. To move forward, it was necessary to carefully review the findings and formulate an approach to the analysis of the data. During that process, the ten leadership categories became the subset of the data and five thematic categories emerged that embodied the themes that evolved from the responses related to each of the ten initial categories. The result was a framework, a mental model depicted in Figure 4.14, that captures the essence of the research project that began with the identification of the ten categories based on the NC Standards for School Executives and an extensive literature review. This mental model served as a guide for Chapter 5 and, along with a continued focus on principals’ accountability for all students, led to a summary and considerations for practice and future research.

**TABLE 4.13: MAJOR THEMES**

<b>MAJOR THEMES</b>		
	<b>Principals</b>	<b>Directors</b>
<b>Understanding Law and Policy</b>	Professional Development / Preparation	
	Individualized Education Plans / Serving as LEA Representative	
	Collaboration with Others	
	Student Discipline	
<b>Using Data to Improve the Performance of Teachers</b>	Using Data Analysis Tools	Depth of Understanding
	Linking Data to Instruction	
<b>Using Data to Improve the Performance of Students</b>	Tools for Collecting and Analyzing Data	Individual Growth and Performance
	Intervening Based on Data	
<b>Creating an Inclusive School Culture</b>	Effective Co-Teaching Scheduling	Access to Total School Environment
	Beliefs and Mindsets	
<b>Collaborating with Families</b>	Relationship Building	
	IEP Meetings	
<b>Serving as the LEA Representative at IEP Meetings</b>	Active Participation in IEP Meetings	
	Knowledge of Regulations (Law and Policy)	
	Clear Understanding of the Expectations of the LEA Representative	
<b>Scheduling Special Education and Related Services</b>	Access to General Education Curriculum	
	Priority Given to EC Students' Schedule	
	Human Resources	
<b>Supporting Teachers in Differentiating Instruction</b>	Research Based Practices	
	Professional Development	
<b>Arranging for and Justifying the Use of Resources</b>	Input from Others	
	Equitable Access	
<b>Selecting and Supporting School Personnel</b>	Recognizing Effectiveness and Quality	
	Improving or Removing Personnel and Efforts to Support Them	
	Hiring the Right "Fit" for the School and Its Students	

**FIGURE 4.25: MENTAL MODEL**



## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

This chapter discusses the findings of the study. First, the purpose and guiding questions are reviewed followed by a summary of the methodology and a discussion of the key findings. Finally, recommendations for practice and future research are offered. The mental model that was introduced in Chapter 4 represents the experience that the researcher has undergone with the data from the initial phases of the project up to the data analysis. It represents the purpose of this study as well as the next steps for moving forward with implications for positively impacting principal leadership for the education of all students.

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the leadership and management knowledge and skills that principals must have to lead the special education programs in their schools in a time of increasing accountability for student performance. The study focused on the following as key questions:

- How do principals and directors of special education programs perceive the effectiveness of principals in major categories of school leadership?
- What do principals and directors of special education programs say that principals do that contributes to principal effectiveness in major categories of school leadership?

- What do principals and directors of special education programs identify as needs or supports that would assist principals in enhancing their leadership for special education in the major categories of school leadership?

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the participants in order to obtain a rich data set that would permit the researcher to correlate principals' perceptions and directors' perceptions about principal leadership for special education. The survey asked participating principals and directors of special education to demonstrate, using a rating scale, their perceptions of how effective principals are at providing leadership for special education in each of the ten areas previously identified.

In addition, for each of the ratings that the participants were asked to provide, they responded to two open-ended questions. The first open-ended question asked them to identify the things they do in that particular area that make them effective. The second open-ended question requested that they provide narrative about what they need to know and be able to do to more effectively perform in that area. All responses were anonymous.

The survey questions were designed with the standards for North Carolina School Executives in mind, but they were written to specifically address skills for effective special education leadership. The literature review on special education leadership was used to identify essential skills in this area, as they relate to the

seven standards, and resulted in the survey items. Using an extensive coding process, major themes from the responses of the survey participants were identified in each of the leadership categories that emerged from the literature review and corresponded to the North Carolina Standards for School Executives. These major themes were depicted in Table 4.13 of Chapter 4. A display of how the themes relate to the categories and the five major categories are presented in the mental model in Table 4.14.

### **Perceptions of Principals and Directors**

Though there were common themes that emerged from the responses of both groups of participants, the ratings presented a snapshot of the differences among principals' perceptions and directors' perceptions. The number of responses for each question that requested a rating by the participant varied based on each question. The number of participants who responded to each question is represented in Table 5.1 along with the average rating for each.

**Table 5.1: Ratings by Participant Group in Each Category**

	<b>PRINCIPALS</b>		<b>DIRECTORS</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<b>Understanding Law and Policy</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>3.54</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>2.24</b>
<b>Using Data to Improve Performance of Teachers</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>3.58</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2.35</b>
<b>Using Data to Improve Performance of Students</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>3.62</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2.55</b>
<b>Creating an Inclusive Culture</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>3.83</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2.68</b>
<b>Collaborating with Families</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>3.83</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2.61</b>
<b>Serving as LEA Representative</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>4.11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2.65</b>
<b>Scheduling</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2.25</b>
<b>Differentiating Instruction</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>3.65</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2.47</b>
<b>Using Resources</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>3.84</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2.53</b>
<b>Selecting and Supporting Quality Personnel</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>4.01</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2.57</b>

Despite the decline in number of respondents from one category to the next, a difference of at least one point or more on the rating scale was apparent in each category, with the directors' perceptions yielding lower ratings than principals' ratings. This implies that, in public school systems of North Carolina, directors view principals as less prepared, and perhaps less effective, in all ten leadership areas than principals perceive themselves to be.

This may indicate that principals have blind spots with regard to their skills and knowledge in these areas and/or it may suggest that directors and principals have different perspectives of effectiveness. The leadership area in which the largest discrepancy was reported was Serving as LEA Representative. This also emerged as one of the big five thematic categories upon coding and reviewing the results. Interestingly, this was the top rated area for principals and the second highest rating for directors.

From the major themes that emerged in the ten leadership areas based on survey responses, five thematic categories evolved. They were:

- Personnel Development
- IEP Process
- Collaboration
- Data Analysis
- Service Delivery Planning and Implementation

These five thematic categories, as depicted in the mental model in Table 4.14, represent the voices of principals and special education directors in North

Carolina who responded to the survey. In addition, due to the tight alignment of the survey to the North Carolina Standards for School Executives, these themes link directly to their performance appraisal. Embedded throughout this approach to thinking about leadership for special education is the impact of accountability found in both NCLB and IDEA. All of these areas inform a way of approaching principal leadership that focuses on all students.

### **Discussion of Findings: The Five Conceptual Themes**

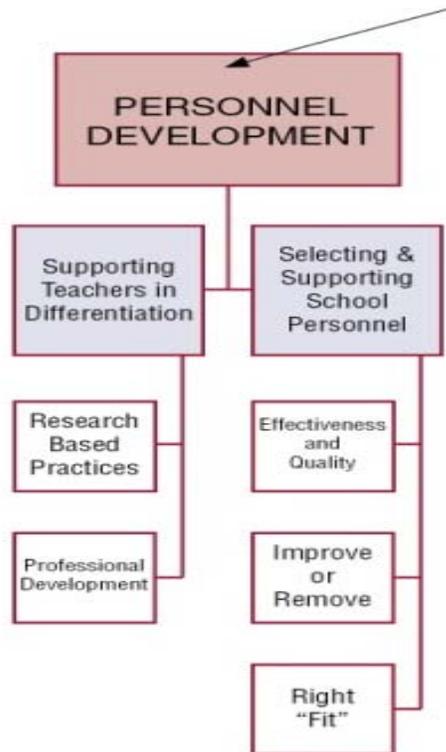
It is not surprising that personnel development, the IEP process, collaboration, data analysis, and service delivery planning/implementation comprise so much of the narrative responses of principals and special education directors regarding principal leadership for special education. Together as conceptual themes, they provide a framework for focusing on necessary leadership knowledge and skills for the education of all students. The perplexing matter is what to do about the gaps in the leadership knowledge and skills. To explore this further, a summary of each conceptual theme follows.

#### *Personnel Development*

Personnel development as a prominent conceptual theme most directly related to the following leadership categories that emerged from the review of the literature: Supporting Teachers in Differentiating Instruction and Selecting and Supporting Quality Personnel. This thematic category is not referring to professional development as an activity that could relate to any area of leadership. Instead, the subthemes that informed this conceptual theme refer to

the design of professional development and all of the components that are involved. This has implications for how to address the perceived needs in this area; personnel development must be approached as a critical piece of the puzzle instead of merely a vehicle for acquiring knowledge and skills.

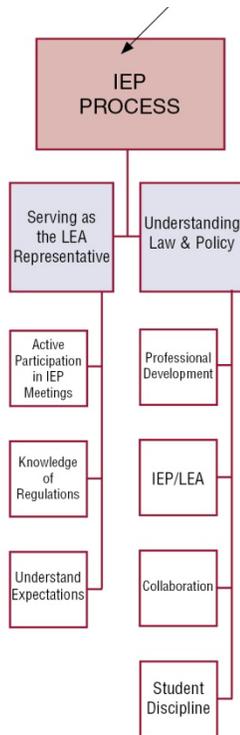
**FIGURE 5.1: Personnel Development as a Conceptual Theme**



### *The IEP Process*

The IEP Process as a prominent conceptual theme most directly related to the following leadership categories that emerged from the review of the literature: serving as the LEA Representative and Understanding Law and Policy. The subthemes that informed the emergence of this thematic category were very rich with responses that varied. This could be interpreted as a promising trend; the subthemes that emerged and their relevance to two key leadership categories from the literature review reveal that there is a perception that the IEP process is important and needs to be addressed as it relates to the acquisition of knowledge and skills in order to be effective. At minimum, this conceptual framework provides a solid springboard for planning for professional development in the area of effective IEP processes.

