

INCLUSIVE PRACTICES USED BY PRINCIPALS AND THEIR
STAFFS TO FACILITATE THE INTEGRATION OF STUDENTS
WITH DISABILITIES INTO GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

By

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive Practices Used By Principals and Their Staff to Facilitate the Integration of Students With Disabilities into General Education Classrooms

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The purpose of this study was to examine how and why elementary school principals collaborate with their teaching staff to facilitate a commitment to educating students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The researcher used a qualitative multiple case study of three elementary schools to gather the data to answer the research questions posed for the study. The primary methodology for collecting data was from coding semi-structured audiotaped interviews with principals and selected general and special education teachers who were collaborating for the purpose of integrating students with disabilities into general education classrooms for part of their academic instruction. Informal interviews or purposeful conversations were also conducted with other selected general and special education teachers and paraprofessionals at the elementary school sites. Coding procedures followed those used in grounded theory.

The study demonstrated that principals play a major role in how students with disabilities are successfully integrated into general education classrooms. Six themes emerged that are consistent with the related literature on the generally effective practices of school administrators. First, principals must work with their staff to cultivate a school climate that nurtures all students in an environment where they all belong, where high expectations are set for all students, and where teachers can teach all children. Second, principals must establish an open system of communication that allows all teachers and parents to share their feelings about the inclusion process at their school and to make recommendations for change if needed. Third, school administrators must work with their faculty to develop mutual goals and to resolve problems. Fourth, principals must assume responsibility for ensuring the necessary support for school policies, including integrating students with disabilities into the general education classrooms. Responsibility was defined as providing instructional, staffing, and emotional support. Fifth, principals must give high priority to providing coordinated planning time for teachers who are working together to facilitate effective communication, team problem solving, and monitoring of student progress. Sixth, principals must support ongoing staff development opportunities that provide information and strategies for working in a school environment that is accepting of all members of the school community.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

In the public education system, special and general education structures began as conceptually and administratively separate entities (Whittier & Hewitt, 1993). Educational programs for the disabled were administered by central office or district directors. Building principals were not directly involved in these students' educational life (Whittier & Hewitt). Over the past 25 years, however, state and federal legislation and public attitudes have wrought radical changes related to the perceived and actual role of disabled individuals within society, and particularly in educational provisions (Elliott & Riddle, 1992; Trump & Hange, 1996). There has been a much stronger commitment to educating all children with special needs in regular schools including those with severe learning difficulties (Trump & Hange). The instruction of students with disabilities is no longer associated with separate, "pullout" programs; instead, most students with disabilities are presently being taught in regular classrooms with their nondisabled peers (Choate, 1993).

The major support for placement of individuals with disabilities into integrated settings derives from the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), now known as the Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA) (Yell, 1995). This Act set the stage for the regular classroom placement of students with disabilities and prompted significant changes in our system of public education. As public schools move toward the integration of disabled students into general education classrooms, the professional roles and responsibilities of general education teachers and principals are being redefined (Fritz & Miller, 1995). General education teachers are an important component of the successful implementation of the integration process (Coates, 1989; Lombardi, 1994). The leadership of the principal is also critical to successful educational programming for children with disabilities (Beninghof & Singer, 1995). The school administrator should be extensively involved in decisions about the placement of students with disabilities since he or she is in a key position to ensure that all pupils with disabilities participate in academic and extra-curricular programs so that these students have the opportunity to interact with non-disabled peers (Goor, Schwenn, & Boyer, 1997).

Principal Leadership

Educational leadership is viewed as a critical variable associated with effective schools (Algozzine, Ysseldyke, & Campbell, 1994; Beninghof & Singer, 1995). The belief that principals have a significant influence on schools is well documented in the research (Algozzine, Ysseldyke, & Campbell, 1994; Kirner, Vautour, & Vautour, 1993; Van Horn, Burello, & DeClue, 1992). The principal is the instructional leader for all educational services within the school, including special education programs (Van Horn, Burello, & DeClue, 1992).

The attributes of effective leaders are essential to accomplishing inclusive educational environments and practices which will help lead to success for all students. Beninghof and Singer (1995) indicated that leaders need to be:

- (a) Driven by sound principles and beliefs
- (b) Guided by a vision for the future;
- (c) Committed to empowering others to achieve greatness in students and schools through the management of human, material, and fiscal resources; and
- (d) Dedicated to leadership by example or "walking the talk." (p. 12)

The effective school administrator demonstrates an understanding of the needs of all students and the relation of these needs to the overall success of the school program (Sage & Burello, 1994). The principal should be able to implement required programs and to help with strategies and resources that will address the wider range of student abilities in the classroom. It is essential that the principal identify and articulate a philosophy that reflects the following assumptions, according to Villa & Thousand (1992):

- (a) all children can learn, (b) all children have the right to be educated with their peers in appropriate heterogeneous classrooms in their local schools, and
- (c) it is the responsibility of the school system to meet the diverse educational and psychological needs of all students. (p. 7)

Hall and Hord (1984) found that, regardless of the principal's management style (initiator, manager, responder), the most effective behavioral indicators of success in facilitating change include vision and goal setting, structuring the school as a workplace, managing change, collaborating and delegating, decision making, and guiding and supporting. Several other studies have found that the role of the principal as a leader is critical in creating school conditions such as setting high standards and goals, planning and coordinating with staff, having an orientation toward innovation, frequent monitoring of staff and student performance, and involving parents and the community. (Blank, 1987)

Effective principals realize that an active involvement with students and staff will result in related changes in classroom instruction (Campbell & Shaw, 1993). Teachers and principals therefore must work closely together if schools are to be successful. It is important that teachers be actively involved, have the ability to influence, and be given the responsibility in many instances to make decisions related to learning (Ambrosie, 1989).

Statement of the Problem The recent restructuring efforts in American public schools, combined with trends in special education, has created new challenges for building principals (Sage & Burello, 1994). The type of leadership demonstrated by the principal is vital to the success of integrating children with disabilities into general education classrooms (Beninghof & Singer, 1995).

Several research studies indicate that administrators support influences the feelings that teachers have about themselves and their work (Fimian, 1987; Halpin & Croft, 1963), while lack of principals support can lead teachers to feel frustrated and unimportant (Rosenholtz, 1989). According to Littrell, Billingsley, & Cross (1994), however, defining what constitutes the most effective type of support for general and special educators appears to be a significant problem. Principals need to be sure that they assess their behavior on a regular basis to ensure that they are providing the necessary support that teachers feel is important. Building administrators are expected to assume a variety of roles including instructional leader, business manager, disciplinarian, and school community liaison (Sage & Burello, 1994). In addition, an increasingly significant responsibility of principals concerns the provision of appropriate programs for students with disabilities (Burello, Schrup, & Barnett, 1988). Research appears to support the conclusion that it is the attitude of the building principal toward inclusion and other aspects of special education that is critical to the success of special education programs (Goor, Schwenn, & Boyer, 1997). There are many indications that school administrators' attitudes and behaviors toward disabled students may have an effect on the quality of the educational programs these pupils are provided with, as well as the attitudes of school-level staff toward these students (Lombardi, 1994). In addition, because teacher responses to disabled children reflect their attitudes, building principals must be aware of the attitudes general education teachers possess concerning the integration of special needs students (Lombardi).

In order for the concept of inclusion to be successfully put into practice, it is essential that general education administrators make careful decisions regarding the types of policies to establish, determine informative guidelines, provide adequate resources, and plan with classroom teachers to maximize the educational experiences of disabled students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study therefore is to examine how and why elementary school principals in a selected school district collaborate with their teaching staff to facilitate a commitment to educating students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The research questions addressed in the study are as follows:

1. What educational training or experience have these principals had with models or practices that support the integration of disabled students into general education classrooms?
2. What are the educational practices used by these principals to help ensure that students with disabilities are successfully integrated with non-disabled peers?
3. What leadership style or behaviors of each of these principals influence these teachers' efforts to integrate students with disabilities into general education classrooms?
4. How does each principal collaborate with teachers to facilitate the integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms?

5. What experience or training has the principal provided for general education teachers in regard to making academic and behavioral accommodations for special education students?

Rationale For Study

The integration of disabled students is expected to increase significantly in the future as greater numbers of children with special learning needs attend public schools (Sage & Burello, 1994). As a result, principals will have more responsibility regarding the inclusion of special education students into the regular classroom. As educational services to students with disabilities change, there is an essential need to describe and analyze the role of school administrators that are relevant to the performance of students.

Little is known to date about what leadership behaviors that impact teacher behaviors will be most desirable or how principals should handle an integrated situation. This study can be helpful to school boards, principals, and teachers in providing a better understanding of the type of behaviors that encourage inclusive practices.

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of the study, the following definitions were used:

Collaboration: An educational approach whereby regular education and special education teachers work together toward the goal of educating all students in regular classrooms by sharing instructional resources and responsibilities (Campbell-Whatley & Drakeford 1994; Cook & Friend, 1995).

Collaborative Consultation: An interactive process that enables people with diverse expertise to generate creative solutions to mutually defined problems (West & Idol, 1990).

Inclusion: The commitment to educate children with disabilities, to the maximum extent appropriate in the schools, and classrooms they would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the support services to the child rather than moving the child to the services (Tomey, 1995).

Integration: Placing students with disabilities in general education schools and classes where they receive special education services and support to meet their learning goals and facilitate their social interaction with peers (Virginia Department of Education, 1997).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): The most appropriate educational placement that is closest to the mainstream (Lewis & Doorlag, 1991).

Mainstreaming: The process of teaching students with disabilities, using supplementary aids and services to maximize their educational potential (Wood, 1993).

Related Services: Auxiliary services such as psychological services for assessment, training or physical therapy that are available to help disabled students derive maximum benefit from special education (Lewis & Doorlag, 1993).

Students With Disabilities: Students whose special learning needs are due to mental, physical, sensory, language or emotional disabilities, mental retardation, behavior disorders, speech and language disorders, vision and hearing disabilities, and physical and health handicaps (Lewis & Doorlag, 1991).

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations of the study include:

1. The informants in this study were confined to a large suburban school district located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States.
2. The design of the case study was qualitative in nature, limiting the transferability or generalizability to other settings, but providing rich, useful data related to the study's purpose.

The following were limitations of the study:

1. The accuracy of the information that was obtained during the study was subject to the actual responses and behavior of the participants.
2. The results and conclusions were subject to the technical research skills of the researcher.
3. The researcher's perceptions of what the informants said may have been influenced by her position as an LD teacher in the district.

Outline of the Study

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter includes the introduction, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, significance and limitations of the study. The second chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to the study. The third chapter describes the procedures that were followed in data collection, a description of the population and sample, and the methods used to organize and analyze the data. The fourth chapter presents the data and the findings of the survey. The fifth chapter includes the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further research in this area.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

The review of the literature is organized into six sections. The first three sections will describe the regular education initiative (REI) and the inclusive school model. The two sections following will review the current literature on the attitudes of general education teachers and principals toward the integration of disabled students into regular classrooms. The next sections will address the competencies and role of the principal required in inclusive schools. The final section reviews literature on the principal and collaboration.

The Regular Education Initiative

The most recent debate in special education is focused on the degree to which full integration of all disabled students can be achieved through supporting general education classroom environments rather than through a continuum of separate education environments. In 1986, Madeline Will of the U.S. Department of Education proposed the regular education initiative (REI), a plan for unifying general and special education (OSERS, 1986). This initiative advocates that the general education system of public schools assume responsibility for all students including those with disabilities. The federal Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) defines the integration of disabled students as:

1. Educating all disabled children in regular schools regardless of the degree or severity of their disabling condition(s).
2. Providing special services within the regular schools.
3. Supporting regular teachers and administrators.
4. Having students with disabilities follow the same schedules as nondisabled students.
5. Involving disabled students in as many academic classes and extracurricular activities as possible, including music, art, gym, field trips, assemblies, and graduation exercises.
6. Arranging for disabled students to use the school cafeteria, library, playground, and other facilities at the same time as students.
7. Encouraging helper and buddy relationships between nondisabled and disabled students.
8. Arranging for disabled students to receive their education in regular community environments when appropriate.

9. Teaching all children to understand and accept human differences.
10. Placing disabled children in the same schools they would attend if they did not have disabilities.
11. Taking parents' concerns seriously.
12. Providing an appropriate, individualized education program. (pp.6-7)

Proponents of the REI question the quality and value of special classes and pull-out programs for students with mild academic handicaps including those children who are labeled learning disabled (LD), educably mentally retarded (EMR), or emotionally disturbed (ED). These advocates indicate that service provision outside the regular classroom has led to discontinuity in instruction, reduction of curricular options for students with exceptionalities, and education with a limited scope (Myles & Simpson, 1990). Allegedly byproducts of pull-out and other segregated programs include lower self-esteem for students with disabilities than for nondisabled peers (Rogers & Saklofske, 1985); less than adequate social skills (Madden & Slavin, 1983); and lack of preparation for adulthood, manifested by a high rate of unemployment among people with exceptionalities. REI supporters want a fundamentally restructured mainstream adjusted to the needs of each child. Such a solution they believe would lead to a better education for all children at a lower cost (Byrnes, 1990). Providing support for the REI is the heightening concern that too many students are being labeled as disabled.

Kauffman, Gerber, and Semmel (1988), citing reasons for advocacy of total integration of students with disabilities, believe that (a) few educators can argue against such reasons underlying the regular education initiative as the need to work toward better integration and coordination of services; (b) the desire to seek effective and economical methods of servicing students with learning and behavior problems ; (c) the need to place students with their nonhandicapped peers; (d) the need to implement research that has suggested guidelines for effective schools and instruction; (e) the idea that special education should be for those students who need the most specialized and extensive services; (f) the belief that most good teaching practices are appropriate for many students regardless of their handicapping condition; (g) the fact that some students fail because of the inadequacy of teachers of regular classes; (h) the importance of a continuum of services ranging from full-time placement in the regular classroom to institutionalization; and (i) the difficulty of accurately identifying and assessing persons with disabilities (pp.6-11).

As with most calls for reform, the REI met with opposition (Virginia Department of Education, 1993). Although critics of the regular education initiative also see problems with the current education system, they do not believe that the evidence is sufficient to warrant a major restructuring (Byrnes, 1990). REI opponents are fearful that the rights of students with disabilities would be jeopardized if existing categorical placements were modified or eliminated. A major concern is that students who need special education services may not receive them in the regular education classroom (Kauffman, 1989). Another problem is that many general education teachers are not willing to accept the shared responsibility for educating disabled

students since they lack the essential training. These teachers are already attempting to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners who make up the general education classroom.

The Jefferson Compact and the Inclusive School Model

The Jeffersonian Compact, a statement resulting from former President Bush's Summit on Education, strongly encouraged the need for flexibility in using federal funds and encouraged the commitment to restructuring the schools to include decentralization of authority or school-based management (Department of Education, 1991). One recommendation that was made for the use of federal funds is the use of waiver to permit students qualifying for special education to return to regular classes with extra support. The Compact indicated that decentralization would mean greater choice for parents and students, greater authority for and accountability by teachers and principals, and an instructional program designed for all students to accomplish work skills (Department of Education, 1991). The results of the Summit provide support for the belief that all students regardless of their disability belong in their neighborhood school and the principals should organize the program to meet the diverse and individualized needs of all children.