**FIGURE 5.2: The IEP Process as a Conceptual Theme**

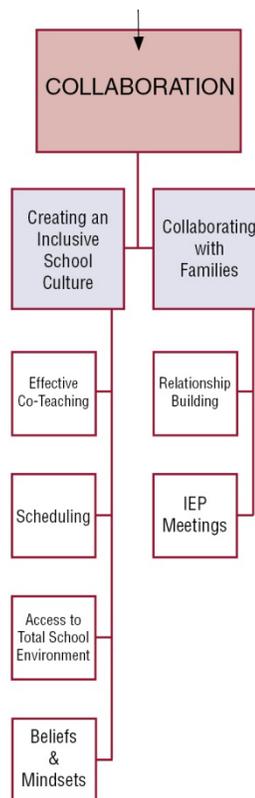


### *Collaboration*

Collaboration as a prominent conceptual theme most directly related to the following leadership categories that emerged from the review of the literature: Creating an Inclusive School Culture and Collaborating with Families. A compelling piece of the responses that framed this thematic category was the tendency for participants to point to areas and issues that are not typically associated with collaboration. A look at the model that captures this thematic category depicts this. One might expect to see leadership attributes that reference relationship building skills. While this did evolve as the subtheme

entitled Beliefs and Mindsets, most of the responses tended to relate to managerial leadership and the tactical aspects associated with the leader as manager.

**FIGURE 5.3: Collaboration as a Conceptual Theme**

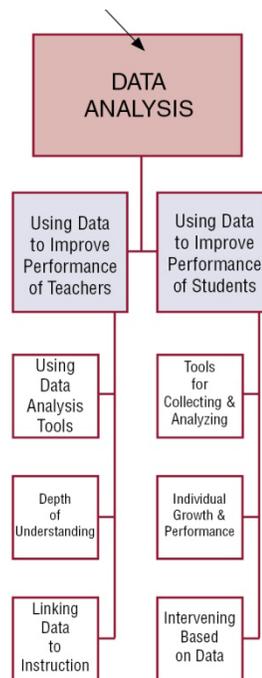


### *Data Analysis*

Data Analysis as a prominent conceptual theme most directly related to the following leadership categories that emerged from the review of the literature: Using Data to Improve Performance of Teachers and Using Data to Improve

Performance of Students. While this seems like a natural connection, the subcategories paint a picture that is very revealing and most telling with regard to next steps. The conceptual theme and the corresponding subcategories suggest that principals understand the need for tools to enhance their effectiveness as well as an increased depth of knowledge and skills, especially in the area of individual student growth and performance.

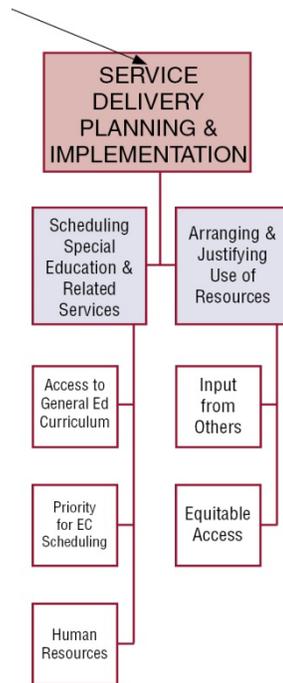
**FIGURE 5.4: Data Analysis as a Conceptual Theme**



### *Service Delivery Planning & Implementation*

Service Delivery Planning and Implementation as a prominent conceptual theme most directly related to the following leadership categories that emerged from the review of the literature: Scheduling Special Education and Related Services and Arranging and Justifying the Use of Resources. The issue of planning for service delivery and its implementation appeared in other categories as well, highlighting it as an important area according to principals' and directors' perceptions about principal leadership for special education. Most often, it was explained as a matter relating to scheduling, but the conceptual theme is the planning and implementation of service delivery options. Principals are asking for help in the area of planning for serving all students effectively; the findings in this study provide timely insight into how to respond to that request.

**FIGURE 5.5: Service Delivery Planning & Implementation as a Conceptual Theme**



### **Recommendations for Practice: Connectedness**

As early as Chapter 1, the connections that this research project has to the North Carolina Standards for School Executives was emphasized. The importance of relevancy to practice was a priority since this study's initiation. A key component of relevancy involves considering connections to current data sets that influence the context of principal leadership for special education.

The incorporation of the NC Standards for School Executives into the initial research design was important, among other reasons, because they are used in the evaluation instrument for public school principals in North Carolina. For the purpose of making recommendations for practice, six other data sources were selected for discussion: Working Conditions Survey Data, Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning, IEP Self Assessment, Accountability and Curriculum Revision Effort, North Carolina's Common Education Data Analysis and Reporting System (CORE), and the North Carolina Part B State Performance Plan (SPP). These data sources were selected by the researcher based on three factors: 1) their widely publicized use in the state of North Carolina's public school arena, 2) their relatedness to the five conceptual themes that emerged from this research study, and 3) the role that they play in the increased accountability for student performance that is an important component of this study and the results.

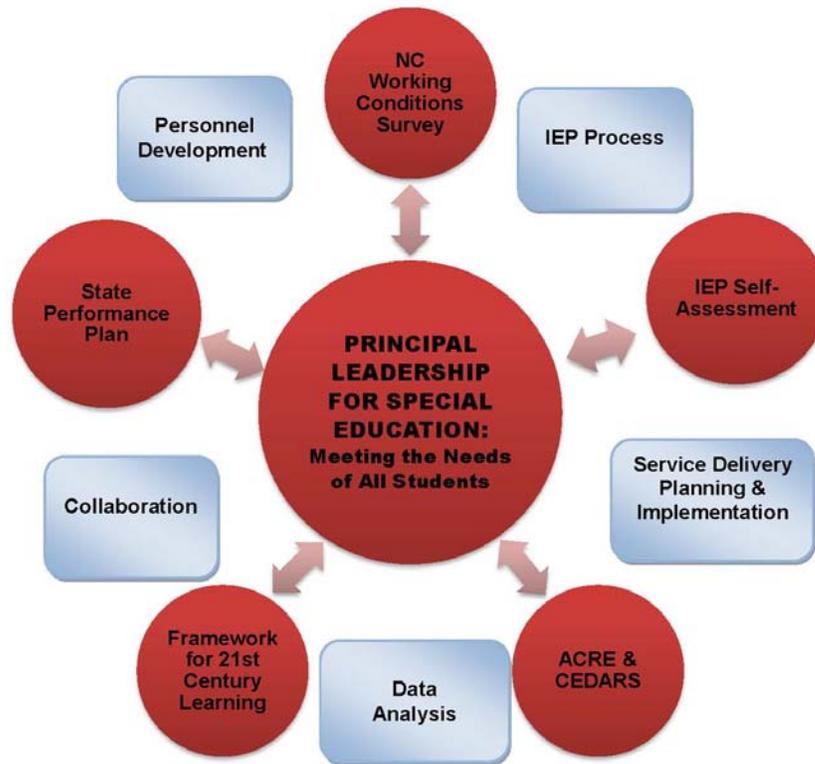
It is important to note that these do not represent all of the potential data sets, sources, or plans that could be connected to the findings. In addition, the purpose of this discussion is not to suggest that these sources will address knowledge and skill deficits as represented by the survey results. The purpose of this section is to discuss the mutual relation of these particular sources to the findings as represented by the mental model presented in Chapter 4 in order to extend the practicality and impact of the findings to principal leadership for special education.

The purpose of this analysis attends to the third research question of this study:

- What do principals and directors of special education programs identify as needs or supports that would assist principals in enhancing their leadership for special education in the identified areas?

While it could serve as a suggestion for future research, the specific components of each of the six selected data sources and their alignment with the findings in this study were not the primary focus. These data sources are worth consideration as a bridge to next steps for improving principal leadership for special education. Doing so will require being able to interface with initiatives that are already in place, of which these are examples. Figure 5.6 represents the focus of this section.

**FIGURE 5.6: Connectedness to Other Sources**



*NC Working Conditions Survey*

The Governor of North Carolina deploys surveys each year to every licensed public school-based educator in North Carolina. The goals of the survey are to hear from teachers and administrators about what they identify as areas in need of improvement, understand what school characteristics appear to affect those perceptions, and provide data on working conditions to local school leaders and state policymakers. While all results from the Working Conditions surveys should be considered for relevance to principal leadership, a recent summary of

Principals Working Conditions reported that principals received at least ten hours of professional development over the past two years in instructional leadership (80 percent) and data-driven decision-making (62 percent). However, few principals report receiving professional development in scheduling (11 percent), staffing, remediation/coaching, and working with parents and the community. (New Teacher Center, 2009)

These data, in connection with the findings of this research study, are important for two primary reasons. Firstly, principals report needing more professional development in the areas that they report having had the most professional development. Secondly, all five thematic categories from the findings of this study are represented in this recent summary of Principals' Working Conditions.

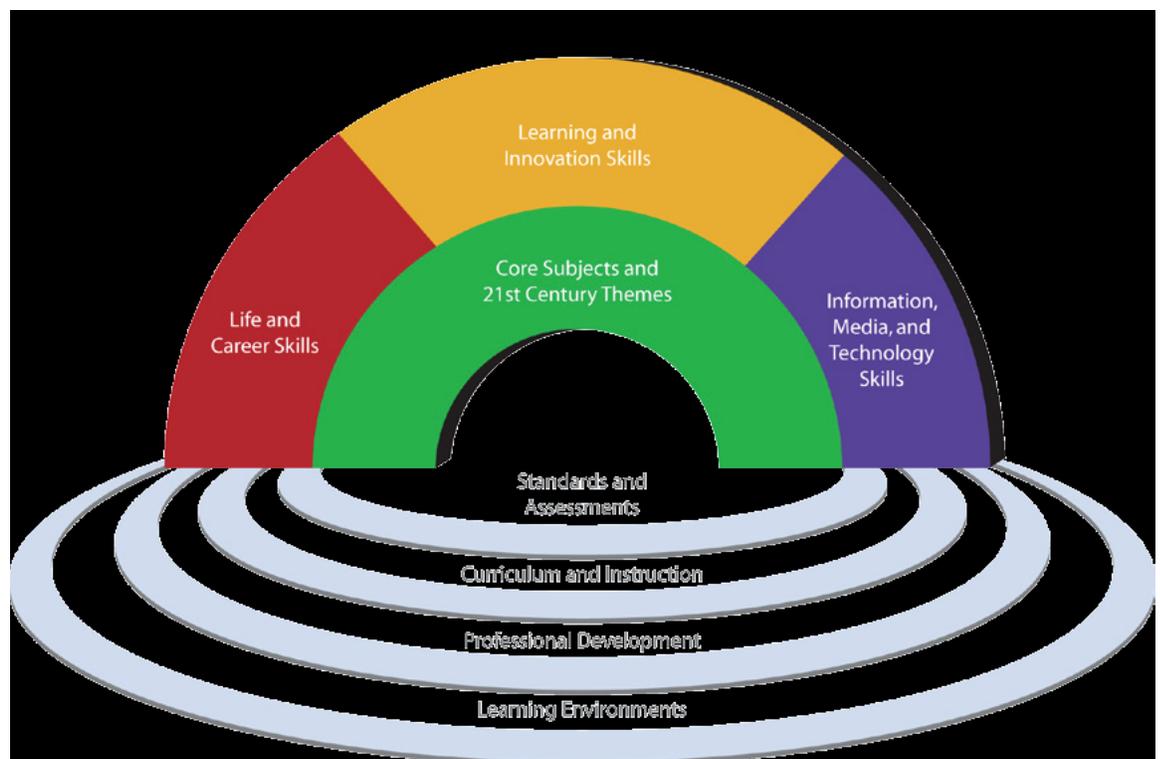
#### *Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning*

The Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning includes six critical systems that are necessary to ensure student mastery of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. They are 21<sup>st</sup> century standards, assessments, curriculum, instruction, professional development, and learning environments. These systems, according to the framework, must be aligned in order to produce a support system that produces 21<sup>st</sup> century outcomes for today's students. (Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, 2007)

This framework correlates with all five thematic categories that evolved in this research study. This highlights the alignment of this study with the NC

principals' evaluation which is based on the framework. A key piece of the next steps that are necessary based on the findings in this research about principal leadership for special education will be the inclusion of the Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning.

**Figure 5.7: Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning**



### *IEP Self Assessment*

Adapted from the Office of Special Education of Howard County Public Schools, Maryland, this very detailed document thoroughly addresses the issues raised in responses from principals and directors regarding principal leadership for special education. It provides a framework for the entire IEP process divided

into five major domains: interpersonal skills, preparation and planning, the IEP team environment, implementation of procedures, and professional responsibilities. Each domain is further divided into indicators. These indicators comprise a very thorough assessment for determining the level of effectiveness of the IEP process. (Office of Special Education, Howard County Public Schools, 2007)

This framework and the self-assessment component is a compelling consideration for addressing the perceived lack of skills and knowledge in the area of IEP process. In addition, given its attention to the important domains it contains, it also addresses the other leadership areas categorized in the survey. Most importantly, its purpose is to promote professional growth of those involved in the IEP process which attends to the purpose of this study.

#### *Accountability and Curriculum Revision Effort (ACRE)*

North Carolina's Accountability and Curriculum Reform Effort, also known as ACRE, is the state's comprehensive initiative to redefine the Standard Course of Study for K-12 students, the student testing program and the school accountability model. In undertaking this ambitious work, North Carolina education leaders are the first in the nation to address learning standards, student tests and school accountability simultaneously. This project has been deemed by the NCDPI as the most important and significant work of the State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction in a generation. (ACRE, 2009)

*North Carolina's Common Education Data Analysis and Reporting System  
(CEDARS)*

CEDARS is North Carolina's PreK-13 State Longitudinal Data System. The system is composed of various DPI source data collection systems, a student and staff identification system, a centralized data repository, and associated reporting and analysis tools. Once completed, CEDARS will support NC's efforts to use high quality data about students, staff, programs, and finances to make policy and service decisions that will improve student outcomes. Specifically, CEDARS will enable State, local, and federal policy makers and service providers to analyze trends and relationships between various educational factors and student performance over time. CEDARS is being designed to support the data sharing and reporting needs of DPI staff, school principals, and local school district administrators, state and federal policy and decision makers, researchers, and other consumers of educational data. CEDARS is also intended to improve the state's ability to share and exchange data with external entities, including the federal government, institutes of higher education, and other State agencies. (CEDARS, 2009)

*North Carolina Part B State Performance Plan (SPP)*

In accordance with 20 U.S.C. 1416(b)(1) of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA or Part B), each State has in place a Part B State performance plan (Part B - SPP) that evaluates the State's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of Part B and describes how the

State will improve such implementation. In accordance with 20 U.S.C. 1416(b)(2)(C)(ii) and 34 CFR §300.602, each State must report annually to the public on the performance of each local educational agency (LEA) located in the State on the targets in its Part B - SPP. The State also must report annually to the Secretary on the State's performance under its Part B - SPP. This report is called the Part B Annual Performance Report (Part B – APR). (SPP, 2010)

This plan is important and relevant to the findings of this research study because it is North Carolina's roadmap for meeting the accountability mandates. This plan encompasses the accountability piece that is woven through this entire research project. The indicators and measures that are outlined in North Carolina's Part B State Performance Plan should be included as a resource in the planning for professional development to address the needs of principals that are the findings of this study.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Earlier in this chapter a discussion of findings summarized the big five conceptual themes that emerged from the results of both surveys. From that summary, five statements that correspond with the "Big 5" could serve as a focus for considering and recommending next steps:

- 1) The IEP process is important and needs to be addressed as it relates to the acquisition of knowledge and skills in order to be effective.

- 2) Developing and supporting personnel who can meet the needs of all students is a key area for principal leadership.
- 3) Managerial leadership is important, as are the tactical aspects associated with the leader as manager.
- 4) Principals are asking for help in the area of planning for serving all students effectively.
- 5) Principals understand the need for tools to enhance their effectiveness as well as an increased depth of knowledge and skills in using data, especially in the area of individual student growth and performance.

These five statements, accompanied by the lists of what principals do to be effective and what skills and knowledge principals need in the ten leadership areas should be utilized to plan for professional development. This professional development should be carefully planned to incorporate the findings of this study but not in isolation. The context within which principal leadership for special education is provided, and especially how accountability influences that context, is critically important. The sources that were briefly described in the previous section are examples of other considerations for planning.

This professional development for principals should be new and different and not driven by a plan or accountability model. The voices of the ones responsible for providing the leadership should be the focus of the professional development planning – the principals. Suggested next steps are:

- 1) Attempt to capture the perceptions of more principals to add to the findings or further verify the findings that were already reported.
- 2) Attempt to capture the perceptions of more directors of special education to add to the findings or further verify the findings that were already reported.
- 3) Convene a team of stakeholders to plan professional development based on the findings and using the North Carolina Standards for Professional Development that could be deployed as a university course, a summer institute, or an ongoing training module for leaders.
- 4) Carefully assess the effectiveness of the professional development. Identify a subset of participants to conduct case study research to improve the professional development design.

The purpose of this study was to, by capturing the perspectives of practicing administrators, truly discover the leadership practices that must occur in order to address the awareness and capacity of principals to provide effective leadership for special education. The next step is the most difficult but most important – the challenge of responding to the critically urgent need for strong, effective principal leaders. Consider these words that summarize the importance of the issue:

*Schools and their leadership focus too much on the center – the majority of students who achieve and who have the attention of vocal parents, community patrons, or business patrons. If schools are interested in educating all students well, we content that they must attend to the margins – those vulnerable students who have little parental guidance and*

*no voice in school affairs. These students may come from a lower social class; have racial, ethnic, or ability differences, come from families that speak other languages; or have different social and religious customs. High-performing students also need the opportunity to test the margins. They too require teachers and peers who challenge them to think more deeply. All of these students are complex human systems who test the response systems educators typically use to foster learning and compliance with the rules and routines of the school day. These students challenge the curriculum and its standards, the teacher's normal instruction routines, and the motivational strategies that stimulate learning and compliance in the classroom. They present educators with a grand opportunity to create new learning for themselves and examine their invitation to learning for all students. These students constantly challenge the equilibrium and boundaries of the classroom and their diversity calls out for the school to change. They are the engines of reform. (Burrello, L.D., Lashley, C, & Beatty, p. 2)*

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# APPENDIX A

## NC STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL EXECUTIVES

### *North Carolina Standards for School Executives*

*As Approved by the State Board of Education  
December 7, 2006*

#### A New Vision of School Leadership

Public education's changed mission dictates the need for a new type of school leader – an executive instead of an administrator. No longer are school leaders just maintaining the status quo by managing complex operations, but just like their colleagues in business, they must be able to create schools as organizations that can learn and change quickly if they are to improve performance. Schools need executives who are adept at creating systems for change and at building relationships with and across staff that not only tap into the collective knowledge and insight they possess but powerful relationships that also stir their passions for their work with children. Out of these relationships the executive must create among staff a common shared understanding for the purpose of the work of the school, its values that direct its action, and commitment and ownership of a set of beliefs and goals that focus everyone's decision making. The staff's common understanding of the school's identity empowers them to seek and build powerful alliances and partnerships with students, parents and community stakeholders in order to enhance their ability to produce increased student achievement. The successful work of the new executive will only be realized in the creation of a culture in which leadership is distributed and encouraged with teachers, which consists of open, honest communication, which is focused on the use of data, teamwork, research-based best practices, and which uses modern tools to drive ethical and principled, goal-oriented action. This culture of disciplined thought and action is rooted in the ability of the relationships among all stakeholders to build a trusting, transparent environment that reduces all stakeholders' sense of vulnerability as they address the challenges of transformational change.