The most recent model to emerge is that of inclusive education. Since the term inclusion appears to have multiple meanings, it is important to distinguish between inclusion and full inclusion. Proponents of full inclusion believe that there should not be any special education services and that all students with disabilities should be taught in general education classrooms (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). Rogers (1994) defines full inclusion as a term "primarily used to refer to the belief that instructional practices and technological supports are presently available to accommodate all students in the schools and classrooms they would otherwise attend if not disabled" (p. 8). The philosophical basis for full inclusion, in part, can be traced to the REI (Reganick, 1993).

Although there are still not many totally inclusive schools, Stainback and Stainback (1992) identified some common characteristics:

1. Inclusive schools are grounded in a philosophy that all children belong in the mainstream of school community life.
2. The rules of an inclusive classroom reflect the philosophy of fair and equal treatment among all students as well as others school and community members.
3. Teachers in inclusive classrooms adjust and/or expand the general education curriculum as required to meet each student's needs.
4. These schools accept all students within the given neighborhood school. In this way a natural proportion of handicapped students attends school in their age-appropriate, neighborhood school.

5. Inclusive schools focus on providing assistance, specialized support, and services to all students within the regular classroom.

6. These schools adapt, modify, and expand the curriculum by differentiating objectives within the regular classroom.

7. Inclusive schools foster interdependence and natural support networks among staff and students through cooperation and collaboration and by de-emphasizing competition.

8. When a student requires expert assistance from outside the classroom, the classroom supports system and curriculum are adapted to assist not only the needs of one student, but also other students in the class who could benefit from similar supports.

9. Teachers and other staff personnel are empowered to make decisions on how the combined special education and regular education resources, in terms of money, personnel, curriculum, and instructional procedures, will be utilized to meet the needs of the students within the school.

10. Educators in inclusive classrooms help students to understand and utilize their individual differences.

11. Those involved in inclusive schools and classrooms are flexible and receptive to change when deemed necessary. (pp.7-11)

While the first goal of many advocates of the inclusive school movement is to abolish special education, a second is to enhance students' social competence and to change the attitudes of teachers and students who will eventually become taxpayers, parents and service providers (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987). Gartner and Lipsky believe that "the rationale for educating students with severe disabilities in integrated settings is to ensure their normalized community participation by providing them with systematic instruction in the skills that are essential to their success in the social and environmental contexts in which they ultimately use these skills" (p. 386).

According to Snell (1991), the three most important and reciprocal benefits from inclusion are (a) "the development of social skills across all age groups, (b) the improvements in the attitudes that nondisabled peers have for their peers with disabilities, and (c) the development of positive relationships and friendships between peers as a result of integration" (Appalachia Educational Lab, 1996, p.9).

Critics of inclusive schools question how general education can respond appropriately to the needs of all special education students when it has such obvious difficulty accommodating the divergent student population that already exists (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). Many opponents believe that special education students will not get enough attention in the regular classroom,

while others feel that the regular education student will suffer because pupils with special needs will require the majority of the classroom teacher's time (Stoler, 1992). The inclusionist vision of restructured schooling which deemphasizes the standard curriculum and advocates a process-approach to education is indirect contrast to what is currently being written and supported by many reformers, policy makers and educators (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994).

In contrast to full inclusion, the inclusion movement is broader in scope and provides a continuum of services (Appalachia Educational Lab, 1996). Schrag and Burnette (1994) define inclusion as an educational context and process that amounts to more than regular class placement for students with disabilities; inclusive schools implement a philosophy of coordination that celebrates diversity and maintains a continuum of educational options to provide choice and meet the needs of individual children (p. 1).

Stainback, Stainback, East, and Sapon-Shevin (1994) believe that the overall goal of inclusion is "not to erase differences, but to enable all students to belong within an educational community that validates and values their individuality" (p. 489).

In 1993, the Virginia State Special Education Advisory Committee in its annual report (Virginia Department of Education, 1993) adopted the following definition for its use of the term inclusion:

Opportunities for all students with disabilities to have access to and participate in all activities of the total school environment, both academic and social, curricular and extracurricular. Students would be educated with support and adaptations with peers without disabilities who are age-appropriate in general education settings, and in their homeschool. (p. 7)

The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) also issued a position paper that supports inclusion, but not full inclusion.

CASE supports individual children being served in a regular classroom setting 100% of the time with appropriate supports as one option within the full continuum of service. CASE does not support full integration as a policy/practice in which all students with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disabilities and needs for related services, receive their total education within the regular classroom setting in the school they would attend if not disabled. (CASE, 1991, p. 11)

Another major supporter of the concept of inclusion, but not full inclusion, is the Learning Disabilities Association of America (1993). In their position statement they indicated that the appropriate placement is the least restrictive environment (LRE) within a continuum of services based on each student's individual education plan.

Mercer and Lane (1994) defined the principles of responsible inclusion as:

1. Obtain consensus of the staff and administration to implement inclusion.
2. Operationally define responsibilities and roles of teachers and administrators.
3. Plan ongoing staff development.
4. Identify teachers who desire to collaborate and provide them with training.
5. Ensure that placements are IEP (Individualized Education Program) driven and sensitive to the wishes of the student.
6. Maintain a continuum of alternative placements. (p.1)

Essential Components of a Successful Inclusion Model

In April of 1994, the Council for Exceptional Children organized a Working Forum on Inclusive Schools with nine other education organizations (Appalachia Educational Lab, 1996). The task force recommended 12 principles for successful inclusive schools:

1. Vision- The school's philosophy should include the concept that all children belong and can learn in the mainstream. Diversity should be valued.
2. Leadership- The school principal must be a leader and proponent of inclusion. He/she must involve the whole staff in the entire planning and implementation of inclusion.
3. High standards- All students must work toward the same educational outcomes based on high standards although the strategies used to pursue and achieve those outcomes may differ.
4. Sense of community- The school must demonstrate the concept that everyone belongs and ensure that all are accepted and supported by peers and other members of the school community.
5. Array of services- The school, with district assistance, should provide services for students with any handicapping condition.
6. Flexible learning environments to meet student needs- While full inclusion is a goal, a continuum of educational options is present to accommodate change in student progress.

7. Research based strategies-Faculty should use strategies such as cooperative learning, curriculum adaptation, peer mediation, mastery learning, etc.
8. Collaboration and cooperation-The use of team teaching, co-teaching, and other collaborative arrangements is evident.
9. Changing roles and responsibilities-School-based problem-solving teams should be established to solve individual student problems.
10. New forms of accountability-Student and effectiveness measures may differ from scale approaches.
11. Access-Equal access should be assured through technical and physical plant modifications.
12. Partnerships with parents-Parents are viewed as equal partners in the planning and implementation of inclusive school strategies.

Irmsher (1995) synthesized the research of Friend and Cook (1993), Schrag and Burnette (1994), and Eichinger and Woltman (1993) regarding successful inclusion programs. She found that most of the programs included the following components:

1. Early involvement of all concerned (school board, administrators, regular-classroom teachers, special education teachers, support staff, parents, and students) in discussions about proposed changes.
2. A mission statement, ideally written by representatives of this broad-based group.
3. A continuing process of communication regarding the change taking place.
4. Education of all concerned to make sure they understand the value of inclusion.
5. Involvement of all concerned in planning.
6. Strong support from administrators, including a commitment to reallocating special-education resources for support in the regular classroom.
7. Teachers, principals, and support staff willing to embrace change.

8. In-service training for staff on topics such as collaborative teaching, multilevel classrooms, cooperative learning, adapting the curriculum, and working with special-needs students.
9. Shared planning/consulting time for regular and special education teachers, or other team-teaching configurations.
10. Needs of all students, with and without disabilities, addressed.
11. A pilot program before moving to full implementation.
12. Acquisition of necessary specialized equipment and adaptations needed to serve each student, coupled with physical changes in the classroom and school environment.
13. Adequate classroom support for teachers; instructional assistants and specialists such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, special education teachers, and so forth.
14. Students placed in age-appropriate mainstream classrooms at their neighborhood schools.
15. Clear-cut steps and support available to teachers in solving the inevitable problems that crop up.
16. Instructional assistants free to help with the entire class, not just specific students with disabilities.
17. Encouragement and appreciation of teachers willing to experiment and be innovative even if efforts are unsuccessful.
18. Education of all staff in the importance of inclusion as a school-wide belief.
19. Opportunities for non-disabled students to learn about all types of diversity, including individuals with disabilities.
20. A structured system to promote peer friendships between disabled and non-disabled students.
21. Benchmark goals to shoot for in year 1, year 2, and so forth.
22. A sense of community that values the abilities of all students, understands their limitations, and provides nurturing opportunities for them to develop a strong sense of self-worth, concern, and respect for others.

23. Flexible curricula and instruction that are accessible to all.

24. Strong ties among the school, parents, and the community.

25. A philosophy that celebrates diversity. (pp.12 -13)

Regular Education Teachers' Attitudes Toward Integration of Disabled Students

When disabled students are integrated into general education classrooms, a major concern that emerges is the potential impact of the attitudes of regular classroom teachers toward these students (Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin, 1989). The attitudes and behaviors of educators toward any individual student can either enable the pupil to progress intellectually, socially, and emotionally, or can inhibit the child's opportunities for learning and growth.

Since a teacher's positive attitude toward a disabled child may facilitate the child's functioning and a negative attitude can magnify difficulties, the identification of teacher attitude is particularly crucial to the integration process (Choate, 1993). Because teacher responses to disabled students reflect their attitudes, building principals must be aware of the attitudes regular education teachers possess concerning the integration of disabled students. Without considering these attitudes and expectations, administrative decisions will result in inappropriate placement and poorly implemented programs.

A significant portion of the literature on inclusion indicates that general education teachers generally feel ill-prepared to handle the various special needs of the students in their classrooms (Lewis, 1994). Many teachers believe that they have not been given adequate time to learn how to work with students with disabilities before implementation occurred (D'Alonzo & Giordano, 1996). Myles and Simpson (1989) reported that 85% of the general educators they surveyed were willing to accept a student with disabilities in their classroom on a full-time basis, given appropriate training. Without support and training, less than 33% of the respondents were willing to accept these students in their general education classes.

Lamb-Zodrow (1987) indicated that teachers may experience negative feelings about inclusion, such as:

(a) resentment for extra responsibility; (b) incompetent due to lack of training and preparation; (c) overburdened by additional demands on already heavy workloads; and (d) stressful and upsetting to their regular schedule. (p.61)

Vaughn et al. (1996) conducted a series of focus group interviews with special education, general education, and Chapter I teachers to get a better understanding of the teachers' perception toward inclusion in a large metropolitan school district in the southeastern part of the United States. The results of the interviews revealed that the majority of the teachers had very negative opinions about inclusion and believed that it is promoted by individuals who do not work in classrooms and who are unaware of the procedures and consequences of

implementing practices they establish. The teachers indicated that such factors as class size, inadequate resources, the extent to which all students would benefit from inclusion and lack of teacher preparations affecting the success of inclusion (Vaughn et al.).

A survey and follow-up interview of teachers' opinions concerning inclusion of students in a full-day general education program done by Ross and Wax (1993) was also not positive. Teachers believed they had been given additional responsibilities without the essential technical training and administrative support. They were most upset about their unmet need for modeling of successful teaching strategies, collaboration with special education teachers, their lack of knowledge about specific language/learning disabilities, and their lack of planning time and paraprofessional help.

Rieck (1991) found in reviewing the existing research that the primary factors which influence teacher attitude include the level of the classified student, physical attractiveness of the student, nature of the disability, class composition, and support service provided by the special educator.

The negative factors seem to increase with the grade placement of the students. Teachers from the middle grades appeared to be more opposed to mainstreaming than those teachers who taught the primary grades (Berryman & Berryman, 1981). High school teachers were also more likely to have negative views than elementary teachers (Rieck, 1991).

Pearman, Barnhart, Huang, and Mellblom (1992) surveyed the beliefs and attitudes of school district personnel in Colorado toward inclusive practices. Their findings further support previous studies in that the results indicated a significant difference between the perceptions of elementary and secondary teaching staff. In addition they found that male teachers had significantly more negative opinions about inclusion than female teachers. The type of disability also seems to be a critical factor in influencing teacher attitude and use of inclusionary practices. Jobb, Rust, & Brissie (1995) conducted a study of 162 randomly selected classroom teachers using the Opinions Relative to the Integration of Students with Disabilities to investigate their attitude toward full inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education classrooms. The results demonstrated that the teachers' attitude toward inclusion depended on the student's disability. The teachers appeared more willing to make accommodations for children with physical disabilities compared to cognitive, emotional, or behavioral problems (Jobb et al., 1995). The researchers also found a positive but modest correlation between the amount of inclusion in-service training and special education teaching experience and teacher attitude toward inclusion (Jobb et al., 1995). General education teachers who were interviewed by York, Doyle, and Kronberg (1992) in an earlier study also indicated that it was very difficult determining how to include children with severe disabilities in classroom activities.

Jones (1991) investigated 10 teachers to determine their attitude toward the mainstreaming of disabled children using the Attitude Toward Mainstreaming Scale. She found that (a) gender did not produce a significant effect on the attitudes of teachers toward the mainstreaming of disabled students; (b) the effects of the regular education teachers' ethnicity on their attitude toward mainstreaming disabled students were significant in that Asian teachers

were more positive toward mainstreaming the disabled student than Black, White, or Hispanic teachers; (c) the level of teaching did not produce a significant effect on the attitudes of teachers toward the mainstreaming of disabled students; (d) the attitudes of regular education teachers regarding the mainstreaming of disabled students were not significantly affected by their fields of teaching; (e) the regular classroom teachers' age did not significantly affect their attitudes toward mainstreaming of disabled student; (f) the attitudes of regular education teachers were not significantly affected by their years of experience; and (g) the level of experience did not produce a significant effect on the attitudes of teachers regarding the mainstreaming of disabled students (Jones).

Personal Attitudes of Administrators

The attitudes of administrators with regard to integrating special education students into regular education classrooms have been well studied. The results of a survey of 25 elementary school principals by Wiener and Norton (1993) found that most principals agreed with inclusion philosophically but were somewhat dubious about the amount of services that could be provided. They felt that the students with special needs would benefit socially but would be at a disadvantage academically. The administrators also reported that, although inclusion would help to promote understanding of individual differences among students, it would compromise the amount of time the teacher had to work with the majority of the students due to the amount of attention that would be required for students with disabilities.

Evans, Bird, Ford, Green, and Bischoff (1992) conducted a case study of one school district in Nebraska to investigate the attitudes of administrators, teachers and parents during their initial move toward inclusion. The researchers found that the primary concern expressed by administrators (especially building principals) was their feelings of inadequacy due to their lack of training and unfamiliarity with students with disabilities. The administrators were also concerned about the accessibility of their buildings, and that the significant amount of time that would be required of teachers to work with these students would reduce their overall effectiveness with the majority of students (Evans et al.).

The personal characteristics of administrators appear to influence attitude and acceptance of mainstreaming. Center, Ward, Paramenter, and Nash (1985) found that age, personal philosophy, leadership ability, principal willingness to integrate, and interpersonal relationships affect their attitude. Task-oriented administrators with extensive training in special education or who have had previous experience with special education exhibited only a slightly better attitude than nonparticipating principals. Some research indicates that race, sex and past experience can also influence the attitude of principals (Reehill, 1987).