#### Philosophical Foundations of the Standards

The standards are predicated on the following beliefs:

- ☞ Today schools must have proactive school executives who possess a great sense of urgency.
- ☞ The goal of school leadership is to transform schools so that large-scale, sustainable, continuous improvement becomes built in to their mode of operation.
- ☞ The moral purpose of school leadership is to create schools in which all students learn, the gap between high and low performance is greatly diminished and what students learn will prepare them for success in their futures, not ours.
- ☞ Leadership is not a position or a person. It is a practice that must be embedded in all job roles at all levels of the school district.
- ☞ The work of leadership is about working with, for and through people. It is a social act. Whether we are discussing instructional leadership, change leadership or leadership as learning, people are always the medium for the leader.
- ☞ Leadership is not about doing everything oneself but it is always about creating processes and systems that will cause everything to happen.
- ☞ Leadership is about the executive's ability to select and develop a strong executive staff whose complementary strengths promote excellence in all seven functions of leadership identified in this document.
- ☞ The concept of leadership is extremely complex and systemic in nature. Isolating the parts of leadership completely misses the power of the whole. It is not just knowing what to do, but why to do it, how to do it and when to do it.
- ☞ Within a school district there are nested leadership systems (local boards of education, central office, school, and classroom). For the organization to be successful these systems must be aligned and supportive, and function as a team.
- ☞ Leadership is about setting direction, aligning and motivating people to implement positive sustained improvement.
- ☞ Leaders bring their "person" to the practice of leadership. Matching the context of leadership to the "person" of the individual is important to the success of the leader.

## Intended Purposes of the Standards

The North Carolina School Executive Standards have been developed as a guide for principals and assistant principals as they continually reflect upon and improve their effectiveness as leaders throughout all of the stages of their careers. Although there are many influences on a school executive's development, these standards will serve as an important tool for principals and assistant principals as they consider their growth and development as executives leading schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Taken as a whole these standards, practices and competencies are overwhelming. One might ask, "How can one person possess all of these?" The answer is, one person cannot. It is, therefore, imperative that a school executive understands the importance of building an executive team that has complementary skills. The more diversity that exists on the team the more likely the team will be to demonstrate high performance in all critical function areas. The main responsibility of the school executive is to create aligned systems of leadership throughout the school and its community.

In addition, these standards will serve other audiences and purposes. These standards will:

- ✿ Inform higher education programs in developing the content and requirements of school executive degree programs;
- ✿ Focus the goals and objectives of districts as they support, monitor and evaluate their school executives;
- ✿ Guide professional development for school executives;
- ✿ Serve as a tool in developing coaching and mentoring programs for school executives.

## Organization of the Standards

Each standard is formatted as follows:

- ✿ **Standard:** The standard is the broad category of the executive's knowledge and skills.
- ✿ **Summary:** The summary more fully describes the content and rationale of each Standard.
- ✿ **Practices:** The practices are statements of what one would see an effective executive doing in each Standard. The lists of practices are not meant to be exhaustive.
- ✿ **Artifacts:** The artifacts are evidence of the quality of the executive's work or places where evidence can be found in each Standard. Collectively they could be the components of a performance portfolio. The lists of artifacts are not meant to be exhaustive.

- ✿ **Competencies:** Although not articulated, there are many obvious competencies inherent in the practices of each critical leadership function. This document concludes with a list of those competencies which may not be obvious but that support practice in multiple leadership functions.

## The Seven Standards of Executive Leadership and Their Connection

Relevant national reports and research in the field focused on identifying the practices of leadership that impact student achievement were considered in the development of these standards. Particularly helpful were the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework, and work by the Wallace Foundation, the Mid-continental Regional Education Laboratory, the Charlotte Advocates for Education and the Southern Regional Education Board. Work by the National Staff Development Council, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Middle School Association, the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium, and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration Education Leadership Constituent Council were also considered in the development of these standards. Additionally, input was solicited from stakeholders and leaders in the field.

The seven critical standards used as the framework for the North Carolina School Executive Standards are borrowed from a Wallace Foundation study, *Making Sense of Leading Schools: A Study of the School Principals* (2003). Unlike many current efforts that look at all of the things principals "might" or "should" do, this study examined what principals actually do. As such, it is grounded in practice, exploits story and narrative, and supports the distribution of leadership rather than the "hero leader."

North Carolina's Standards for School Executives are interrelated and connect in executives' practice. They are not intended to isolate competencies or practices. Executives' abilities in each standard will impact their ability to perform effectively in other standard areas. For example, the ability of an executive to evaluate and develop staff will directly impact the school's ability to reach its goals and will also impact the norms of the culture of the school. School executives are responsible for ensuring that leadership happens in all seven critical areas, but they don't have to provide it.

The standards and their practices follow.

## Standard 1: Strategic Leadership

**Summary:** School executives will create conditions that result in strategically re-imagining the school's vision, mission, and goals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Understanding that schools ideally prepare students for an unseen but not altogether unpredictable future, the leader creates a climate of inquiry that challenges the school community to continually re-purpose itself by building on its core values and beliefs about its preferred future and then developing a pathway to reach it.

**Practices:** The school executive practices effective strategic leadership when he or she:

- ✳ Is able to share a vision of the changing world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that schools are preparing children to enter;
- ✳ Systematically challenges the status quo by leading change with potentially beneficial outcomes;
- ✳ Systematically considers new ways of accomplishing tasks and is comfortable with major changes in how processes are implemented;
- ✳ Utilizes data from the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey in developing the framework for continual improvement in the School Improvement Plan;
- ✳ Is a driving force behind major initiatives that help students acquire 21<sup>st</sup> century skills;
- ✳ Creates with all stakeholders a vision for the school that captures peoples' attention and imagination;
- ✳ Creates processes that provide for the periodic review and revision of the school's vision, mission, and strategic goals by all school stakeholders;
- ✳ Creates processes to ensure the school's identity (vision, mission, values, beliefs and goals) actually drive decisions and inform the culture of the school;
- ✳ Adheres to statutory requirements regarding the School Improvement Plan;
- ✳ Facilitates the collaborative development of annual school improvement plans to realize strategic goals and objectives;
- ✳ Facilitates the successful execution of the school improvement plan aligned to the mission and goals set by the State Board of Education;
- ✳ Facilitates the implementation of state education policy inside the school's classrooms;
- ✳ Facilitates the setting of high, concrete goals and the expectations that all students meet them;
- ✳ Communicates strong professional beliefs about schools, teaching, and learning that reflect latest research and best practice in preparing students for success in college or in work;
- ✳ Creates processes to distribute leadership throughout the school.

### Artifacts:

- ✳ Degree to which school improvement plan strategies are implemented, assessed and modified
- ✳ Evidence of an effectively functioning, elected School Improvement Team
- ✳ NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- ✳ School improvement plan, its alignment with district and state strategic priorities, and a plan for growth on items of concern as evidenced in the NC TWC Survey
- ✳ The degree to which staff can articulate the school's direction and focus
- ✳ Student testing data

## Standard 2: Instructional Leadership

**Summary:** School executives will set high standards for the professional practice of 21<sup>st</sup> century instruction and assessment that result in a no nonsense accountable environment. The school executive must be knowledgeable of best instructional and school practices and must use this knowledge to cause the creation of collaborative structures within the school for the design of highly engaging schoolwork for students, the on-going peer review of this work and the sharing of this work throughout the professional community.

**Practices:** The school executive practices effective instructional leadership when he or she:

- ✳ Focuses his or her own and others' attention persistently and publicly on learning and teaching by initiating and guiding conversations about instruction and student learning that are oriented towards high expectations and concrete goals;
- ✳ Creates an environment of practiced distributive leadership and teacher empowerment;
- ✳ Demonstrates knowledge of 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum, instruction, and assessment by leading or participating in meetings with teachers and parents where these topics are discussed, and/or holding frequent formal or informal conversations with students, staff and parents around these topics;
- ✳ Ensures that there is an appropriate and logical alignment between the curriculum of the school and the state's accountability program;
- ✳ Creates processes and schedules that facilitate the collaborative (team) design, sharing, evaluation, and archiving of rigorous, relevant, and engaging instructional lessons that ensure students acquire essential knowledge;
- ✳ Challenges staff to reflect deeply on and define what knowledge, skills and concepts are essential to the complete educational development of students;
- ✳ Creates processes for collecting and using student test data and other formative data from other sources for the improvement of instruction;

- ☞ Creates processes for identifying, benchmarking and providing students access to a variety of 21<sup>st</sup> century instructional tools (e.g., technology) and best practices for meeting diverse student needs;
- ☞ Creates processes that ensure the strategic allocation and use of resources to meet instructional goals and support teacher needs;
- ☞ Creates processes to provide formal feedback to teachers concerning the effectiveness of their classroom instruction;
- ☞ Creates processes that protect teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their instructional time;
- ☞ Systematically and frequently observes in classrooms and engages in conversation with students about their learning.