Knight (1986) examined the attitudes of elementary educators, special educators, and special education administrators in Louisiana. The results indicated that the attitude of the respondents was influenced by their individual philosophies. The years of professional experience and classroom management style also appeared to affect the response of the principals surveyed. Age, race, and course preparation in special education only moderately affected the attitude of the respondent.

Reehill(1987)surveyed71elementaryschoolprincipalsand19middleschool principalsinNewYorktocomparetheknowledgeandattitudesofprincipalstowardthe placementofdisabledstudentsintheleastrestrictiveenvironment.Thestudycomparedthe knowledgeandattitudesoftherespondentstotheirpersonalbackgroundandprevious experience. Reehillfoundthatboththeelementaryandmiddleschooladministratorslackedthe knowledgeneededforeducationalprogrammingofstudentswithdisabilities.Bothgroupsof principalsfavoredtheplacementofstudentswithmilddisabilitiesinenvironmentssthatwere morerestrictivethanwhatshouldhavebeenrecommended.Theattitudeoftheelementaryand middleschoolprincipalswasnotinfluencedbythenumberofyearsofexperienceortheirlevel ofknowledgeregardingprogramsforstudentswithdisabilities(Reehill,1987).

Prillaman(1983)conductedasurveyof42principalsusingtheMainstreaming PlanningInventorytodeterminetheirattitudetowardmainstreamedisabledstudents.The resultssuggestthat

(a)Onethirdoftheprincipalsupportthespecialclassmodelasthebest placementfordisabledchildren,yetapproximatelythree-fourthsbelievethat normalchildrenprofitfromcontactwiththedisabled.(b)Threefourthsof therespondentsbelieveteacherswillneednewtechniquesandmaterials in ordertoeffectivelyteachmainstreamedstudents.(c)Onlyfourprincipals believedthatmainstreamingwouldhaveanegativeeffectontheself-concept ofthedisabled.(d) 50%oftherespondentsbelieveddisabledchildrenwillbe motivatedwhenplacedinaregularclassroom.(e) 75%oftherespondents believethattheplacementofdisabledstudentsinregularclasseswillhelp teachersgrowprofessionallyandpersonally.(f)Approximately90%ofthe principalsstatedthatmainstreaming willnotresultinanincreaseinbehavior problems(p.87)

Centeretal.(1985)notedthatprincipalseitherstronglyacceptedoropposedthe integrationofstudentswithdisabilitiesdependingonthedegreeofseverity.Characteristics consideredacceptableforinclusioninageneraleducationclassroomweredescribedasstudents whowouldnotcreateworkfortheclasroomteacher.Studentswithmildtomoderate disabilities,moderatevisualandauditorydisabilities,andwithdrawnstudentsweremore favorablyacceptedbyprincipalstobeingeneraleducationclassrooms(Centeretal.).

Principalswerelesscertainofintegratingstudentswhowere disruptive,requiredextra teachercompetencies,orextracare(Center,etal.,1985).Studentswhowerehyperactive, dangerousorexhibitedashortattentionspanwerealsoconsiderednotasacceptableinthe regularclassroom.Studentswithmoderatetoseverememorydisabilitiesorthosechildrenwith moderatetosevere physicaldisabilitieswithmobilitywerealsolessfavorablyacceptedby generalclassroomteachers.Studentswithmildtomoderateintellectualoremotionaldisabilities werealsofoundinthiscategory.

Principals were unwilling to accept individual students whose educational and behavioral characteristics were not tolerable in general classrooms (Center et al., 1985). Students with multiple or severe disabilities were also unacceptable in the regular classrooms. Principals marginally accepted students who required extra time by a teacher to do non-academic duties (e.g., changing catheters). Farley (1991) investigated the relationship between the attitudes of middle school principals and teachers in Virginia at 65 large and small middle schools toward mainstreaming and the level-of-comfort participants felt toward special education and mainstreaming using the Attitude Towards Mainstreaming Scale (ATMS), and the Comfortability Scale for Special Education (CSSE). She found that (a) the attitudes of middle school personnel are similar to the attitudes of personnel who work in other grade levels; (b) that principals had more favorable attitudes toward mainstreaming than teachers; and (c) that principals' level of comfort does not influence teachers' level of comfort (Farley). Specific factors which were found to be indirectly related to positive attitudes included prior experience working with persons with disabilities, educational background, and coursework in special education. The size of the school division was related to the level of comfort of school personnel when working in teams situations.

Special Education Competencies Required of Principals

Effective inclusion of special education students into regular education classrooms will be impossible to achieve without the support of school administrators (Lombardi, 1994). The principal is an extremely critical member as the staff look to her for direction. Uncertain or contradictory messages from the leader of the school provide no incentive for involvement or change. The activities, practices, and even the atmosphere within a school are a reflection of the leadership in the building.

It is vital that building administrators have a solid understanding of special education to effectively implement procedural requirements and provide appropriate educational services for disabled students in their schools. Many studies indicate, however, that most principals do not have the knowledge of the instructional and programmatic needs of disabled children (Monteith, 1994).

Valesky and Hirth (1992) surveyed colleges and universities in the United States that offered graduate degrees in school administration to determine requirements for special education and special education law knowledge for administrative endorsements. The researchers found that only 27% of all regular administrator endorsements offered required knowledge of special education law and 57% of endorsements offered by the universities had no requirement for knowledge of special education.

Monteith (1994) reviewed a comprehensive study conducted by Aspedon in 1992, who found that

- (a) more than 40% of principals had never had any special education course;
- (b) more than 85% of principals felt that formal training in special education is needed in order to be a successful building principal;
- (c) more than 80% of

principals had moderate to very high interest in receiving special education training; and (d) despite lack of special education training, more than 75% of principals had exclusive or shared responsibility for supervising and evaluating special education teachers in their schools. (p.5)

Monteith (1994) also reviewed the results of a survey of principals, assistant principals, and supervisors from South Carolina, southern North Carolina, and northern Georgia, which was conducted by the South Carolina State University Department of Educational Administration in 1993 to determine to what extent practitioners felt they already possessed adequate information to effectively administer programs for students with disabilities. The research findings indicated that

(a) 75% of the administrators had no formal training in special education; (b) what they did know about special education came from the administration office or state or through making mistakes; (c) over 90% of the administrators indicated that formal special education training was needed in order to be an effective school leader; and (d) 89% indicated that they would be interested in participating in a training program. (Monteith, 1994, pp8-9)

Administrator Role in Support of Inclusive Schools

Rude and Anderson (1992) conducted interviews with classroom teachers, special education teachers, and building principals to determine building principals' role in supporting effective inclusion practices. The following administrative strategies that helped to promote a positive school environment for the inclusion process were identified.

Administrative Role:

1. The attitude of the administrator was cited as the most influential factor for the success of an inclusion program.
2. Administrators at inclusive schools cultivated a school climate that signified that all students belonged at the school site, and that all teachers would teach all students.
3. Administrators must continually redefine the role of both the classroom teacher and special educator based on previous inclusion successes and emerging student needs.
4. In some cases, modifications of the existing school's organizational structure were necessary in order to provide built-in-teacher collaboration and planning time.
5. When possible, administrators sought out and hired new teachers who were willing to accept a philosophy of inclusion.
6. Staff members were encouraged to have patience with one another, implementation problems were to be expected.

7. Providing inserviceeducationprogramstostaffmembersenabledthedevelopment ofnewskillsandprovidedacommonlanguageofinstructionandassessment.

8. Inclusion task forces were helpful for identifying goals, guidelines and procedures for inclusion. Task force members then became instrumental in public relations and inservice education to others concerning the inclusion process.

9. Administrators promoted the sharing of fears and concerns; an open door policy was in effect for teachers, students and parents.

Classroom teachers:

1. When possible, the administrators provided additional support personnel and technical equipment.

2. Release time for conferences or additional classroom monies were incentives for teachers to become involved in inclusion. Administrators asked individual teachers what they found to be rewarding, rather than assuming they already knew.

3. Viable means of emotional support were available, including development of teachers support groups, assigning one special educator to each classroom teacher to facilitate problem solving discussions, and the development of a resource team whose members remained "on call" to respond to classroom emergencies.

4. Some administrators encouraged their teachers to redefine their expectations and definition of success for their individual students with special needs.

5. Classroom teachers benefitted from visiting successful preexisting inclusion programs.

6. When insurmountable differences in philosophy occurred, an administrative show of support included assisting the teacher in transferring to another school location.

Special Educators:

1. Administrators gave teachers insight into working with difficult colleagues and encouraged teachers to cognitively rehearse responses before approaching the person with whom they were in conflict.

2. New positions for existing personnel were created. "Integration Facilitator" and "Special Education Consultant" were two teacher held positions which enabled itinerant teachers to provide suggestions and act as a sounding board for classroom teachers and other special educators.

3. Administrators modeled the concepts of collaboration, team teaching, and problem solving.

4. Reinforcing activities and opportunities were provided to replace what special educators previously found rewarding (Rude & Anderson, 1992, pp. 33-34).

The Principal and Collaboration

Current reform efforts in restructuring the public schools have centered around the principles of decentralizing the decision-making process and moving toward school-site-based management for the purpose of providing greater autonomy and contributing to teacher empowerment (Fishkin & Sullivan, 1993). Collaborative problem solving among school personnel is a crucial component in this reform effort and a possible solution to the problem of isolation that many teachers experience (Kruger, Struzziero, Watts, & Vacca, 1995).

An important factor of effective collaboration is the development and maintenance of a positive, trusting relationship among collaborators (Stainback & Stainback, 1992). Teachers need to feel comfortable collaborating with others and trust these individuals are not judging their teaching. A joint statement written in 1987 by the National Education Association, the Council for Exceptional Children, and the American Association of School Administrators (Cole, 1992) states:

Collaborative efforts among special educators and other members of the educational system and various public and private agencies can help improve and expand the services available to exceptional children and we hope, improve and expand the services available to all children. We encourage the development of collaborative efforts that appropriately and effectively utilize professional and other resources at the local level. (p. 10)

Administrators support is an essential organizational factor that has been proven to be related to successful collaborative problem solving (Fullan, 1991). Schools need administrative leadership where the culture of the school encourages critical thinking, reflection, and risk-taking. Principals must be willing to engage in creative and collaborative behaviors rather than authoritarian practices (Pazey, 1993). Collaborative behavior among administrators provides a model for teachers whomay need assistance to break free from the tradition of working independently (Stainback & Stainback, 1992).

The school administrator plays an important role in helping to transform the culture of a school to support collaborative problem solving, planning, and teaching (Thousand & Villa, 1992). To work toward accomplishing such a cultural change, the principal needs to:

Develop and celebrate new "heroes", rituals, traditions, and symbols that reflect the valuing of collaboration.

Make available meaningful incentives to encourage staff to collaborate (e.g., scheduled time to meet and plan, training in collaboration, opportunities to observe experienced collaborators working together, collaboration as a stated expectation in job descriptions, mission and policy statement in supporting collaborative behaviors).

Establish collaboration as a norm through job descriptions and job performance expectations so that collaboration is an ongoing responsibility not a voluntary act.

Acknowledge that learning to collaborate is a developmental process that requires regular practice, ongoing training, and feedback opportunities built into the school calendar and day. (Thousand & Villa, 1992, p. 177)

An important responsibility of school leaders is to ensure that all school personnel

(a) become knowledgeable about the change process. . . .; (b) develop conceptual, technical, and interpersonal skills necessary to facilitate and support people through the change process and (c) have the courage to deal with the resistance they may encounter as a result of emotional turmoil and cognitive dissonance people typically experience when they go through any change. (Villa, Thousand, Nevin, & Malgeri, 1996, p. 177)

Darling-Hammond and Wise (1992) emphasized the important influence that principals have upon teachers' collaboration and professional development in relation to the creation and maintenance of effective schools. They particularly stressed the joint principal-teacher participation in decision making as an avenue towards school improvement as follows:

participatory school management by teachers and principals, based on collaborative planning, collegial problem solving and constant intellectual sharing, produces student learning gains and increased teacher satisfaction and retention. These schools feature principals who are effective leaders, and studies show that such principals create conditions that encourage teacher leadership, peer support and assistance and participation in decision making (p. 1365)

Berry and Ginsberg (1990) also cited the need for facilitative leadership in effective schools and for teachers as active collaborators in the improvement process. Collaboration between school administrators and teachers was viewed as a prerequisite for cyclical school improvements (Evans, 1996).

Gold (1995) examined the perceptions of regular and special educators and principals concerning the frequency and importance of collaborative practices in both more and less successful inclusive schools. The results of the study indicate that professional credibility issues,

differing conceptual frameworks and collaborative practices used may diminish collaborative outcomes (Gold, 1995). The researcher also found that the perceptions of professional in high and low-achieving schools differed significantly with regard to collaborative practices related to decision-making, autonomy, and school norms. Gold supports the belief that the principal's role in collaboration appears to be a critical variable impacting collaborative outcomes.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the regular education initiative (REI) and the inclusive schools model. It also reviewed the literature on the attitudes of general education teachers and principals toward the integration of disabled students into regular education classes. In addition, the principal's role in collaboration and the essential components of an inclusive school were addressed.

The manner in which principals collaborate with their teachers to facilitate the integration of special education students into general education classes is the major focus of this study. As there continues to be a dearth of information about the leadership style and behaviors of the principal that makes integrations successful, this research has been done in an attempt to contribute to the literature and to provide practicing administrators with information regarding effective inclusionary practices.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine how and why elementary school principals in a selected school district collaborate with their teaching staff to facilitate a commitment to educating students with disabilities in the general education classroom. This chapter describes the research methods used in the study. Following the introduction, the chapter is organized into the research design, entry, description of the district, the sample selection, data collection and data analysis, reliability and validity, and ethical considerations.

The following research questions guided the data collection in the study:

1. What educational training or experience have these principals had with models or practices that support the integration of disabled students into general education classrooms?
2. What are the educational practices used by these principals to help ensure that students with disabilities are successfully integrated with non-disabled peers?
3. What leadership style or behaviors of each of these principals influence these teachers' efforts to integrate students with disabilities into general education classrooms?
4. How does each principal collaborate with teachers to facilitate the integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms?
5. What experience or training has the principal provided for general education teachers in regard to making academic and behavioral accommodations for special education students?

Research Design

The primary focus of this study was exploratory and descriptive in nature. The researcher used a case study approach to gather the data to answer the research questions. Yin's (1989) definition of case study was helpful in distinguishing this research methodology from all other research designs. Herefersto a case study as an empirical inquiry that (a) "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when (b) the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident; and in which (c) multiple sources of evidence are used" (p.23).

The researcher, in support of Becker's purpose for case study, as cited by Merriam (1988), chose this method as the most appropriate to provide a "rich, thick description" of the schools that were observed "to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study and to develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process" (Merriam, p. 11).

The case study method appeared also to be the most appropriate method for understanding the complexity of organizational phenomena, as it contributes solely to our knowledge of individual, organizational, political and social phenomena (Yin, 1989).

Stake (1995) indicated that the main purpose of a case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is an emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself. (p. 8)

The researcher throughout the duration of this study remained aware of Yin's (1989) cautionary remarks.