**Artifacts:**

- ☞ School improvement plan
- ☞ NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- ☞ Student achievement data
- ☞ Dropout data
- ☞ Teacher retention data
- ☞ Documented use of formative assessment instruments to impact instruction
- ☞ Development and communication of goal-oriented personalized education plans for identified students (ESOL, exceptional children, Level I and Level II children)
- ☞ Evidence of the team development and evaluation of classroom lessons

**Standard 3: Cultural Leadership**

**Summary:** School executives will understand and act on the understanding of the important role a school's culture contributes to the exemplary performance of the school. School executives must support and value the traditions, artifacts, symbols and positive values and norms of the school and community that result in a sense of identity and pride upon which to build a positive future. A school executive must be able to "reculture" the school if needed to align with school's goals of improving student and adult learning and to infuse the work of the adults and students with passion, meaning and purpose. Cultural leadership implies understanding the school as the people in it each day, how they came to their current state, and how to connect with their traditions in order to move them forward to support the school's efforts to achieve individual and collective goals.

**Practices:** The school executive practices effective cultural leadership when he or she:

- ☞ Creates a collaborative work environment predicated on site-based management that supports the "team" as the basic unit of learning and decision-making within the school and promotes cohesion and cooperation among staff;
- ☞ Communicates strong ideals and beliefs about schooling, teaching, and professional learning communities with teachers, staff, parents, and students and then operates from those beliefs;
- ☞ Influences the evolution of the culture to support the continuous improvement of the school as outlined in the school improvement plan;
- ☞ Systematically develops and uses shared values, beliefs and a shared vision to establish a school identity that emphasizes a sense of community and cooperation to guide the disciplined thought and action of all staff and students;
- ☞ Systematically and fairly acknowledges failures and celebrates accomplishments of the school and staff;
- ☞ Visibly supports the positive, culturally-responsive traditions of the school community;
- ☞ Promotes a sense of well-being among staff, students and parents;
- ☞ Builds a sense of efficacy and empowerment among staff that result in a "can do" attitude when faced with challenges;
- ☞ Empowers staff to recommend creative 21<sup>st</sup> century concepts for school improvement.

**Artifacts:**

- ☞ Work of Professional Learning Communities within and tangential to the school
- ☞ Documented use of the SIT in decision-making throughout the year
- ☞ NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- ☞ School improvement plan
- ☞ Teacher retention data
- ☞ Student achievement data
- ☞ Awards structure developed by school

**Standard 4: Human Resource Leadership**

**Summary:** School executives will ensure that the school is a professional learning community. School executives will ensure that processes and systems are in place that result in the recruitment, induction, support, evaluation, development and retention of a high performing staff. The school executive must engage and empower accomplished teachers in a distributive leadership manner, including support of teachers in day-to-day decisions such as discipline, communication with parents, and protecting teachers

from duties that interfere with teaching, and must practice fair and consistent evaluation of teachers. The school executive must engage teachers and other professional staff in conversations to plan their career paths and support district succession planning.

**Practices:** The school executive practices effective human resource leadership when he or she:

- ☘ Provides structures for the development of effective professional learning communities aligned with the school improvement plan, focused on results, and characterized by collective responsibility for instructional planning and for 21<sup>st</sup> century student learning;
- ☘ Models the importance of continued adult learning by engaging in activities to develop personal knowledge and skill along with expanded self – awareness;
- ☘ Communicates a positive attitude about the ability of staff to accomplish substantial outcomes to improve their efficacy;
- ☘ Creates processes for teachers to assume leadership and decision making roles within the school that foster their career development;
- ☘ Creates and monitors processes for hiring, inducting and mentoring new teachers and other staff to the school;
- ☘ Uses the results of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey to create and maintain a positive work environment for teachers and other staff;
- ☘ Evaluates teachers and other staff in a fair and equitable manner and utilizes the results of evaluations to improve performance;
- ☘ Provides for results-oriented professional development that is aligned with identified 21<sup>st</sup> century curricular, instructional, and assessment needs, is connected to school improvement goals and is differentiated based on staff needs;
- ☘ Continuously searches for the best placement and utilization of staff to fully benefit from their strengths;
- ☘ Is systematically and personally involved in the school's professional activities.

**Artifacts:**

- ☘ School improvement plan
- ☘ NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey – with special emphasis on the leadership and empowerment domains
- ☘ Copy of master school schedule documenting the time provided for individual and collaborative planning for every teacher
- ☘ Number of National Board Certified teachers
- ☘ Teacher retention data
- ☘ Number of teachers pursuing school executive credentials, National Board Certification, or advanced licensure in their teaching areas
- ☘ Records of school visits for the purpose of adult learning

- ☘ Record of professional development provided staff and an assessment of the impact of professional development on student learning
- ☘ Mentor records, beginning teacher feedback, and documentation of correlation of assignment of mentor to mentee
- ☘ Copies of professional growth plans
- ☘ Student achievement data

**Standard 5: Managerial Leadership**

**Summary:** School executives will ensure that the school has processes and systems in place for budgeting, staffing, problem solving, communicating expectations and scheduling that result in organizing the work routines in the building. The school executive must be responsible for the monitoring of the school budget and the inclusion of all teachers in the budget decisions so as to meet the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs of every classroom. Effectively and efficiently managing the complexity of every day life is critical for staff to be able to focus its energy on improvement.

**Practices:** The school executive practices effective managerial leadership when he or she:

- ☘ Creates processes to provide for a balanced operational budget for school programs and activities;
- ☘ Creates processes to recruit and retain a high-quality workforce in the school that meets the diverse needs of students;
- ☘ Creates processes to identify and solve, resolve, dissolve or absolve school-based problems/ conflicts in a fair, democratic way;
- ☘ Designs a system of communication that provides for the timely, responsible sharing of information to, from, and with school and district staff;
- ☘ Designs scheduling processes and protocols that maximize staff input and addresses diverse student learning needs;
- ☘ Develops a master schedule for the school to maximize student learning by providing for individual and on-going collaborative planning for every teacher;
- ☘ Collaboratively develops and enforces clear expectations, structures, rules and procedures for students and staff.

**Artifacts:**

- ☘ NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- ☘ School Improvement Plan
- ☘ External reviews, such as budget
- ☘ Copies of master schedules/procedures
- ☘ Communication of safety procedures and behavioral expectations throughout the school community

### Standard 6: External Development Leadership

**Summary:** A school executive will design structures and processes that result in community engagement, support, and ownership. Acknowledging that schools no longer reflect but in fact build community, the leader proactively creates with staff opportunities for parents, community and business representatives to participate as “stockholders” in the school such that continued investments of resources and good will are not left to chance.

**Practices:** The school executive practices effective external development leadership when he or she:

- ☘ Implements processes that empower parents and other stakeholders to make significant decisions;
- ☘ Creates systems that engage all community stakeholders in a shared responsibility for student and school success;
- ☘ Designs protocols and processes that ensure compliance with state and district mandates;
- ☘ Creates opportunities to advocate for the school in the community and with parents;
- ☘ Communicates the school’s accomplishments to the district office and public media in accordance with LEA policies;
- ☘ Gathers fiscal, intellectual and human resources from the community that support the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning agenda of the school;
- ☘ Builds relationships with individuals and groups to support specific aspects of the learning improvement agenda and also as a source of general good will.

#### Artifacts:

- ☘ PTSA participation
- ☘ PTSA meeting agendas, bulletins, etc.
- ☘ Parent attendance at school improvement team meetings
- ☘ Survey results from parents
- ☘ Evidence of visible support from community
- ☘ Booster club participation
- ☘ Number of school volunteers
- ☘ Plan for shaping the school’s image throughout the community
- ☘ PTSA membership
- ☘ Evidence of business partnerships and projects involving business partners

### Standard 7: Micropolitical Leadership

**Summary:** The school executive will build systems and relationships that utilize the staff’s diversity, encourage constructive ideological conflict in order to leverage staff expertise, power and influence to realize the school’s vision for success. The executive will also creatively employ an awareness of staff’s professional needs, issues, and interests to build social cohesion and to facilitate distributed governance and shared decision-making.

**Practices:** The school executive practices effective micropolitical leadership when he or she:

- ☘ Uses the School Improvement Team to make decisions and provides opportunities for staff to be involved in developing school policies;
- ☘ Creates an environment and mechanisms to ensure all internal stakeholder voices are heard and respected;
- ☘ Creates processes and protocols to buffer and mediate staff interests;
- ☘ Is easily accessible to teachers and staff;
- ☘ Designs transparent systems to equitably manage human and financial resources;
- ☘ Demonstrates sensitivity to personal needs of staff;
- ☘ Demonstrates awareness of informal groups and relationships among school staff and utilizes these as a positive resource;
- ☘ Demonstrates awareness of hidden and potentially discordant issues in the school;
- ☘ Encourages people to express opinions contrary to those of authority;
- ☘ Demonstrates ability to predict what could go wrong from day to day;
- ☘ Uses performance as the primary criterion for reward and advancement;
- ☘ Maintains high visibility throughout the school;
- ☘ Maintains open, vertical and horizontal communications throughout the school community.

#### Artifacts:

- ☘ NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- ☘ Teacher retention data
- ☘ Dissemination of clear norms and ground rules
- ☘ Evidence of ability to confront ideological conflict and then reach consensus
- ☘ Evidence of shared decision-making
- ☘ Evidence of use of a decision matrix
- ☘ Evidence of a school that operates through teams
- ☘ Evidence of distributed leadership

## Competencies

A competency is a combination of knowledge (factual and experiential) and skills that one needs to effectively implement the practices. Factual knowledge is simply “knowing” content; experiential knowledge is the knowledge one gains from understanding – it is knowing the when and why. Skills bring structure to experiential knowledge. It is when one can put their accumulated knowledge into a series of steps that – if followed – will lead to practice.

There are many competencies that are obviously inherent in the successful performance of all of the practices listed under each of the seven critical functions of Leadership. The principal may or may not personally possess all of these competencies but must ensure that a team is in place that not only possesses them but can effectively and efficiently execute them. Although the principal may not personally possess them all, he or she is still responsible for their effective use in the various leadership practices.

The competencies listed below are not so obvious in the practices, can be applied to multiple practices and are absolutely essential for all school executives to possess to ensure their success. For example, the competency – conflict management is important in Micropolitical Leadership, Strategic Leadership, Cultural Leadership, and perhaps one could argue that this competency is necessary in all seven Standards. These competencies are listed here to emphasize their importance and to make sure they are incorporated into the development of school executives.

- ✳ **Communication** – Effectively listens to others; clearly and effectively presents and understands information orally and in writing; acquires, organizes, analyzes, interprets, maintains information needed to achieve school or team 21<sup>st</sup> century objectives.
- ✳ **Change Management** – Effectively engages staff and community in the change process in a manner that ensures their support of the change and its successful implementation.
- ✳ **Conflict Management** – Anticipates or seeks to resolve confrontations, disagreements, or complaints in a constructive manner.
- ✳ **Creative Thinking** – Engages in and fosters an environment for others to engage in innovative thinking.
- ✳ **Customer Focus** – Understands the students as customers of the work of schooling and the servant nature of leadership and acts accordingly.
- ✳ **Delegation** – Effectively assigns work tasks to others in ways that provide learning experiences for them and in ways that ensure the efficient operation of the school.
- ✳ **Dialogue/Inquiry** – Is skilled in creating a risk free environment for engaging people in conversations that explore issues, challenges or bad relationships that are hindering school performance.
- ✳ **Emotional Intelligence** – Is able to manage oneself through self awareness and self management and is able to manage relationships through empathy, social

awareness and relationship management. This competency is critical to building strong, transparent, trusting relationships throughout the school community.

- ✳ **Environmental Awareness** – Becomes aware and remains informed of external and internal trends, interests and issues with potential impacts on school policies, practices, procedures and positions.
- ✳ **Global Perspective** – Understands the competitive nature of the new global economy and is clear about the knowledge and skills students will need to be successful in this economy.
- ✳ **Judgment** – Effectively reaching logical conclusions and making high quality decisions based on available information. Giving priority and caution to significant issues. Analyzing and interpreting complex information.
- ✳ **Organizational Ability** – Effectively plans and schedules one’s own and the work of others so that resources are used appropriately, such as scheduling the flow of activities and establishing procedures to monitor projects.
- ✳ **Personal Ethics and Values** – Consistently exhibits high standards in the areas of honesty, integrity, fairness, stewardship, trust, respect, and confidentiality.
- ✳ **Personal Responsibility for Performance** – Proactively and continuously improves performance by focusing on needed areas of improvement and enhancement of strengths; actively seeks and effectively applies feedback from others; takes full responsibility for one’s own achievements.
- ✳ **Responsiveness** – Does not leave issues, inquiries or requirements for information go unattended. Creates a clearly delineated structure for responding to requests/situations in an expedient manner.
- ✳ **Results Orientation** – Effectively assumes responsibility. Recognizes when a decision is required. Takes prompt action as issues emerge. Resolves short-term issues while balancing them against long-term goals.
- ✳ **Sensitivity** – Effectively perceives the needs and concerns of others; deals tactfully with others in emotionally stressful situations or in conflict. Knows what information to communicate and to whom. Relates to people of varying ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.
- ✳ **Systems Thinking** – Understands the interrelationships and impacts of school and district influences, systems and external stakeholders, and applies that understanding to advancing the achievement of the school or team.
- ✳ **Technology** – Effectively utilizes the latest technologies to continuously improve the management of the school and enhance student instruction.
- ✳ **Time Management** – Effectively uses available time to complete work tasks and activities that lead to the achievement of desired work or school results. Runs effective meetings.
- ✳ **Visionary** – Encourages imagineering by creating an environment and structure to capture stakeholder dreams of what the school could become for all the students.

## APPENDIX B CATEGORIES OF LEADERSHIP

CATEGORIES OF LEADERSHIP DERIVED FROM REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Title	Author	Date	Understanding Law & Policy	Using Data to			Collaborating with Families	Participating in the IEP Process	Scheduling & Service Delivery	Differentiated Instruction	Allocating Resources	Hiring & Supporting Quality Personnel
				Improve Teacher Performance	Improve Student Performance	Creating an Inclusive Culture						
A Principal's Guide to Special Education	Bateman, D. & Bateman, C.F.	2006	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Adequate Yearly Progress of Students with Disabilities: Competencies for Teachers	Thompson, S.H., Lazrus, S.S., Clepper, A.T., & Thudrow, M.L.	2006	X	X	X			X				X
Assessing Learner-Centered Leadership: Connections to Research, Professional Standards, and Current Practices	Gedding, E., Porter, A., Murphy, J., Elliott, S.N., & Crawley, X.	2009		X	X	X	X		X			X
Balanced Leadership: What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement	Waters, T., Marzano, R.J., & McNulty, B.	2003	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Beginning Principals: Balancing at the Top of the Greasy Pole	Walker, A. & Olan, H.	2006	X			X						
Certification and Special Education Leadership Personnel: An Analysis of State Standards	Whitworth, J.E. & Hatley, R.V.	2001	X									
Characteristics of Effective Rural Elementary Schools for Students with Disabilities	Nagle, K.M., Hernandez, S.E., McLaughlin, M.J., & Dob, F.	2006	X	X	X		X					X
Confounded Policies: Implementing Site-Based Management and Special Education Policy Reforms	Marshall, C. & Patterson, J.A.	2002	X							X		
Educating All Students Together: How School Leaders Create Unified Systems	Burrello, L.C., Lashley, C., & Reatto, E.F.	2001			X		X	X		X		
Educational Leadership in the Era of Accountability	Johnstone, C.J., Dikkers, A.G., & Lucifora, A.	2009	X									X
Educator and Administrator Perceptions of the Impact of No Child Left Behind on Special Populations	Vannest, K.J., Lukichni, M., Mason, B.A., & Temple-Harvey, K.K.	2008	X	X			X		X			X
Equity Audits: A Practical Leadership Tool for Developing Equitable and Excellent Schools	Scriba, L., Schourich, J.J., Garcia, J., & Noffly, G.	2004		X	X							X
From Knowledge to Wisdom: Using Case Methodology to Develop Effective Leaders	Lyons, C.A., Schumacher, J.A., & Cameron, G.	2008	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

CATEGORIES OF LEADERSHIP DERIVED FROM REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Title	Author	Date	Understanding Law & Policy	Using Data to				Participating in the IEP Process	Scheduling & Service Delivery	Differentiated Instruction	Allocating Resources	Hiring & Supporting Quality Personnel
				Improve Teacher Performance	Improve Student Performance	Creating an Inclusive Culture	Collaborating with Families					
How Leadership Influences Student Learning	Leithwood, K., Louis, K.S., Anderson, S., & Walstrom, K.	2004	X	X	X	X				X	X	
If They Knew, They Would Change: How Legal Knowledge Impacts Principals' Practice	Mitello, M., Schimmel, D., & Eisenwirth, H.L.	2009	X		X		X	X				
Inclusive Leadership: Preparing Principals for the Role that Awaits Them	Garrison-Wade, D.S. & Fomer, C.L.	2007			X						X	
Individuals With Disabilities Education Act Reauthorization: Accountability and Personal Responsibility	Turnbull III, H.R.	2005	X									
Innovation, NCLB, and the Fear Factor: The Challenge of Leading 21st-Century Schools in an Era of Accountability	Schoen, L. & Fusarelli, L.D.	2008	X	X	X			X	X	X		
Investigating Instructional Leadership for Special Education	Boys, D.A. & Crockett, J.B.	2007		X	X				X		X	
Leadership Content Knowledge	Stein, M.K. & Nelson, B.S.	2003		X	X				X			
Leadership for Learning: A Research-Based Model and Taxonomy of Behaviors	Murphy, J., Elliott, S.N., Goldring, E., & Foster, A.C.	2007		X	X				X	X		
Leadership Opportunities in the Context of Responsiveness to Intervention Activities	Ehren, T.C., Whitfire, K.A.	2005	X		X		X	X	X			
Leading Schools: Distinguishing the Essential from the Important	Waters, T. & Grubb, S.	2004	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Making Sense of Leading Schools: A National Study of the Principalship	Portin, B., Schneider, P., DeArmond, M., & Gundlach, L.	2003	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Measuring the Learning-Centered Leadership Expertise of School Principals	Goddard, E., Huff, J., Spillane, J.P., & Berns, C.	2009		X					X			
NCLB: A Study of Its Effect on Rural Schools - School Administrators Rate Service Options for Students with Disabilities		2009	X							X		
Powered with Good Intentions: The Federal Role in the Oversight and Enforcement of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) and the No-Child Left Behind Act	Ramanathan, A.	2008	X									