A fatal flaw in doing case studies is to conceive of statistical generalization as the method of generalizing the results of the case. That is because cases are not "sampling units" and should not be chosen for this reason. Rather, individual case studies are to be selected as a laboratory investigator selects the topic of a new experiment. Multiple cases, in this sense, should be considered like multiple experiments (or multiple surveys). Under these circumstances, the method of generalization is "analytical," in which a previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of case study. If two or more cases are shown to support the same theory, replication can be claimed. (p. 3)

Yin (1989) indicates that theory development not only facilitates the data collection phase of the case study but also is the stage at which the generalization of the case study will occur. An important part of the researcher's methodology was generalizing to a theory. In an effort to improve the possibility of generalizing the results of this case study to other sites, the suggestions offered by Merriam (1988) were closely followed.

Providing a rich, thick description so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgment. Establishing the typicality or modal category of the case—that is, describing how typical the program, event or individual is compared with others in the class, so that users can make comparisons with their own situations. (p. 11)

The design of this research was an embedded case study as it involved multiple units of analysis. Within the single case study of the principal's role in facilitating the integration of students with disabilities into general education classes, subunits of analysis were incorporated

(Yin, 1989). Three elementary schools in a selected school district where the researcher did her fieldwork were considered subunits and viewed as embedded units of analysis within the larger design. In keeping with Yin's (1989) advice, the researcher remained focused on the larger unit of analysis rather than on the subunit level.

The research methodology involved the use of sources of information which included semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers, review of written documents relevant to the study, and observations of selected school meetings. Interviews were conducted to determine the process and actual inclusionary practices as it related to each participant's own experience with integrating students with disabilities into general education classes at their school. Interviews focused on the leadership style or behavior of the principal that influenced teachers' efforts to integrate students with disabilities into general education classes, how teachers and principals view inclusion, and the type of inclusive practices that were being used at the study sites. Observations of relevant school meetings and documents pertaining to inclusion were used to corroborate the participants' interview responses.

Entry

Administrative approval from the district in which this case study occurred was obtained through its Office of Research, Testing, and Program Evaluation. The researcher provided each principal with a copy of the research proposal and then contacted them by phone to obtain permission to do the field study. An initial meeting was held at the schools with each principal to review the research project and to meet the teachers. A time schedule for the site visitations was developed by the researcher and approved by the principals before beginning the data collection each week. A meeting was held individually with each teacher who was selected by the principals and research to participate in the study to explain the purpose of the research. The first objective of the researcher was to establish a comfortable relationship with all participants by treating them with respect and dignity. Written consent forms were received from each participant before the actual fieldwork commenced.

Marshall and Rossman (1989) cautioned that entry must be renegotiated throughout the duration of the study. The researcher was significantly aware of the importance of eliciting cooperation, trust and acceptance of the participants throughout the study. To that end, the confidentiality of all data gathered at the sites was assured.

The researcher also came to the study as an insider having served in the study district as an LD teacher for fourteen years. It is her belief that her knowledge and experience with special education practices and her involvement in the initial planning and implementation of inclusion in the district help to add credibility to her role in conducting the study.

Description of the District

The school district chosen as the study district is located in a Mid-Atlantic state and is part of a greater metropolitan area. The county in which the district resides has a population

nearing 1,000,000 with a school system that ranks as one of the largest in the United States in enrollment. The school district has over 200 regular, special education, and alternative schools.

The special education student enrollment comprises approximately 12.9% of the total student population. Students' needs are met through a variety of program service models that range from school-based support provided by itinerant teachers or specialists, through resource and self-contained classrooms to separate centers and placements in private schools. In accordance with IDEA, the goal is to provide the services for each student in the least restrictive environment. There are well over 100 elementary schools in the district, and each school's enrollment varies from less than 400 to more than 1,000. The majority of the elementary schools have kindergarten through sixth grade.

Site Selection

Criterion-based or purposive sampling was used to select the elementary schools for the study. Purposive sampling, the non-probabilistic selection of subjects or situations, allows for information-rich cases in which the researcher can learn a significant amount about issues related to the purpose of the investigation (Patton, 1987).

Selection of the sites were based on several elements. They included selected factors from Whitaker's (1996) list of criteria, expert nomination by school district officials, and other criteria that appeared in the literature. The researcher also used special education population, size of school (the schools selected ranged in enrollment from approximately 400 to 750 students), schools that employed two full-time special education teachers and two full-time general education teachers involved in integration, and administrators with special education experience in selecting the sample for this study. The schools selected each had two major special education programs. The general education classrooms at the three sites did not all have a natural proportion of special education students primarily due to staffing and scheduling limitations. The students with disabilities at these schools did not all attend their neighborhood school.

Conceptual Framework

The components of successful inclusion programs developed by Irmsher (1995) (see Chapter 2) were used as a conceptual framework where the study addressed leadership behaviors to examine the inclusive practices of the elementary principals at the schools in which the fieldwork was conducted.

The study district does not embrace a full-inclusive schools philosophy. Rather, there is a continuum of services which provides for the most appropriate instructional programming for each disabled student's needs as addressed in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in the least restrictive environment.

The following factors from among Whitaker's (1996) list of criteria were selected for this study:

1. Schools will employ a full-time administrator.
2. Documentation of inclusion efforts will be available in the schools.
3. Schools will involve parents, central office and support staff in inclusive effort.
4. Schools will have a written or spoken vision of how special education students will be integrated into the general education.
5. Schools will encourage social interaction for all students with disabilities.
6. Schools will promote high standards for all students, teachers, administrators, parents.
7. Schools will promote a sense of community (teaming, parent involvement, co-teaching paraprofessionals as partners, peer helpers, flexible scheduling).
8. Schools will use a variety of accountability including portfolios, individual assessments, (IEPs).

Data Collection

The primary sources of data collection included semi-structured interviews with three elementary principals, two assistant principals, nine general education teachers, and nine special education teachers. Other data was collected from the elementary schools and school district documents, school meetings, and informal conversations within the selected sites.

Interviewing and piloting the instrument. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), all qualitative interviews share the following essential characteristics that distinguish them from other forms of data gathering:

- (a) Qualitative interviews are modifications or extensions of ordinary conversations, but important distinctions.
- (b) Qualitative interviews are more interested in the understanding, knowledge, insights of the interviewees than in categorizing people or events in terms of academic theories.
- (c) Content of the interview, as well as the follow-up questions and choices of topics, change to match what the individual interviewees know and feel. (pp. 6-8)

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed from the literature as a guide to talk with principals and teachers about their experience with and training in educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms (see Appendixes A and B). A pilot of the

questions was conducted during the months of September and October of 1997. Five pilot principals were initially contacted by phone and then mailed a copy of the protocol to determine the clarity, accuracy, and readability of the questions. The way in which they are worded is one of the most important ways to determine how an interviewee will respond (Patton, 1987). Two of the elementary principals in the pilot agreed to an interview which was conducted at their school and ranged in length from an hour and a half to two hours. Three other principals offered the researchers suggestions by phone. Two questions were added and some changes in the words selected were made as a result of the recommendations that were received. For example, it was suggested that the words "school climate" be used instead of "school culture" and "school or site-based planning team" be substituted for "steering committee" to help ensure consistency of understanding. It was also suggested that a question regarding the extent to which principals involved parents in the planning process of integrating special education students into general education classrooms be included. The interview protocol developed for teachers by the researcher was also piloted with two general education and two special education teachers (see Appendix B). All of the teachers agreed to an interview. Three of the interviews were held at the participants' schools and ranged in length from 45 to 60 minutes. One of the interviews was conducted by phone and took approximately one hour. Some of the questions were changed to help ensure that the respondents would understand what was being asked. For example, it was suggested that inclusionary practices and integration models be defined to help ensure that the interviewee understood what was being asked.

In keeping with Rubin and Rubin's (1995) contention that the qualitative interviewing design should be flexible, iterative, and continuous, the questioning was redesigned throughout the study rather than rigidly adhered to in order to accommodate the expressed needs of the study subjects and to work toward validity and reliability. This flexibility in the instrument allowed exploration of new topics while keeping the research organized and focused.

Selecting the sample. Three elementary principals, two assistant principals, nine general education teachers, and nine special education teachers from the selected school district participated in this study. These individuals were chosen based on selected factors from Whitaker's (1996) list of criteria, administrators with special education experience, size of school in which they were employed, and expert nomination by school district officials.

The interview procedures. One semi-structured formal interview was conducted with each principal and those teachers who were selected by the principal and researcher at the elementary school site to participate in the study. Every effort was made by the researcher to establish rapport with the interviewees and to explain the purpose of the overall interview. The investigator informed the participants about her professional role in the district. She also indicated that she was there to learn from them about how principals work with their staff to support the integration of special education students into general education classes. Although the researcher came to the interview with a list of questions to ensure coverage of the major topics, adaptations were made as the conversations warranted to be meaningful to the participants. Interviews ranged in length from 45 minutes to an hour and a half. As suggested by Patton (1987), interview data was collected by notetaking, audiotape recording and follow-up memos after the interviews. Notetaking was used by the researcher to help formulate new

questions during the interview and to aid in locating specific quotations from the tape. Probing, an interviewing strategy that is used to delve deeper into the interviewee's responses, was used when more details, elaboration or clarity was needed about the issue being discussed.

The researcher used a practice of examining her own personal reaction to the interviewee's comments by documenting these feelings in a journal immediately after each interview. All audiotaped interviews were transcribed and kept in a locked file to maintain the confidentiality of the participants who were involved in the study.

Informal interviews and discussions were also held on a daily basis with the teachers who were selected for the study by the elementary principals where the fieldwork was conducted. Open-ended and specific questions were asked as the conversation warranted.

A matrix was developed by the researcher to help organize the research questions by the method used to answer them (see Appendix C).

Observations. The researcher observed the planning sessions of the teachers who were involved in the study each week and made reflective notes about what was accomplished in her journal. Classroom observations were made following these planning sessions as indicated.

Documents and other sources of data. Finally, the researcher examined all available county and school documents that related to this study. These documents included the school biennial plan, principal bulletins, teachers' lesson plans, materials/resource lists, special education manuals, and other relevant written documents. These documents were used as a source of information pertaining to the efforts made by principals and their staff to integrate students with disabilities into general education classes.

Additional data was obtained through observations at selected school meetings. The researcher attended six meetings at each school during her three-week fieldwork experience at each of these selected sites to obtain additional information regarding how principals and teachers collaborate to facilitate the integration of special education students into general education classes. These meetings included Local Screening/Child Study, Steering Committee, special education, and grade-level team meetings held at the three elementary schools. This resulted in approximately 18 hours of observations.

Data Analysis

The nature of a qualitative design means that data collection and analysis occur simultaneously. Merriam (1988) describes data analysis as "a very complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation" (p. 147). The process of analysis involves bringing order to the data, organizing what there is into patterns, categories, and basic descriptive units (Patton, 1987).

The data analysis for this study involved using a multi-method, triangulation approach and occurred throughout the data collection period. Triangulation involved checking the findings from observations, interviews and documents for consistency. The researcher endeavored to achieve theoretical sensitivity, "the ability to recognize what is important in data and give it meaning" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 46). This was accomplished by using the following analytic techniques recommended by Strauss & Corbin (1990):

- (a) asking, what is really going on here?
- (b) maintaining an attitude of skepticism toward any categories or hypotheses brought too early in the research, and validating them repeatedly with the data themselves. (p. 47)

To ensure that the researcher was thoroughly familiar with the data before analysis, she listened to all interview tapes, read each transcribed interview as each was completed, and read all interview transcripts after all data was collected. The information was systematically coded, analyzed, and arranged into as many categories as possible. Open coding, the procedure defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as "the process in which concepts are identified and developed in terms of their properties and dimensions" (p. 74) was continually used by the researcher. The procedures of making comparisons and asking questions about the data was helpful in naming, categorizing, and adding information to previously identified categories that were obtained from a review of the literature. The researcher's original field notes were copied. Each interview and observation was assigned a number based upon the type of data collected. Then the coded units of data were cut up and separated into different color folders by their designated codes. Analysis and re-clustering occurred as new data was added from the researcher's field notes.

The researcher also used axial coding, a process of putting the data back together in order to make connections between a category and subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This was done by developing each category

....in terms of the causal conditions that give rise to it, the specific dimensional location of this phenomenon in terms of its properties, the context, the action/ interactional strategies used to handle, manage, respond to this phenomenon in light of that context, and the consequences of any action/interaction that is taken. (p. 114)

The interview data was organized as suggested by Patton (1987) into six categories: (a) experience/behavior questions, (b) opinion/values questions, (c) feeling questions, (d) knowledge questions, (e) sensory questions (questions about what is seen, heard, touched, tasted, and smelled), and (f) background/demographic questions. The researcher's questions were clearly delineated by these categories on the interview protocols.

A matrix was developed to organize the data collected from the planning sessions by the following categories: (a) inclusionary practices, (b) general and special education teacher responsibilities, (c) instructional activities, and (d) evidence of collaboration (see Appendix D).

Across-site analysis was undertaken after the fieldwork had been completed at the three elementary schools. Yin (1989) describes the methods of cross-site analysis as follows:

Each individual case study consists of a whole study in which convergent evidence is sought regarding the facts and conclusions for the case. Each case's conclusions are then considered to be information needing replication by other individual cases. Both the individual cases and the multiple case results can and should be the focus of a summary report. For each individual case, the reports should indicate how and why a particular proposition was demonstrated (or not demonstrated). (p. 57)

Yin (1989) suggests that, across the cases, the reports should indicate the extent of replication, logic, and why certain cases were predicted to have certain results, whereas other cases were predicted to have contrary results.

These methods were applied in cross-site analysis of the three elementary school sites for findings related to (a) the role of the principal in facilitating inclusionary practices, (b) the experience that general education teachers have been provided in regard to making academic and behavioral accommodations for special education students, and (c) the principal's role in facilitating collaboration between the general and special education teachers.

Reliability and validity. Reliability, as defined by Merriam (1988), refers "to the extent to which one's findings can be replicated" (p. 170). The goal of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study (Yin, 1989). Qualitative research studies, however, seek to "describe and explain the world as those in the world interpret it" (p. 170). Since there are a variety of interpretations of what may be happening, the probability of taking repeated measures and establishing reliability in the traditional sense is unrealistic. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest thinking in terms of the dependability or consistency of the results obtained from the data rather than replication. The researcher used the following strategies recommended by Merriam (1988) to ensure that her results were dependable.

(a) The investigator's position: The investigator explained the assumptions and theory behind the study, her position regarding the group being studied, the basis for selecting participants, and the social context from which data were collected. (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, pp. 214-215)

(b) Triangulation: Multiple methods of data collection and analysis were used.

(c) Audit trail: The researcher described in detail how the data was collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the study. (p. 172)

Credibility is the qualitative parallel of validity. The researcher used some of the techniques suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to enhance the likelihood that credible findings and interpretations would be produced. One of these activities was a prolonged period of engagement in which the investigator learned as much as possible about the culture of the schools that were selected for the study in order to become familiar with the situation, to minimize the chance of misinformation caused by distortions of the researcher or respondents, and to build the trust of the participants.

Triangulation was also used to strengthen credibility. This study employed both multiple informants and multiple data collection strategies. Interview data across schools was compared for content comparability. Member checks, in which the researcher asked all of the participants involved to respond to developing theories and conclusions were employed to compare investigator perceptions against those of the informants. The researcher also used extensive excerpts from interview transcripts when presenting the results of the study.

Regular debriefing sessions with two colleagues who are working in the area of special education, and university students who are engaged in their own research studies were also used to comment on the researcher's findings as they emerged. Their review of the data allowed a check for any biases or unwarranted conclusions.

Another criteria that enhances the soundness of a qualitative study is transferability which involves the ability to apply one set of findings to another context. The investigator attempted to provide a rich, thick description "so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgment" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 124-125). She also conducted a cross-case analysis as previously discussed in this chapter.

Ethical Considerations

An ethical code of behavior was followed throughout the fieldwork. The researcher in accepting total responsibility for her actions was very conscious of the types of ethical issues that might pervade the research process. She strived to be as nonbiased, accurate and honest as possible during all phases of the study. Several of the recommendations made by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) for maintaining high ethical standards were followed in conducting the research. These included treating each participant with respect while soliciting their cooperation, abiding by all negotiated terms that were made in order to conduct the research, assuring the confidentiality of the information that was reported by the participants, and being truthful in reporting the findings.

The researcher also remained aware of the ethical standards for the conduct of evaluations developed by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, which Patton (1987) reviewed. The standards are:

Evaluations should be designed and conducted so that the rights and welfare of the human subjects are respected and protected. Evaluators should respect human dignity and worth in their interactions with other persons associated with an evaluation. Evaluation findings should be disseminated to clients and other right-to-know audiences, so that they can assess and use the findings. (p.78)

The researcher obtained approval from her university's research committee to ensure the ethical conduct of the research and to assure participants that they would be exposed to the least possible risk before conducting this study. Each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form which described the purpose of the study, the risks, benefits, and the voluntary nature of their participation.

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate how principals work with their staff to help integrate special education students into the general education classroom. The role of the principal has become increasingly complex and demanding. The diversity of students served and proliferation of special programs developed to meet their needs have produced challenges for educational administrators. Since principal behavior cannot be understood without understanding the context in which the integration model exists, a description of the school and its community is included as part of the research study. The role and responsibilities of each participant who was formally interviewed for the study was also included.

The findings presented were established by reviewing the interview transcripts and observational field notes, organizing the data, looking for patterns that emerged from the data, and cross-validating the data obtained for accuracy. This procedure allowed the research to carefully analyze the data for recurring regularities that were eventually sorted into themes. The researcher made careful decisions about what was significant in the data. The results have been arranged by school. The actual experience of these selected participants with integrating special education students at each school are represented.

Robert E. Lee Elementary

Community. The majority of the children who attend Robert E. Lee Elementary School come from two distinctly different communities. However, because of the Spanish partial immersion and School Age Child Care (SAC) programs, about 10% of the students come from among 45 other areas of the district. Approximately 73% of the students are Caucasian, 13% are Asian, 7% are Hispanic, and 3% are African American. Roughly 5% of the children are eligible for free and reduced priced lunches. Approximately 10% of the pupils at the school move each year.

The community in which the school is located has 850 single-family homes with an average price of \$180,000. It is a fairly traditional, middle class neighborhood. The neighborhood takes its name from the larger seventeenth century English land grant on which it rests. A one-time tobacco plantation, it was the largest grant made in the county and passed through the hands of some of American history's most important families. The community is located between a major commuter access route and a large recreational park. There are about eight miles of wooded trails that run from the community's pool and tennis courts down to the shores of the lake located within the park where fishing and paddle boating are available.

Approximately 40% of the students live in this community. Another 40% to 50% of the student body come from a community three miles away. The students are bused by two other elementary schools in order to get to Robert E. Lee Elementary since these schools are already filled to capacity. The community is a predominately Caucasian, upper-middle-class neighborhood. The families live in traditional single family homes where the average price is \$300,000.

The majority of the students at the school come from traditional two-parent families. The parents themselves place a high regard on education and are very concerned about their children's academic and social welfare. The PTA is extremely active and supportive of the school and its programs. They provide over 3,000 hours of volunteer work a year to the school. Many efforts are made to enable every student's family to have an opportunity to participate in the large community of the Robert E. Lee family.

School. Robert E. Lee is a K-6 school with 575 general education students and approximately 25 self-contained special education students. The school, built in 1963, had been remodeled a few times over the years.

The school has a Spanish partial immersion program in which students in grades one through six study mathematics, science, and health in Spanish. There are two special education programs available at the school. These are the learning disabilities and emotional disabilities programs. Students who have a learning or emotional disability are provided services in either a learning lab setting or are given in-class assistance from the special education teachers or instructional assistants.

In addition, there is a strong technology emphasis at the school. There is a PC computer lab and a minimum of three Macintosh computers which are connected to a schoolwide area network in every classroom.

Staff. There are 23 full-time general education classroom teachers at the school. Robert E. Lee Elementary has a full-time physical education teacher, a music teacher, a librarian, and one full-time and one part-time guidance counselor. There are also three learning disability teachers, two emotional disability teachers, and one speech clinician. Itinerant staff include two psychologists, one social worker, and a physical and occupational therapist. A principal and assistant principal provide the leadership at the school.

Robert E. Lee has undergone a modest turnover in the staff in the past few years due to teacher transfer, relocation out of the district, or retirement.

The staff was extremely open and willing to share their experiences. They spoke very positively about the school and the strong collaborative relationship all staff members have to ensure that each child is viewed as a special person and provided with a challenging educational program. There is a mentoring program available for new staff at the school.

Although integrating special education students into the general education classrooms has involved the whole staff to some degree, seven individuals were selected to participate in this study. These seven participants formally interviewed included the principal, the assistant principal, three general education teachers, and two special education teachers.

"Conrad," the principal. Conrad, the principal of Robert E. Lee Elementary, has been in the field of education for 24 years. He began his career as an elementary school teacher in the South where he worked in a school that moved from a traditional self-contained structure to an open-space, non-graded continuous progress program. He was also a middle school teacher for a couple of years in the early 1970s at the seventh and eighth grade levels which was involved in multi-age grouping. Conrad became a principal in the same school district in 1975. In 1984, he was selected as the first administrator in that state to evaluate principals and central office administrators in the career ladder program which was run by the state department of education. After a few years, however, Conrad decided to return to the principalship. He moved to the study district in 1988 where he has been a principal of two elementary schools. He also worked one year in the Office of Planning and Evaluation where he was responsible for state wide test administration. He has been the principal of Robert E. Lee Elementary for three years. Conrad is a gracious Southern gentleman who was extremely easy to talk to and appeared to be quite comfortable with the questions that were asked.

Conrad did not spend much time in his office during the time the researcher was observing at the school. He frequently was seen engaged in conversation with his staff about students and taking care of his many administrative duties.

Conrad spoke about his role in terms of the needs of all of the students at Robert E. Lee.

My role and this is a fairly deeply held philosophical belief. My role is to ensure appropriate instruction for every student in my building. I don't care what label they have. I just don't care. I really think the question is simpler than we are making it. (Interview, 5/22/98, p.5)

"Adrienne," assistant principal. This was Adrienne's second year as assistant principal at Robert E. Lee Elementary. She has 25 years of experience as a special education teacher. Conrad had been her principal at another elementary site in the district prior to coming to this school. There she worked with both learning disabilities students and children with emotional disabilities. Adrienne has also worked with autistic children and taught physical education and adaptive P.E. to mentally retarded students.

Adrienne spoke extensively about her role in facilitating the integration of students with disabilities into the general education classes. She believes that it is important for all principals to have a positive attitude about integrating special education students and for them to develop a plan that will allow inclusion to take place in an effective manner.

I have a special education heart so I do believe that all students can learn. I believe that all the teachers have to be involved and I think the new law supports that with the regular education teacher. The general education teachers are attending the IEPs now so they are getting a better understanding of the child's special education needs as they come in. The teachers are involved in co-planning. They have input into writing the IEPs which is a nice, new change. As a leader, I think teachers see that I'm proactive for special education students and I hope that encourages them to be proactive for special education. (Interview, 5/15/98, p.5)

"Betsy," general education teacher. Betsy teaches first and second graders. She has been teaching elementary school for 4 years. This was her first year working in the study district. She has four students who have been identified as learning disabled in her classroom this year.

Betsy is a very dedicated teacher. She spoke enthusiastically about her teaching and how integration was working in her classroom. She believes the support which she has received from the principal has really helped to make her teaching experiences so successful this year.

Betsy also talked about the harmonious working relationships she has with the primary LD teacher. She believes that good communication and collaboration are essential for successful inclusion.

I really feel comfortable having her in the classroom and we really do work closely with planning for the children. There are times when some students need a little more assistance learning different concepts and she will work with them. That has been so beneficial. (Interview, 5/22/98, p.4)

"Linda," primary LD teacher. Linda teaches LD students in kindergarten through third grade. This year was her third year teaching in the study district. It was also her third year to work with Conrad as her principal. Linda spoke about the positive aspects of integrating special education students into general education classes several times. However, it was clear from our conversation that she felt decisions about placing a child in an integrated setting should be done on a case-by-case basis.

I do think that if there is any way that the kids can be integrated it is definitely beneficial for the kids with special needs and for the classroom kids because they can learn so many things from each other. I also think they shouldn't be pushed just because we are going for a more inclusive type environment. I think it should be whatever is best for the child. (Interview, 9/18/98, p.1)

Linda also talked about what she perceived as the principal's expectation for inclusion of special education students at the school.

I think he feels it is important to do. I know that just by talking with him he has a philosophy of multi-age grouping which also fits nicely with the special ed theory. That is one of the reasons I work with the first and second grade combination class. It has worked out so nice because the special ed kids see that it's okay to put them in different groups because the students are all mixed in first and second anyway. I think our principal is open to a lot of different ideas. (Interview, 9/18/98, p.2)

"Jean," general education teacher. Jean teaches a fifth grade general education classroom. She has taught at the elementary level in the study district for 25 years. She has been at Robert E. Lee Elementary for the past 11 years and has worked for Conrad for 4 years.

Jean has a special education instructional assistant who works with her 2 hours a day. She appeared to be generally positive about working with students with disabilities, however, she spoke about her obligation to teach all of the children in her class. She shared her own experiences of working with students with emotional disabilities who she felt were not adequately prepared to be integrated into a general education classroom. She indicated that she feels integration for most students with disabilities can be successful if the proper accommodations are made and if the administrators provide the necessary support.

I think special education students should only be in the regular classroom if they have a basic academic understanding of what is going on. If their behavior severely disrupts the learning process, I don't think they should be mainstreamed. (Interview, 6/4/98, p.6)

Jean stated that she has a good working relationship with both Conrad and Adrienne. She feels they are very supportive and truly care about the students, parents, and staff at the school.

Meg," general education teacher. Meg teaches sixth grade general education students. She is well organized, and it is evident that the students respond well to her style of teaching. She has taught for 25 years. This is her tenth year in the district and her tenth year at Robert E. Lee Elementary.

Meg believes her own interest in special education was initially prompted by her son's academic problems. Although he was diagnosed with a severe math disability, the school system in which he attended did not have any special math programs at that time. Meg indicated she spent long hours helping him with his math assignments and making special materials to help him learn new concepts.

Meg described her own role in integrating students with disabilities into her classroom in very positive terms.

I have probably what would be considered for any general education teacher who is working with special education students, particularly working with

both ED and LD students, the most ideal situation that could ever occur. I have to say I really felt it's made a tremendous effect on the learning of the students and the attitude that the other students had with the special education students. The class is small. I have three students with emotional disabilities and four learning disabled students who receive their science and math instruction from me. (Interview, 6/9/98, p.6)

"Marie," special education teacher. Marie teaches fifth and sixth grade students who have emotional disabilities. She received her bachelor's degree in business administration and has her master's in special education. She was a para professional in a preschool early intervention program in another state for a year and a half while she attended graduate school. She then taught for 1 year as a substitute special education teacher. This school did not categorize the students with disabilities, so she had an opportunity to work with visually impaired, learning disabled, and emotionally disturbed children. She has worked with Conrad for one year.

Marie was very candid about her experiences integrating her special education students into the general education classes this year.

When I got there in the Fall, I had no idea what had happened last year. I had no idea what was going to happen this year. I got the job the week before school started. I was told by the principal that the students were fairly on grade level and they needed to be integrated for specials and some for academics depending on what their IEPs stated. I didn't know that some teachers were hesitant to integrate students with emotional disabilities because of some problems that happened last year. I think that was good because I was open. I just approached them all with this is what I was told I needed to do. Academically, I pushed that the students be integrated into the general education classroom as quickly as possible. I think, for the most part that was a good choice. (Interview, 6/11/98, p.2)

Other participants. The researcher had several informal conversations with individuals who worked at or who had previously taught at Robert E. Lee Elementary. The staff members included the guidance counselor, the reading specialist, other classroom and special education teachers, the school secretary, and even a retired teacher who had taught at the school for many years and who now substituted there. These conversations took place during the teacher's duty-free lunch period and after the students had left for the day. The majority of the comments were very positive about integrating students with disabilities.

The para professionals were very willing to talk about their own experience with inclusion at the school. One of the special education instructional assistants, Carrie, talked about her experience at the school as being rewarding. She indicated that she liked working at the school, because she felt that both the principal and assistant principal were very supportive and easy to talk to about any problems that may arise.

They treat me as a professional and often ask how things are going in the classroom. I have a close working relationship with the special and general education teachers I work with and I feel lucky to be working at such a great school. (Interview, 6/3/98, p. 1)

Another paraprofessional, Agnes, stated that she was sorry she would be leaving the school because her husband was being transferred to another location. She indicated that the school climate here is very positive about working with all children regardless of their learning or emotional problems. She also stated that she always felt comfortable speaking with Conrad about any personal or professional problems, and she always found time to talk with her.

The reading specialist also shared some of her experiences with working at the school. She described the school in favorable terms. "Here at Robert E. Lee Elementary, we don't treat children differently because they are in a special education program. They are respected and considered part of the school's community" (Interview, 6/5/98, p. 1).

School climate. It was evident from the comments shared by the teachers and administrators that they were committed to providing a supportive and nurturing environment for every student at the school. The children were greeted each morning upon arrival and at dismissal time by a variety of school personnel that often included the principal, the assistant principal, the guidance counselor, and some of the classroom teachers and paraprofessionals. Students were encouraged to participate in a number of leadership roles provided by the Student Council Association, Just Say No Club, safety patrols, student mentor programs, and the student liaison for the school's human relations program.

Classroom observations revealed that the teachers worked collaboratively to ensure that each child has a challenging educational program. The faculty appeared to be endeavoring to fulfill the goals of the school mission which most of them had participated in writing. The stated mission indicates that "Robert E. Lee is a school where the climate is one of mutual respect and support. We encourage diversity and risk taking for our staff, our students, and within our community" (School Plan, 9/97, p. 1).

Conrad spoke candidly about how the school mission was developed and how it addressed the inclusion philosophy.

Actually the school plan was developed the same year as the ED program came into the building. I do not recall any specific discussions among the staff members at the time of the school plan that was related to the issues of ED inclusion. And yet if you've read the school plan it really applies to all students at all times. Probably the mission statement I meant to say, is reflective of a more generalized attitude of the teachers and the teachers and staff possess with respect to differences. But it wasn't designed for the acceptance of inclusion as much as it was for the acceptance of all students. (Interview, 5/22/98, p. 3)

In a conversation with the assistant principal, she described the school as a warm and comfortable place to learn and work.