CATEGORIES OF LEADERSHIP DERIVED FROM REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Title	Author	Date	Understanding Law & Policy	Using Data to Improve Teacher Performance	Using Data to Improve Student Performance	Creating an Inclusive Culture	Collaborating with Families	Participating in the IEP Process	Scheduling & Service Delivery	Differentiated Instruction	Allocating Resources	Hiring & Supporting Quality Personnel
Principals and Special Education: The Critical Role of School Leaders	D'Paolo, M. & Walther-Thomas, C.	2003	X		X	X					X	X
Principals' Knowledge of Fundamental and Current Issues in Special Education	Walkeman, S.Y., Browder, D.M., Flowers, C., & Ahlgrim-Jensen, L.	2006			X	X		X	X		X	X
Recognizing and Supporting the Critical Role of Teachers in Special Education Leadership	Billingaley, B.	2007		X					X		X	X
Research Base for Leadership Skills and Knowledge to Support Improving Instruction for Students with Disabilities	Ulric, D. & Usame, A.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
School Principals and Special Education: Creating the Context for Academic Success	D'Paolo, M., Tischman-Morey, & Walther-Thomas, C.	2004		X		X	X					X
Secondary School Curricula Issues: Impact on Postsecondary Students with Disabilities	Stodden, R.A., Galloway, L.M., & Stodden, N.J.	2003	X	X	X				X	X		
Special Education and Regular Education: Achieving High School Success with the NCLB and the IDEA	Jones, R.E., Zriesel, P.A., Barrock, R.D., Eckes, S., & Swando, J.	2008	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Special Education Subgroups Under NCLB: Issues to Consider	Eckes, S. & Swando, J.	2009	X		X							X
Special Education's Role in Preparing Responsive Leaders for Inclusive Schools	Crockett, J.B.	2002	X				X	X	X			X
Strengthen Your Principal's Resource Library	Lasky, B. & King, B.D.	2009	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Striking the Right Balance: The Science and Art of Educational Leadership	Waters, T.	2009	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Success in Sight: A Comprehensive Approach to School Improvement	Gichhrell, L., Dean, C., Galvin, M., Goodwin, B., & Barlow, D.	2006	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The Administrative Role in Transforming Secondary Schools to Support Inclusive Evidence Based Practices	Bozardin, M.L.	2005	X	X	X							X
The Balanced Leadership Framework: Connecting Vision with Action	Waters, T. & Cameron, G.	2007	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
The Balanced Principal: Joining Theory and Practical Knowledge	Fleck, F.	2008				X	X					

CATEGORIES OF LEADERSHIP DERIVED FROM REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Title	Author	Date	Understanding Law & Policy	Using Data to Improve Teacher Performance	Using Data to Improve Student Performance	Creating an Inclusive Culture	Collaborating with Families	Participating in the IEP Process	Scheduling & Service Delivery	Differentiated Instruction	Allocating Resources	Hiring & Supporting Quality Personnel
The Changing Landscape of Special Education Administration	Crockett, J.B.	2007	X									
The Essential Leadership Model	Kruth, R.K. & Banks, P.A.	2006			X	X						X
The Fair Safe Schools Challenge: Leadership Possibilities From High Reliability Organizations	Bellamy, G.T., Crawford, L., Marshall, L.H. & Coulter, G.A.	2005	X	X	X					X		
The Impact of Federal Policy on Curriculum and Instruction for Students with Disabilities in the General Classroom	Hardman, M.L. & Dawson, S.	2008	X		X	X			X	X	X	X
The Perceptions of New Principals Regarding the Knowledge and Skills Important to Their Initial Success	Perzko, V.	2008	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The Principal's Priority 1	Johnson, J.	2008		X	X					X		X
The Rural Principal's Role with Consideration for Special Education	Cruzeyo, P.A., Morgan, R.L.					X			X			
Three Tiers to Success	Barton, R. & Stoenakis, J.	2009			X				X			
Today's Policy Contexts for Special Education and Students with Learning Disabilities	Turnbull III, J.R.	2009	X									
Urban School Principals and the 'No Child Left Behind' Act	Gardner, M.E., Canfield-Owens, K. & Anderson, K.L.	2008	X		X	X						
What Every Principal Needs to Know About Special Education	McLaughlin, M.L.	2009	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
What is Special about Special Education Administration? Considerations for School Leadership	Boscardin, M.L.	2007			X			X	X			
Without Data All We Have Are Assumptions: Revisiting the Meaning of a Free Appropriate Public Education	Crockett, J.F. & Yell, M.L.	2008	X		X					X		X



ALIGNMENT OF LEADERSHIP CATEGORIES TO NORTH CAROLINA STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL EXECUTIVES

NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL EXECUTIVE STANDARD	NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL EXECUTIVE PRACTICE	Understanding Law & Policy	Using Data to Improve Teacher Performance	Using Data to Improve Student Performance	Creating an Inclusive Culture	Collaborating with Families	Participating in the IEP Process	Scheduling & Service Delivery	Differentiated Instruction	Allocating Resources	Hiring & Supporting Quality Personnel
	<p><b>NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL EXECUTIVE PRACTICE</b> Ensures that there is an appropriate and logical alignment between the curriculum of the school and the state's accountability program</p> <p>Creates processes and schedules that facilitate the collaborative (team) design, sharing, evaluation, and archiving of rigorous, relevant, and engaging instructional lessons that ensure students acquire essential knowledge</p> <p>Challenges staff to reflect deeply on and share what knowledge, skills, and concepts are essential to the complete educational development of students</p> <p>Creates processes for gathering, analyzing, and using data and other formative data from other sources for the improvement of instruction</p> <p>Creates processes for identifying, benchmarking, and providing students access to a variety of 21st century instructional tools (e.g. technology) and best practices for meeting diverse student needs</p> <p>Creates processes that ensure the strategic, allocation and use of resources to meet instructional goals and support teacher needs</p> <p>Creates processes to provide formal feedback to teachers concerning the effectiveness of their classroom instruction</p> <p>Creates processes that protect teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their instructional time</p> <p>Systematically and frequently observes in classrooms and engages in conversation with students about their learning</p> <p>Creates a collaborative work environment predicated on site-based management that supports the "team" as the basic unit of learning and decision making with the school and promotes cohesion and cooperation among staff</p> <p>Communicates strong ideals and beliefs about schooling, teaching, and professional learning communities with teachers, staff, parents, and students and then operates from those beliefs</p> <p>Influences the evolution of the culture to support the continuous improvement of the school as outlined in the school improvement plan</p> <p>Systematically develops and implements policies, beliefs and a shared vision to establish a school identity that emphasizes a sense of community and cooperation to guide the disciplined thought and action of all staff and students</p> <p>Systematically and fairly acknowledges failures and celebrates accomplishments of the school and staff</p> <p>Visibly supports the positive, culturally-responsive traditions of the school community</p> <p>Promotes a sense of well-being among staff, students, and parents</p>	X		X				X	X		
<b>Instructional Leadership</b>			X	X			X	X	X		X
<b>Cultural Leadership</b>			X								X

ALIGNMENT OF LEADERSHIP CATEGORIES TO NORTH CAROLINA STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL EXECUTIVES

NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL EXECUTIVE STANDARD	NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL EXECUTIVE PRACTICE	Understanding Law & Policy	Using Data to Improve Teacher Performance	Using Data to Improve Student Performance	Creating an Inclusive Culture	Collaborating with Families	Participating in the EP Process	Scheduling & Service Delivery	Differentiated Instruction	Allocating Resources	Hiring & Supporting Quality Personnel
	<b>NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL EXECUTIVE PRACTICE</b> Builds a sense of efficacy and empowerment among staff that result in a "can-do" attitude when faced with challenges.				X						X
	Empowers staff to recommend creative 21st century concepts for school improvement								X		X
	Provides structures for the development of effective professional learning communities aligned with the school improvement plan, focused on results, and characterized by collective responsibility for instructional planning and for 21st century learning			X	X			X	X	X	X
	Models the importance of continued adult learning by engaging in activities to develop personal knowledge and skills with staff		X								X
	Communicates a positive attitude about the ability of staff to accomplish substantial outcomes to improve their efficacy		X								X
	Creates processes for teachers to assume leadership and decision making roles within the school that foster their career development				X						X
	Creates and monitors processes for hiring, inducting, and mentoring new teachers and other staff to the school										X
	Uses the results of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey to create and maintain a positive work environment for teachers and other staff		X		X						X
	Evaluates teachers and other staff in a fair and equitable manner and utilizes the results of evaluations to improve performance		X								X
	Provides for results-oriented professional development that is aligned with 21st century curricular, instructional, and assessment needs, is connected to school improvement goals and is differentiated based on staff needs		X							X	X
	Continuously searches for the best placement and utilization of staff to fully benefit from their strengths		X								X
	Is systematically and personally involved in the school's professional activities						X				
	Creates processes to provide for a balanced operational budget for school programs and activities							X		X	
	Creates processes to recruit and retain a high-quality workforce in the school that meets the diverse needs of students	X		X	X						X
	Creates processes to identify and solve, resolve, disolve, or abolish school-based problem/conflicts in a fair, democratic way	X			X						
<b>Managerial Leadership</b>	Designs a system of communication that provides for the timely, responsible sharing of information to, from, and with school and district staff	X			X						



ALIGNMENT OF LEADERSHIP CATEGORIES TO NORTH CAROLINA STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL EXECUTIVES

NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL EXECUTIVE STANDARD	NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL EXECUTIVE PRACTICE	Understanding Law & Policy	Using Data to Improve Teacher Performance	Using Data to Improve Student Performance	Creating an Inclusive Culture	Collaborating with Families	Participating in the IEP Process	Scheduling & Service Delivery	Differentiated Instruction	Allocating Resources	Hiring & Supporting Quality Personnel
	<p><b>NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL EXECUTIVE PRACTICE</b></p> <p>Maintains high visibility throughout the school</p> <p>Maintains open, vertical and horizontal communications throughout the school community</p>				X		X				X
											X

**APPENDIX D**

**PRINCIPAL SURVEY**

=====  
Invitation & Consent  
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Dear Principal,

My name is Angela Duncan and I am a student in the Department of Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations at UNC Greensboro. My doctoral advisor is Dr. Carl Lashley, Associate Professor. I am conducting a research project to study the perceptions of Principals and Directors of Exceptional Children's Programs about their leadership in the area of special education. I am anonymously surveying all public school Principals and all Directors of Exceptional Children's Programs in North Carolina to explore their perceptions of what Principals need to know and do to lead effectively in the area of special education in their schools.