At our school we welcome all children whatever their areas of disabilities or abilities. We welcome them and consider them a part of the school. We have several different programs in special education plus the Spanish immersion program at our school. We believe that all of our children are a part of one family. (Interview, 5/15/98, p. 1)

Conrad talked candidly about the progress that has been made in the acceptance of integrating students with special needs into the classroom.

The teachers I think are very accepting of students that have a lot higher incidence of disabilities, that is to say learning disabilities. I think teachers are very accepting of them in the classroom. That has not always been the case. The community and staff pride itself on high test scores. We have fairly high achieving students here. Probably a reflection hopefully of good teaching, but there is a lot of parental support at home. But even with that, most of our teachers have been accepting of LD students. About three years ago there was an issue of whether or not they were our kids or your kids. Their meaning the specialists. I think now teachers are very open to these children in the classroom. The teachers do have some issues in regard to the ED program that has been here for the last couple of years. More so related to the aberrant behaviors. With regard to their attitude there has been a little more, I won't call it resistance, but a higher level of concern about accepting some students into the classroom when their behavior or their disability is manifested in what we traditionally call imperfect behavior. I suspect we've made great strides in the last couple of years. We've done a lot of work to encourage better communication between the ED teachers and the classroom teachers. I do think the children are welcome into the classrooms. However, at times teachers have a heightened sense of concern about how to handle children who have what I would call aberrant behaviors. (Interview, 5/22/98, p. 2)

Staff support. It was apparent from the information that was shared by the teachers and administrators and the observations made by the researcher that the principal was extremely attentive to the needs of the staff. Instructional materials were observed to be quite plentiful in all of the classrooms.

I have everything I want and more. Whatever we ask for he buys. He always supports us. The fifth grade has put in a lot of requests. We've asked for microscopes, CD ROMs. He's never turned us down. (Interview, 6/4/98, p. 6)

Marie, the fifth-sixth grade ED teacher, also felt that she had more than enough resources for her instructional program.

At the beginning of the year the PTA donates a lot of money to everyone. We had that money. We had another sum of money from somewhere else. I'm amazed at the resources here. I was able to spend all of that money.
(Interview, 6/11/98, p.4)

When Conrad was asked about his willingness to provide funding for instructional materials that have been requested by the special and general education teachers, he explained that

We've had some fairly heated discussions within the PTA. Every teacher now receives a sum of money. Every teacher within the building receives whatever they need. It takes some pride in the fact that no teacher has ever been turned down for a request that they have made here. They may have to think it through and explain why they need what they need. It doesn't matter. There are plenty of resources in this county. (Interview, 5/22/99, pp.5-6)

Conrad also talked about other ways he had tried to support the teachers. He indicated that he has provided additional instructional assistants when needed, communicated with parents, and helped them to solve problems. He spoke candidly about the importance of maintaining good discipline in the classroom and treating teachers as professionals.

With the kind of special education program we have here, that is the ED program, I've tried my best to be very supportive of the teacher's concerns and issues with regard to discipline. Up to the point of demanding that children with disabilities exhibit appropriate classroom behaviors when they enter the classroom. I really believe in trying to treat people like professionals. You are not going to get professional behavior unless people are looked at as professional and that means you allow them to make decisions and you allow them to make mistakes. (Interview, 9/21/98, p.6)

The teachers also discussed the support they received from the principal in respect to solving various problems. Jeantalked about Conrad's willingness to help the teachers by describing his leadership style. She explained that

He very much oversees what's going on in the school, but he does expect us to work out what needs to be worked out. He is very supportive of what we work out. He really doesn't want to know all the nitty gritty, but he backs us in the decisions we make. (Interview, 6/4/98, p.2)

Support in terms of hiring additional instructional assistants was also apparent. These positions are seen as giving assistance to special and general education teachers. One ED teacher had two instructional assistants because of the number of students she was responsible for teaching while the other special education teachers had one instructional assistant who was assigned to work with students in the special and general education classrooms. Teachers

viewed this support as extremely critical to integrating students with disabilities into the regular classroom.

Jeantalked openly about the support that the principal has shown in providing teachers with paraprofessionals to help them integrate students with disabilities more effectively into the classroom.

He has spent a lot of money having so many instructional aides. There are about ten aides in the building which is progress. I remember when we had the same number of students and we only had three or four assistants. He has budgeted his money to support aides in the classroom and I think it's marvelous because without the assistant in the classroom we still cannot give children the one-on-one support. (Interview, 6/4/98, p. 6)

Risk taker. Careful analysis of the data by the researcher revealed that Conrad could be seen as a risk taker. He willingly shared some of the history of the ED program at the school. He also discussed some of the changes and mistakes she has made since becoming principal in regard to integrating students with emotional disabilities.

The ED program was moved into the building at the same time that I became the administrator. There was a lot of reservation on the teachers' part. Probably are reluctant to express that reservation because they were pretty competent teachers and they knew they shouldn't have any reservation about an ED kid, but deep down they really did. When I first came in I hired a very sharp young man. We only had one class of ED students and they were all fifth and sixth grade students. On the first day, I sort of mandated that we were going to start out the way we ought to be serving children. We start with the premise that children will be in the classroom and then pulled out or serviced in areas that they needed. It was a mistake because children came in and they left as school where they had a teacher and several of them had gone through the identification process, and then we put them back in with another general ed teacher without any specialized training. About all we had done was moved locations. We had an ED teacher there who was trying to operate in a lab setting, but rarely were there any opportunities to work with the students in regard to their ED issues and their behaviors that were occurring as a result of their disability. Within two or three months the children were sort of falling apart. We had to regroup, start pulling them out and basing them more in the ED room. And we went to more of a self-contained model. By that time teachers really felt put upon. They felt they were ill equipped to deal with these issues. Some reluctance to acknowledge their own lack of skills in dealing with certain kinds of children. So there was a lot of retrenchment on the part of the special ed. and the regular classroom teachers. (Interview, 9/21/98, p. 4)

Conrad also spoke about the community's reaction regarding the decision to have the ED program at the school, and how he attempted to resolve some of the problems that occurred.

With respect to the parents, there was a lot of cautious reservation about what are those kids going to do to my child's opportunity to learn in the classroom and be free of disruption. They didn't complain a lot to me, but it was obvious that there was some raised eyebrows from PTA parents when they were talking about that class and those kids. So we actually, as much as I didn't want to do it (sic). I didn't want the teacher to feel that they had to live with a situation that was untenable. So we did move back and move to a more self-contained model. Last year, it took 2 years, but we had enough trust built between the teachers and new ED teachers who didn't share the history. There was some common sharing. I mandated that the ED teachers would be required to go to the team meetings instead of separate and apart. They have to go to the fifth grade, sixth grade team meetings. I also had to mandate to the team that they would set the meetings at times when the LD and ED teachers could attend the meetings. The last thing that I did along that lines is when we got a fourth grade ED kid, we went to cross level team meetings where the special ed teachers, both the LD teacher and the ED teacher would be part of a six-member or eight-member team with regular ed teachers. (Interview, 9/21/98, p.5)

The assistant principal openly shared the experiences he had working for Conrad at two different schools in the district.

Throughout this school and another school he willingly encouraged new programs to come into his school. He brought in the preschool handicapped programs six new classes. This was daring since it was at a time when they were pretty new in the county. He was the first principal to have the ED program at this school. He had to do a lot of sharing and visionary work with the teachers to encourage them because some of them were probably a little reluctant because of the unknown. (Interview, 6/15/98, p.3)

The sixth-grade general ed teacher also talked about how Conrad had made major changes at the school since assuming the principalship. The school had operated on a middle school concept at the sixth-grade level for many years. Conrad felt that he needed to make a change to better accommodate the special education and Spanish immersion programs.

I think what he has done is he has allowed the teachers to have some input into the situation. But as an administrator, he also had the courage to make the decisions about what he thinks is best for our school. Recently, this past year, he eliminated the middle school concept at the sixth grade. And having been the teacher who had been here and initiated that concept which then became the model in the county, I frankly was resentful of that fact. However, he felt that we needed a change and as the administrator made the change.

Along with that he changed the setup of the immersion program. (Interview, 6/9/98, p.5)

Communication. There were many references made to the need for effective communication in facilitating a more inclusive environment at the school. All of the teachers who were interviewed felt that they had the opportunity to express themselves freely without fear of being ridiculed or reprimanded by the principal.

Since Conrad's arrival at the school, he has created many opportunities for open discussions. He appeared to want total honesty in regard to the teachers' experience with integration and other concerns they shared. Meg talked about his desire to have good communication with his staff.

He came into the school and the first thing he did before he became principal at the end of the previous year is he asked to have meetings with each of the grade levels. One of the things the teachers learned about him was that he was willing to work with teachers and listen to ideas. And there was no concept or idea that he would not listen to. (Interview, 6/9/98, p.2)

Meg also talked about the changes that had been made by Conrad since his arrival at the school.

Our principal does not believe in a lot of faculty meetings and prefers treating teachers more individually and not just a group of people. The information that is disseminated is provided in weekly newsletters. We avoid having too many faculty meetings. He also has made a change of having grade level teams that are two or three grades to a team as part of the school plan. Our goal is that our communication be on a more academic level. The administrators sit in on these meetings. The special education teachers and all other teachers who work with the students who are being discussed are asked to attend these meetings so the communication is clear. One thing we found in the past is that it was really important that everyone heard the same thing at the same time so if anything needed to be clarified or certain issues or time frames needed to be adjusted we could do it right then and that avoided a lot of problems that would happen later on. (Interview, 6/9/98, p.2)

Conrad talked in terms of the values system he was trying to communicate to the teachers in regard to his own expectations for the integration of special education students.

It's not about personality. It's just a values system. I had a staff developer give a whole speech on it. Whoever we have in the classroom are our students for that year. And that values system I want to communicate to all teachers. (Interview, 9/21/98, p.3)

Conrad also spoke about some of the ways she communicates with the staff to help ensure that integration of students with disabilities into the general education classes is successful.

The assistant principal is developing a new overview on the IDEA law. We are going to use that in service as another attempt to encourage the belief that inclusion is the way to serve all children. That is the direction we are going. So occasionally we use a whole staff meeting, but a lot of time for me it's moving up and down the hallway. I've just spent the last two hours going into different teachers' classrooms raising issues. At the same time, trying to address issues that I know the teachers may be having with a particular special education student. I really believe in a lot of informal conversations throughout the building and a lot of networking with different staff members about the issues. (Interview, 9/21/98, p.8)

Conrad indicated that parent and community support was crucial to the success of the inclusion model. Many school and district newsletters revealed that the parents are kept informed on a regular basis about student progress and school activities and events. The principal also works with the PTA and meets with parents as needed to help them better understand how special education students are being integrated into general education classrooms. In addition, the special education staff and school psychologist have held workshops on homework and disciplinary strategies to assist parents.

Masters schedule and planning time. Most of the teachers interviewed talked about how the Spanish immersion program adversely impacted the masters schedule. Although a few teachers felt that they had adequate time to collaborate with their co -teacher, the majority of them did not.

Jean, the fifth-grade teacher, discussed the masters schedule in terms of how it affected instruction this year.

I think the masters schedule has worked better this year. Our masters schedule revolves around the immersion program because there are so many children who have to go to a second teacher. So everything revolves around that. P.E., music, lunch schedules, and then within that context we have to figure out where our blocks of time are going to be. Language Arts and math are pretty much dictated by that immersion schedule. Then we have to fit those children into those blocks. So I actually think of it as a hindrance. We had much more flexibility in planning before we were impacted by the immersion schedule. (Interview, 6/4/98, p.6)

Meg also talked about her own experience planning with the fifth-sixth grade ED teacher this year.

On a formal basis we make a real effort to discuss the curriculum issues on a weekly basis. We do talk with each other every day, but it's all very informal as we're passing in the hall or coming up the steps. We don't even have the same lunch so there isn't even that available. (Interview, 6/9/98, p. 13)

Betsy, the first-second grade teacher, seemed to be quite pleased with the amount of planning time she had with the primary LD teacher this year.

I worked with the LD teacher at the beginning of the year to come up with times that would work for us. It seemed to have worked out. I know it's very difficult for her to schedule with all the teachers' schedules and everything that goes on. Every school that I have been out of, it's always an issue and I think it always will be. (Interview, 5/22/98, p. 8)

Conrad acknowledged that most of the teachers felt that they had insufficient planning time to effectively implement an inclusionary model at the school. He talked extensively about his efforts to resolve this problem.

Well, probably the first thing we should acknowledge if we are to be totally honest is that a lot of planning time is break time and that is legitimate too. It's okay to take a break. This year the teachers developed their own schedules so that they tried to have a common planning time. I think that all grade levels somewhere have a common planning time by using art, music, and P.E. But even then you are talking about thirty to forty-five minutes. That's not enough time. Creatively the best way to do that and we've done it periodically for specialists is use assistants to cover the classrooms. You are not getting the best instruction for the kids and we have to decide which one is the most important. In the best of all worlds there would be some trained teachers who would float and take classes at a common time. We're never going to have the best of all worlds. I hate for my teachers to hear this, but down deep there is enough time. There's enough time to do what you want to do. Sometimes you almost use it as almost an excuse for not doing what you know deep down deep you should be doing. I have had different groups come to me and say they need a little time together and can you arrange the schedule. Sure if and when they really want it. But at times they need a 15- or 20-minute break. We forget how intensive teaching is in the classroom. And sometimes if you have children for 2-1/2 to 3 hours and you are really focused in delivering instruction you don't need to sit down and talk with teachers to plan. You need time to recharge your own batteries. So I don't have an answer to it. I'm wide open, but without additional staff I don't know how to do it. (Interview, 9/21/98, p. 12)

Professional development. Staff development that supports the integration of special education students is an ongoing process at Robert E. Lee Elementary. Teachers and administrators agreed that the special education inservices and classes they have attended have

increased their ability to work more effectively with a wider range of student needs. The most recent special education related staff development activities at the school have consisted of information on making academic and behavioral accommodations for students with special needs, collaborative practices, special education laws and procedures, and using technology to help students in the classroom. These specific topics were chosen based on what the staff had indicated they wanted to learn. The inservices were usually held before school or on days when the children were not at school.

One special education teacher who was interviewed informally indicated that here had been a lot of district level staff development opportunities which were offered to help teachers and paraprofessionals learn how to work more effectively with special education students. However, teachers needed to be motivated and have the time to attend these training sessions as many were held after the school day was ended.

When asked about what type of inservice opportunities that had been provided either through the administration or other staff members, Conrad indicated that he tried to give teachers choices about choosing their own staff development activities.

I believe in using people who have more expertise than myself. I've always tried throughout the years in the schools where I've been a principal to provide inservice to the staff. But I suspect that some of my teachers are more skilled than I am. Case in point is that in the Fall our assistant principal, who has a strong background in special education, worked with our two school psychologists and special education staff of five teachers to develop an inservice to revisit not just some of the implications of how to manage the paper work related to special ed, but more about what it means to create classroom climates where all children feel they are being appropriately challenged. (Interview, 5/22/98, p.4)

Conrad also talked about his own training regarding integrating special education students into general education classes.

Most of my own classwork had to do more not with the philosophical implications of what it meant to include these students, but the legal requirements with respect to administering programs. I have had standard kinds of classes and inservices provided throughout the years in both school systems I have been in with respect to inclusion and integration. More with respect to the requirements of the law and what I would call a general underlying philosophy about why children belong and what it means to society to include these students with disabilities. (Interview, 5/22/98, p.4)

Adrienne, the assistant principal had attended many special education inservices within the county.

I've been in this county for eighty years. I've taken many classes for special education in the field of learning disabilities. Inclusion was fairly new when I arrived in this county, so I took classes and inservices on specific learning disabilities and new ideas in special ed. I also served on many committees at the Area Office in reassessing special education students. I've taken mainstreaming classes and inclusionary classes. I've done some work with IDEA. I attended the inservices that the LD teacher took with them so that I could be knowledgeable and they are with all the new rules coming out. (Interview, 5/15/98, p.4)

The primary LD teacher talked about how valuable the beginning teacher program was to her when she first came into the district.

I think I was fortunate when I came into the county we had a beginning teacher course that went for three years. They provided a mentor so I had someone who was in special ed a lot longer than I was and was able to help me feel out the environment and help me to learn my role as a special educator. (Interview, 9/18/98, p.3)

Betsy spoke about how she believed her opportunity to work so closely with the primary LD teacher had been an invaluable learning experience.

In working so closely with the LD teacher, she's helped me to find other ways to teach the kids and other ways to be successful. It's kind of on-the-job training. (Interview, 5/22/98, p.7)

Meg, the sixth grade teacher spoke about the kinds of inservices that had been provided at the school. She appeared to be very frustrated regarding her lack of sufficient training to work with ED students and shared some of the staff's concerns.

In terms of staff development training at the beginning of this year we had our own special education staff development training in terms of mainly how to present people for Screening. In addition to that, they also prepared some handouts and had some discussion in terms of dealing with the students in the classroom once they had been identified.... One of the concerns I think we had from the beginning when we found out (sic). We had for a number of years the learning disabled program. We had a self-contained, as well as a pull-out program. We've had various components of mainstreaming, inclusion, and so forth. But our ED program is only 2 years old. The training that we were given at the beginning was basically the teachers came over and said the students were ready to be mainstreamed. We would not notice a difference in the classroom. They talked about a few of the time out strategies and a few of the other things that could be used stating the common sense things. Behavior contracts, a few other things were discussed. It was about an hour-long inservice in which we had an opportunity to ask our questions. At

that time we asked when additional staff in services would be available since none of us had any additional training in working with ED students. It sounded as if we were going to get that OTJ training. We were very concerned about that. A few teachers had worked in other counties and other states and had worked with emotionally disturbed children and were concerned about the physical outbursts and so forth and how that would be handled. And to my knowledge there has not been any follow up in services in those areas. I can't speak for every grade level because perhaps at the lower level there has been something. But in terms of getting our questions answered from the special ed department, certainly. But as far as a formal in service or being sent somewhere, or someone come in, there has not been. (Interview, 6/98, pp. 20-21)

Meg also talked about the type of in service training she would like to receive at the school.

I think it's really hard to get a 4-year program into a 45-minute in service to tell me how to deal with special ed students. And it is a full program for certification. And even going back for recertification it's a number of hours and training. In terms of what teachers need in the classroom, it needs to be a practical approach. I think probably some suggestions for managing the planning between the special ed teacher and the regular ed teacher. . . . The original time we had our in service it was almost as if we were given instruction on classroom management for beginning teachers. These are all things as a classroom teacher you know. I need to know what's beyond that. I know how to do that. But when a kid throws a chair across the room what do I do. That type of thing. Or when you've said three times if you have a question raise your hand, and it's still not being done. There are different procedures that different special ed teachers follow. I think the important thing is what is he expected to do when he is with you. (Interview, 6/9/99, p. 21)

Jean, the fifth-grade general education teacher, also supported the belief that classroom teachers needed more county-wide training in order to work with students with special needs.

I have had some training with Judy Wood. And that was well worth the time. As far as the county training, the county has not really done a whole lot to train us to deal with all of these kids and I know that is a part of the frustration. That we haven't had that, but the children just come right to us. (Interview, 6/4/98, p. 4)

Conrad spoke about the kind of in service training that he would like his staff to have in the upcoming year.

I think I am halfway to where I would like to be. I would like my regular ed teachers and staff to have more training and again I'm referring to my ED kids. More training in management. If they had better skills in dealing with

children who are very difficult, confrontational, ways to deescalate confrontation they probably would be more comfortable. (Interview, 9/21/99, p.9)

Summary of Themes

Six themes emerged from the interviews, classroom observations, and documents reviewed that reflect how the principal was in working with the staff to integrate special education students. The first theme had to do with the school climate. The data collected by the researcher revealed the principal's overall positive attitude toward working with special education students in the general education classrooms. Although, most participants indicated that an inclusive model was only appropriate if it met satisfactorily the academic and social-emotional needs of the child, the principal maintained the high priority of inclusion. The administrators and many of the teachers at the school spoke about a family climate where high expectations were set for all students regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

A second theme that emerged was related to principal support. All of the teachers who participated in the study felt that the principals were extremely supportive of their efforts to integrate the students with special needs. Support was evidenced through adequate instructional materials, personnel, and training.

A third theme was related to the professional development opportunities for the staff which were provided at the school or through the district. Although most teachers viewed the in-service training related to working with special education students as helpful, many felt that additional training was needed to handle the behavioral concerns of the students with emotional disabilities. A fourth theme was related to communication at the school. The teachers felt that the principals encouraged dialogue between teachers and between the principals and the teachers. They indicated that they felt comfortable sharing any problems or concerns that may occur. All participants viewed good working relationships as critical to the success of inclusion. Another theme which emerged had to do with the importance of having adequate planning and a master schedule that allowed for integration to work successfully. The final theme that was evident from the data was that teachers viewed Conrad as a risk taker who was not afraid to make major changes at the school. He openly encouraged teachers to be involved in school decisions regarding curriculum, instructional planning, scheduling, and integrating students with special needs into the general education classrooms.

Bakersville Elementary

Community. Bakersville Elementary is located in a suburban community of a large metropolitan area. It is a very diverse, multi-ethnic middle class neighborhood that is within close proximity to two major highways. There are many historical sites and a large international airport located close by. The school is situated on several acres and was once owned by an important Civil War general. A new regional public library and a large secondary school are within walking distance of Bakersville.

The parents take an active part in their children's learning. A bell that stands at the front of the school contributes to the school's sense of community during special events and outdoor student council assemblies.

School. Bakersville Elementary is a kindergarten through sixth grade school with approximately 787 general education students and 34 special education self-contained students. Approximately 76% of the students are classified as Caucasian, 15% are Asian, 2% are Hispanic, and 2% are African American. The mobility rate of the students is about 11% a year. Approximately 5% of the children are eligible for free or reduced lunches. There are three different special education programs at the school. These include learning disabilities, autism, and mental retardation program. Many of the special education students with autism and mental retardation are bused in from other school attendance areas.

The school is a two-story red brick building that was built in 1986. There are 29 general education classrooms. The building also contains an administrative office, cafeteria, gymnasium, faculty lounge, library, several workrooms, two guidance rooms and eight special education rooms. The average class size in the primary grades is 24 students, and in the upper grades it is 28 students.

Staff. There are 29 general education teachers and 8 special education teachers in the school. The special education team consists of five learning disabilities teachers, one autism teacher, two teachers of the mildly mentally retarded, and one full-time and one half-time speech clinicians. There are two full-time P.E. teachers, two full-time music teachers, one reading specialist, and two full-time guidance counselors. Itinerant staff include an art teacher, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, a school psychologist, a social worker, and an emotional disabilities resource teacher. More than half of the teaching staff have a masters degree. Bakersville Elementary has had a fairly stable teaching staff over the past few years.

Business partnership. Bakersville Elementary has had a business partnership with a major corporation located near the school for six years. Through the school's mentor program, students develop relationships with several of the corporation's employees that promote personal and academic growth. Over half of the students have worked with the same mentor since the partnership began. The mentors also complement students' classroom instruction by sharing specific reading and math strategies with the students. Marlena, the school principal, received the Partners in Education award in September of 1997 for her involvement in the business partnership.

Participants. The administration and staff of Bakersville Elementary are all involved in integrating students with disabilities into general education classrooms in some capacity. However, for this study three general education teachers, three special education teachers and the principal were formally interviewed. The researcher also had informal conversations with two instructional assistants and several general and special education teachers at the school. In addition, several classroom observations were made where co-teaching or other integration practices were reviewed.

"Marlena," the principal. Marlena, the principal of Bakersville Elementary, has been in the field of education for 25 years. She began her career in another state initially as an elementary teacher and then taught secondary school. Later she became a central office administrator in the same district where she worked as a supervisor of special education programs. She then moved to the study district where she has been working for the past 21 years. She has held a variety of positions including being a preschool teacher, a supervisor of the preschool program as a central administrator, and principal of a center for students with moderate to severe disabilities. She was also the director of special education at both the area and central office level and acting area superintendent before coming to the principalship of Bakersville Elementary.

Marlena is a knowledgeable and extremely personable administrator. She is highly respected by her own staff and many other educators in the district. She spoke extensively about her special education background and her experience with special education procedures and legal issues. Marlena was frequently observed conversing with the staff and students at the school. She takes a very active role in attending the school plant team, grade-level team meetings, Local Screening/Child Study discussions, and IEP conferences. She was often seen visiting classrooms and student-related activities.

"Lee," fourth-grade general education teacher. Lee teaches a fourth-grade general education classroom. She has a master's degree in general and special education. She has worked with Marlena since beginning her teaching career 2 years ago. Lee talked candidly about her initial interview with her. She explained that during their discussions she expressed a strong belief that special education students should be taught in the general education classroom with special education assistance as needed. She indicated that her teaching philosophy was similar to her principal's, so she felt it was a good match for her to accept a position at the school in general education rather than special ed.

Lee spends the majority of her school day working with Cindy, the fourth-grade learning disabilities teacher in a co-teaching model. Half of the 24 students in her class have been identified as needing LD services. Some of these students also receive their language arts instruction in a pull-out resource room model. Lee spoke positively about her experience with co-teaching.

It kind of goes with my philosophy of teaching. I adapt instruction based on every child's needs so whether it's a student identified with special needs or a student at risk, or it's a student who is not getting long division that day, I make sure to adapt the instruction to make sure that it meets the children where they are ready to learn. In formal assessment it is constant to make sure that we are teaching at a level that children are ready to receive their instruction. So it's a lot of co-planning, co-teaching with my special ed counterpart and just meeting the kids where they are. (Interview, 5/12/98, p. 2)

Lee and Cindy were observed to have a very professional relationship in the classroom. Although they shared most of the teaching and instructional planning responsibilities, Lee indicated that she usually taught the students during the language arts period in a whole group as many of the LD students were pulled out to the resource room during that time. Cindy usually taught the math lessons while Lee circulated to ensure that the students were understanding the concepts being taught. All of the children appeared to be equally comfortable asking both teachers when they had questions.

Lee spoke about the positive aspects of integrating special education students many times. She stated that she enjoys working with all types of students. She indicated that her students have been very accepting of individual differences. Lee also spoke about the need of general and special education teachers to know they were supported. She indicated that Marlena has been very supportive of her effort to integrate so many LD students into her classroom and giving her the opportunity to work with Cindy again for another school year. She said that she was fortunate to have such good rapport with her co-teacher and believes that working as a team is essential for the success of the inclusion model.

"Lauren," general education teacher. Lauren teaches fifth grade at Bakersville Elementary. This was her fifteenth year teaching and her twelfth year at the school. Lauren has been involved with integrating special education students into her classroom for 8 years. She has had experience working with students with learning disabilities, multiple disabilities, and children categorized as non-categorical.

Lauren spoke about her experience with integrating students with disabilities this year in very positive terms.

I consider myself a team member because the special education teacher and I work as a team. We plan together. We work on IEPs together. I think my role is to provide an environment which is good for both special and regular ed and make appropriate adaptations that need to be made for all students.
(Interview, 5/11/98, p. 1)

Lauren also spoke candidly about the challenges that come from working with students with special needs in a classroom with so many students. However, she frequently cited examples of how much support she has received from the principal and other staff members. She explained that:

I believe that our principal takes an active role in helping all students be included in every possible way. She is very visible to them. She is there every morning and every evening when they leave. She is in the cafeteria a lot.
(Interview, 5/11/98, p. 6)

"Pam," general education teacher. Pam is a sixth-grade teacher who has taught elementary school for 31 years. This was her twenty-seventh year working in the study district

and here leventh year at Bakersville. Eleven of her 28 students this year receive learning disabilities services.

Pam is a very personable, highly enthusiastic individual. She appeared to be very pleased to share her experiences about teaching students with disabilities. She explained:

I came into the county before there was even special education or at least learning disabilities. I much prefer the way we're doing it now with inclusion then when they were pulled out as a resource. I found that particularly with sixth-grade students they're going to be affected being pulled out of the classroom. And I think the way we are doing it now is much superior even with some of them going out for language arts because it's their class. They're not missing anything in here. With the old way, they would miss what was going on and they would sometimes have the wrong curriculum. I much prefer this method to how we did it before. (Interview, 5/25/98, p.3)

To observe Pam and her special education counterpart to see two dedicated professionals at work. The two teachers provide a warm and supportive environment which allows their students the opportunity to maximize their learning potential.

Pam spoke very positively about her co-teaching experience. She attributes the successful working relationship to a similar teaching philosophy about children.

Pam gave the impression that she really enjoyed her career as a teacher. She talked several times about how much she would miss working with the children when she retires next year.

"Cindy," special education teacher. Cindy teaches fourth-grade learning disabilities students in a co-teaching model and is the chairperson of the Local Screening/Child Study Committee. She began her teaching in another state working with students with emotional disabilities for 2 years. She then worked with mentally retarded children for a number of years. Cindy interrupted her teaching career to raise her children for an extended period of time. She began teaching in the study district approximately 10 years ago. Initially, Cindy worked with students with mental retardation and then went back to school to become certified in learning disabilities. She has been teaching LD students for the past 8 years.

Cindy spoke about how essential it was to have good collaboration and communication if students with disabilities were going to be successfully integrated into the general education classrooms.

I think we are pretty fortunate here. I think communication via the principal is pretty good. Certainly better than it is at many, many schools. And we are fortunate because we have a principal who knows a lot about special education and what is important. (Interview, 5/28/98, p.1)

"Beverly," special education teacher. Beverly teaches 15 fourth- and fifth-grade students who have learning disabilities or are mildly mentally retarded. This was her third year at Bakersville Elementary and in the study district. She has a master's degree in learning disabilities and is currently taking classes to be certified to teach students with mental retardation. She explained that one of the reasons she was motivated to teach students with disabilities was that she has a brother who is mentally retarded.

Beverly strongly believes that all children regardless of the severity of their disabilities should be integrated for a portion of their school day. She stated that:

What we are doing is preparing them for the world of work. If you can't get along with the person you are sitting next to, you're not going to hold down a job. So I think it's definitely important, even if it's just for lunch. (Interview, 5/11/98, p. 7)

Beverly was observed to be very structured and caring with her students. She indicated that she really enjoys working with the general education teachers she has been co-teaching with this year.

I'm very lucky. I make it a point of keeping my general education teachers happy. I work with two exceptional women. Last year was the first time for one of them and she felt very frustrated at the end. I was afraid that I was going to lose her. She just felt that she wasn't doing everything she could, but she was. She is a fabulous teacher. (Interview, 5/11/98, p. 3)

Beverly frequently commented how fortunate the staff was to have Marlena as their principal. She indicated that the principal has provided the vision for inclusion to occur.