As a participant in this study, you are asked to complete an online survey. The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. Absolute confidentiality of data provided through the Internet cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access. Please be sure to close your browser when you are finished so no one will be able to see what you have been doing.

There are no material benefits, costs to you, or payments for participating in the study. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you wish to withdraw, simply quit taking the survey and close your browser. This will not affect you in any way.

To further guarantee your anonymity, I have enabled a function in the survey software that will mask your ISP address. The data will be securely stored under password protection within the survey software. If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board has approved this research and this consent form. Questions, concerns, or complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with participating in this study can be answered by contacting Angela Duncan at 919-450-7605 or [bostduncan@gmail.com](mailto:bostduncan@gmail.com) or Carl Lashley at 336-334-3745 or

carl.lashley@gmail.com If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated or if you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research Compliance at UNCG at (336) 256-1482.

By clicking yes below, you are agreeing that you have read this consent information, or that it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing to consent to take part in this study. You are also agreeing that all of your questions concerning this study have been answered and that you are 18 years of age or older.

Thank you for your time and help.

I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

- Yes
- No

=====  
Demographic Information  
=====

2. In what region of North Carolina are you a principal?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Please select the grade level of the school where you are currently principal.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. How many total years have you been a principal?

\_\_\_\_\_

=====  
Understanding Law & Policy  
=====

5. How would you rate your understanding of law and policy related to the education of students with disabilities?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good

- Very Good
- Excellent

6. What do you do that indicates that you have an effective understanding of law and policy related to the education of students with disabilities?

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7. What knowledge and skills do you need to learn to develop an effective understanding of law and policy related to the education of students with disabilities?

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Using Data to Improve Teacher Performance

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8. How would you rate your knowledge and skills in using data to improve the performance of teachers as it relates to educating all students, including those with disabilities?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

9. What do you do that indicates your effectiveness in using data to improve the performance of teachers as it relates to educating all students, including those with disabilities?

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10. What knowledge and skills do you need to learn to use data to improve the performance of teachers as it relates to educating all students, including those with disabilities?

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Using Data to Improve Student Performance

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11. How would you rate your knowledge and skills in using data to improve the performance of all students, including those with disabilities?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

12. What do you do that indicates your effectiveness in using data to improve the performance of all students, including those with disabilities?

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13. What knowledge and skills do you need to learn to use data to improve the performance of all students, including those with disabilities?

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=====  
Creating an Inclusive Culture  
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14. How would you rate your ability to create an inclusive school culture in which all students, including those with disabilities, are full participants in the academic and social environment in the school?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

15. What do you do that indicates your effectiveness in creating an inclusive school culture in which all students, including those with disabilities, are full participants in the academic and social environment in the school?

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16. What knowledge and skills do you need to learn to create an inclusive school culture in which all students, including those with disabilities, are full participants in the academic and social environment in the school?

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=====  
Collaborating with Families  
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17. How would you rate your knowledge and skills in the area of collaborating with the families of students with disabilities to include them in the educational decision making regarding their child(ren)?

- Poor

- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

18. What do you do that indicates your effectiveness in collaborating with the families of students with disabilities to include them in the educational decision making regarding their child(ren)?

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19. What knowledge and skills do you need to learn to be more effective at collaborating with the families of students with disabilities to include them in educational decision making regarding their child(ren)?

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=====  
 Participating in the IEP Process  
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20. How would you rate your ability to serve as the LEA representative at IEP meetings?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

21. What do you do that indicates your effectiveness in serving as the LEA representative at IEP meetings?

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22. What knowledge and skills do you need to learn to be more effective at serving as the LEA representative at IEP meetings?

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=====  
Scheduling & Service Delivery  
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23. How would you rate your knowledge and skills in the area of scheduling as it relates to providing special education and related services in your school?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

24. What do you do that indicates your effectiveness at scheduling special education and related services in your school?

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25. What knowledge and skills do you need to learn to be more effective at scheduling special education and related services in your school?

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=====  
Differentiated Practices  
=====

26. How would you rate your knowledge and skills related to supporting teachers in differentiating instruction for all students, including those with disabilities?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

27. What do you do that indicates your effectiveness at supporting teachers in differentiating instruction for all students, including those with disabilities?

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28. What knowledge and skills do you need to learn to be more effective at supporting teachers in differentiating instruction for all students, including those with disabilities?

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=====  
Allocating Resources  
=====

29. How would you rate your ability to arrange for and justify the use of resources so that they address the needs of all students in your school?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

30. What do you do to more effectively arrange for and justify the use of resources so that they address the needs of all students in your school, including those with disabilities?

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31. What knowledge and skills do you need to learn to more effectively arrange for and justify the use of resources so that they address the needs of all students in your school, including those with disabilities?

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=====  
Hiring & Supporting Quality Personnel  
=====

32. How would you rate your ability to select and support school personnel who are successful at improving the performance of all students, including those with disabilities?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

33. What do you do that indicates your effectiveness at selecting and supporting school personnel who are successful at improving the performance of all students, including those with disabilities?

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34. What knowledge and skills do you need to learn to be more effective at selecting and supporting school personnel who are successful at improving the performance of all students, including those with disabilities?

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Thank you for your time.  
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**APPENDIX E**

**DIRECTOR SURVEY**

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Invitation & Consent  
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Dear Director of an Exceptional Children's Program,

My name is Angela Duncan and I am a student in the Department of Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations at UNC Greensboro. My doctoral advisor is Dr. Carl Lashley, Associate Professor. I am conducting a research project to study the perceptions of Principals and Directors of Exceptional Children's Programs about their leadership in the area of special education. I am anonymously surveying all public school Principals and all Directors of Exceptional Children's Programs in North Carolina to explore their perceptions of what Principals need to know and do to lead effectively in the area of special education in their schools.

As a participant in this study, you are asked to complete an online survey that will take approximately twenty minutes. The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. Absolute confidentiality of data provided through the Internet cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access. Please be sure to close your browser when you are finished so no one will be able to see what you have been doing.

There are no material benefits, costs to you, or payments for participating in the study. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time, without penalty. If you wish to withdraw, simply quit taking the survey and close your browser. This will not affect you in any way.

To further guarantee your anonymity, I have enabled a function in the survey software that will mask your ISP address. The data will be securely stored under password protection within the survey software. If significant new information relating to the study becomes available which may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board has approved this research and this consent form. Questions, concerns, or

complaints about this project or benefits or risks associated with participating in this study can be answered by contacting Angela Duncan at 919-450-7605 or bostduncan@gmail.com or Carl Lashley at 336-334-3745 or carl.lashley@gmail.com If you have any concerns about your rights, how you are being treated or if you have questions, want more information or have suggestions, please contact Eric Allen in the Office of Research Compliance at UNCG at (336) 256-1482.

By clicking yes below, you are agreeing that you have read this consent information, or that it has been read to you, and you fully understand the contents of this document and are openly willing to consent to take part in this study. You are also agreeing that all of your questions concerning this study have been answered and that you are 18 years of age or older.

Thank you for your time and help.

I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

- Yes
- No

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Demographic Information  
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2. In what region of North Carolina are you a Director of an Exceptional Children's Program?

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3. How many total years have you been a Director of an Exceptional Children's Program?

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=====  
Understanding Law & Policy  
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4. How would you rate Principals' understanding of law and policy related to the education of students with disabilities?

- Poor
- Fair

- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

5. What do Principals do that indicates that they have an effective understanding of law and policy related to the education of students with disabilities?

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6. What knowledge and skills do Principals need to learn to develop an effective understanding of law and policy related to the education of students with disabilities?

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Using Data to Improve Teacher Performance

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7. How would you rate Principals' knowledge and skills in using data to improve the performance of teachers as it relates to educating all students, including those with disabilities?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

8. What do Principals do that indicates their effectiveness in using data to improve the performance of teachers as it relates to educating all students, including those with disabilities?

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9. What knowledge and skills do Principals need to learn to use data to improve the performance of teachers as it relates to educating all students, including those with disabilities?

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18. What knowledge and skills do Principals need to learn to be more effective at collaborating with the families of students with disabilities to include them in educational decision making regarding their child(ren)?

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 Participating in the IEP Process  
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Differentiated Practices  
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Hiring & Supporting Quality Personnel  
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Thank you for your time.  
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