"Carrie," special education teacher. Carrie teaches 11 sixth-grade students who have learning disabilities. She has been a teacher for 28 years. Twenty-four of these years have been in the study district teaching general and special education. She has taught both intermediate and elementary age students.

Carrie spoke about how important it was that the general education teachers know that they have the support they need from the principal and special ed staff to integrate students with disabilities into their classrooms.

I think they need to know that we are going to be their support system. I think they are feeling very hurried, very stressed with the idea of all different types of children coming into their classroom. Some of the MR children are mainstreamed into one of the sixth-grade classes. When I have walked into that class one of these children will often blurt my name out loud, which is highly inappropriate. The teacher and I talk to the child and are very patient with him. The children here are particularly receptive to having these children in their classes. I think when they see a child who does have a problem they

are very helpful. I really think it's like being in a cocoon here. I've been at several schools. And not every school has children who will treat students with disabilities so well. (Interview, 5/25/98, p.5)

Carrie also spoke about how beneficial it has been having a principal with a special education background who is sensitive to the needs of her students and staff.

"Rachel," special education teacher. Rachel teaches thirteen students who are mildly mentally retarded. She has taught for a total of 16 years. Fourteen of these years have been in this school district. She taught the hearing impaired children for 6 years and then stayed home for 11 years to care for her children. She has worked as an MR teacher at the school for 6 years. She has a master's degree in deaf-blind multi-handicapped.

Rachel spoke extensively about how the new integration model had initially begun and the changes that have occurred since its implementation.

Well, last spring, we were asked if we would like to be part of this. That could have been in the winter, but maybe March or April of last year, we were asked if we were interested in being part of this model. And we were, so we had knowledge ahead of time that it was coming and we actually had an informal social at someone's house, a get-together with the special ed resource teacher in the summer. So we had kind of a heads up what was going to be coming. However, some of the structure that was actually in place for this year had been set up before the resource teacher came on board. So some things were in place, but we had a lot of meetings at the beginning of the year with the resource teacher, with each other to coordinate things. Talk about our philosophy. What was it going to be? Talk about the work plan to be accomplished and we've gone back to those and said, "oh, yeah, this is what we hope to accomplish." But over the course of the year we have continued to have meetings just to keep us informed of what's going on. As I said this year, unlike I think next year, we were mostly working with what we had in place, but trying to maybe shape it to serve the needs of the kids in what ways we could. And I think the resource teacher and the principal were instrumental in facilitating changes, offering changes, and things like that. (Interview, 5/28/98, p.2)

Rachel also spoke candidly about her own philosophy of education and the high expectations she has set for her special education students.

I think the way I view special ed dovetails right in with my philosophy of education in general. I really think that all children are special. All children can learn, and that the child needs to drive the program. And we have to be aware of each child. And this gets a lot of lip service. We indeed need to be aware of every child's learning style and hold very high expectations for them. ... And also the parents of the children I've worked with for the past six years

continuetogroommeinthatdirectionthatexpectationsneedtobehighand thatashighasyousettheexpectationsyouwillcontinuetoworkwiththe parentsandwiththechildrentomeetthosegoals.(Interview,5/28/98,p.7)

Other participants. Thereseacheralsohadseveralinformalconversationswithother staffat Bakersvilleduringthestudyperiod.Theseindividualsincludedtheguidancecounselor, twospecialeducationinstructionalaides,theautismteacher,andtwoclassroomteachers.Allof theparticipantsappearedtobeextremelycomfortableworkingattheschool.Theywereallvery willingtosharetheirexperiencesandweregenerouswiththeamountoftimetheyspentengaged inconversationwiththeresearcher.Oneoftheparaprofessionalswhoworkedwiththesixth- gradestudentswithmentalretardationseemedparticularlypleasedwithhowwellthesestudents hadbeenacceptedbythegeneraleducationteachersandstudents.

Ithinkthatthecclimateatthisschoolisverypositiveforintegratingspecial educatingstudentsandIcreditourprincipalforherhardworkintryingto preparethestaffforthechangesthathaveoccurred.(Interview,5/28/98,p.1)

School climate. Severalteachersspokeaboutthefamilyatmosphereattheschool. Whenspeakingwiththestaff,itwasobviousthateveryonecaredaboutallofthestudents.The teachersusedsuchwordssuchas"we,""us,""they,"and"everyone"whendescribingtheir relationshipswiththestudentsattheschool.Grade-levelteacherssharedmanyoftheteaching responsibilities.Thestaffseemedcomfortablesharingteachingstrategiesandmaterials.Special educationteacherswereplacedonateamandwereassignedtoclasses thatcontainedspecial educationstudentstoshareintheteachingresponsibilities.

Pam,thesixth-gradeteacher,talkedabouttheschoolclimateinaverypositivemanner.

Well,Ithinkwehaveagreatstaff.We'vehadastafffromthebeginning thatworkswelltogether.Thatshareswitheachother.Nobodyseemstofeel thatI'mgreat.Idon'twantanyoneusingmystuff,orstealingmythunderor whatever.PeoplehavebeenverycooperativeinworkingtogetherandIthink theyareopentonewideasandsoforththatcomein(Interview,5/23/98,p.1)

Rachel,theteacherwhotaughtstudentswhoweremildlymentallyretarded,described theschoolclimateasitrelatedtointegratingthesechildrenintothegeneraleducation classrooms.

Therehasdefinitelybeenanevolutionduringthe6yearsIhavebeenhere. AndintalkingabouttheMRpopulationovertheyearswehavegottenthem moreandmoreincludedinthegeneral edpopulation.Nowtheyallbegin theirdayinthegeneral edpopulation.Nowtheyallbegintheredaytherein whatwecall thehomeroom.Anditjustgoeswithoutsayingthatunless there isaveryspecialcaseofcoursethey'llbeinthegeneral edforthingslike musicand P.E.,lunch,recess,assemblies,andfieldtrips.AndwhatIfindis everyyearwejustkeepexploringwhatwe'redoingandlookingforwaysfor

all children, but specifically we're talking about the MR kids, just to have more access to the general education curriculum. And next year, we are looking for I think what we see as the ultimate change where we really want all special ed children to be considered the student of a general ed teacher and the special ed teachers will be team partners and supporters. But we really want the children to have an identity with a grade level general ed teacher. (Interview, 5/28/98, p. 1)

The principal's spoken and written words often reflected her own personal philosophy for educating children. She spoke frequently about how important it was to hold high expectations for all students and to have a dedicated staff that believed all children belonged.

I believe we need to be committed to all children whether they are special education, ESL, students from economically deprived backgrounds, or general education students who are our brightest students. And we have all of those children. We have a commitment to educating all children, but with a sense of building a team that cares about all our children. We look at the individual needs of students as opposed to instruction down the middle. Our staff is working at diversifying instruction. And that is a key element there. We are learning new strategies that all teachers need in order to deliver instruction to a very diverse population. (Interview, 6/15/98, p. 4)

Marlene spoke about the current school climate in regard to integrating special education students in very favorable terms.

I think we have an excellent climate both without general and special education teams. We are noted for our collaboration at this school. Our general education teachers have been very receptive over the years. I've been here five years and I have never gone to a teacher without having them agree to work with a special ed teacher and with a special ed student in their classroom. Many of the teachers volunteer again each year. We have discussions about who's turn it is because they all want to do it. I do think there is a certain amount of staff development that is always required and a sense of trust that we will be able to work together. (Interview, 6/15/98, p. 1)

When the teachers were asked about their perception of the principal's belief in integrating special education students into the general education classrooms, they all spoke positively about their involvement in the process. They perceived the principal's role as wanting only the very best for children and believing the best environment to be in the general education classroom to the maximum extent that will allow for each student's success. Several of the teachers commented about how the principal's belief had a great effect on the school's climate and instruction. One of the general education teachers who was interviewed informally stated that:

I think that our principal's strong belief that children are entitled to be educated in the regular class to the maximum extent possible that allows them to be successful has led to a very good working relationship among the teachers at each grade level. Without our principal's involvement there would be more separatism and not as much teamwork or feeling of togetherness. (Interview, 5/29/99, p. 1)

Lauren, the fifth-grade general education teacher, indicated that Marlena has been very influential in encouraging all students and staff to reach their highest potential.

When I first had LD students in the classroom they were simply sent out at certain times, did whatever they did with the resource teacher and came back in. There was really no collaboration with the special education teacher whatsoever. Now it's more of a team effort and we try and work on similar things. I would say it has been a growth experience for me because I am now a team member. In the past I didn't make certain adaptations which I think has made me a better teacher. I think our principal has been successful in her endeavor to educate the staff about the positive benefits of integrating special education students because of the strong supports she has provided us and with regular and special ed teachers supporting each other. (Interview, 5/11/98, p. 4)

Carrie, the sixth-grade LD teacher, also talked about Marlena's influence in providing a positive school climate.

One of the things I've noticed about this school is that you never hear teachers raising their voices like I've heard in other schools. I feel our principal has set high expectations for the children and staff. Children are expected to remove their hats when they enter the building. We treat each other like we want to be treated. If we hear someone saying something unkind or saying something that is not appropriate. We have a school-wide discipline plan which we have implemented for all children, special or general. (Interview, 5/25/98, p. 10)

Staff Support. The principal's support of the staff was evident in a number of ways. The faculty and principal identified support as providing instructional materials, hiring additional personnel when needed, providing in-service training and information on collaborative practices and ways to effectively integrate special education students, and willingness of the administrator to listen to any concerns or school-related problems that may arise.

Marlena talked openly about her role in helping teachers implement a more inclusionary environment at the school.

I think it goes to being able to listen to what they are experiencing. What their successes are and what their problems are. Doing that problem solving on a very nitty-gritty level. Okay we have Emily in this class and these are the

problems she has, this is the level of support you feel she needs. How do we solve that? What is realistic? What is ideal versus what is appropriate? What are the resources we are able to deliver? I think the majority of times there are problems that I have to bring an understanding to the staff that we have limited resources. It may be ideal to have a special ed teacher with a special ed student a certain amount of time as perceived by the general ed teacher, but that may not be realistic and may not be appropriate either. So I believe that working out those problems on a very individual level based on the students' needs is very important. (Interview, 6/15/98, p.9)

One of the special education teachers described the supports she had received from Marlena in terms of her leadership style.

I think she is very proactive. I think she also in a private way has the ability to listen to you and let you vent without overreacting to what your feelings may be. I think she has a very good grasp. A lot of it because of her vast experience in special education in this county. (Interview, 5/27/98, p.6)

The autism teacher described the supports she had received from the principal in terms of her students' needs.

I had a child in my room last year who was eventually diagnosed as psychotic. He was really in the wrong placement. I felt very comfortable talking with the principal about this situation because we had an open relationship. She was very instrumental in getting the child the help he needed. She is always very supportive and knows her teachers well. She has a good feel for what is the best place for the kids. (Interview, 6/1/98, p.7)

Resources. All of the teachers interviewed believed that they had a adequate resource materials. Instructional materials were observed to be plentiful in the classrooms and the multimedia center. Many of the shelves were filled with a wide assortment of books, film strips, videos, visual aids, and educational games.

Carrie, one of the special ed teachers, seemed particularly grateful for the principal's generosity in providing the requested materials to support the curriculum. She indicated that

We've never had any problem with materials. We have a special ed and regular ed order. When we order materials we need no one puts a limit on it. We have money from the area office and in addition we have money to order from the general education allowance. I think when people have wanted some additional materials from the principal she has been very receptive (Interview, 5/25/98, p.8)

Other teacher stalked about the high priority that the principal places on expanding the integration and application of technology. The fourth-grade

general education teacher stated it is really nice to have so many computers in the room that the students can use. I think that given the diversified needs of the children I find that it is very helpful. The special ed students seem to really enjoy working on the computers. (Interview, 5/12/98, p. 10)

Staff involvement in decision making. It was apparent from all of the interviews and observations at the school that the principal felt it extremely important for the staff to be actively involved in making school decisions. Marlena was observed on several occasions speaking with individual teachers or the entire faculty about school related issues. The staff was given many opportunities to discuss the curriculum, instructional planning, scheduling, and class size in an endeavor to successfully integrate special education students into the general education classrooms.

When the principal was asked about her leadership style in relation to making important decisions she explained

I believe in a collaborative process. I believe the principal has to model what you are asking your staff to do. Celebration and looking at our successes are so important. My style is of setting the stage as an arranger. I like to make sure that we have the knowledge and the information to make good decisions about children. That we allow individuals to express not only what they believe, but also what their concerns are, and we then deal with those issues in terms of what their needs are. (Interview, 6/15/98, p. 3)

Several of the teachers indicated that they believed they had a adequate opportunity to express their ideas or concerns about school matters. Some of them talked about the gradual changes Marlena had made when she became the school principal. They indicated that she always involved the staff in the decision making process when changes had to be made. Carrie, the sixth-grade LD teacher indicated that

I don't think there were significant changes until the past couple of years. The first year I think she was very wise in just kind of flying low. She'd never been a principal before and I think she had a lot to learn and she was willing to learn and change. She didn't come in with the attitude that I'm here now and we have to do it my way. She respected what we were doing. And I do think we were much further along than some other schools in doing this. One of the things she did when one of the members of our special ed team would leave, she would invite all of us to sit in on the interviews and give our opinions. She would be the ultimate person, but we would give what points we would think were good and we could ask questions. You really felt that you were part of the decision making. Somebody wasn't just thrown at you. (Interview, 5/25/98, pp. 4-5)

Lauren indicated that she has always felt comfortable voicing her opinions about how the special education inclusion model at the school is working.

Our principal is an extremely strong leader who involves her staff in decisions. It's not a dictatorship by any means. It's very democratic. She might have suggestions and we get her input. She's extremely supportive of the special ed program. Actually of all of the programs at the school. She tries to be supportive of everyone equally. (Interview, 5/11/98, p.2)

Cindy also cited an example of how the principal allowed her to be involved in selecting the teacher who she would team with this year. She explained how she had told Marlena that she wanted to co-teach with the same general ed teacher because she felt they had a good working relationship.

I went and gave my reasons for that and asked if Marlena would consider it. She made it happen. Sometimes principals have their mind set as to who they want you to work with. I think our principal was able to give us some freedom in making decisions and knowing what would work best for the kids. (Interview, 5/28/98, p.3)

Masters schedule and planning. The principal and many of the teachers interviewed discussed the school schedule and its importance to sound instruction. One of the teachers who was on the school plan committee spoke about how much time and effort went into making those decisions.

Rachel, the MR teacher, talked openly about the lack of planning time.

I don't have enough planning time. And that is something we are working toward changing. Just the way things happened with only having two MR teachers, close to twenty children and I have the most of them. Having the number of children in four grade levels for me to meet with my IA, the other IA, four grade levels, my special ed team. It's close to impossible. And that has been an area that the resource teacher and the principal know that for me anyway I certainly for the sake of the children, it needs to be changed. I think we made it work, but it can be so much better. (Interview, 5/28/98, p. 4)

Lee, the fourth-grade representative on the school plan committee, spoke about the changes in the schedule that were needed.

We are really working to change our scheduling. Particularly how it affects our special education students. In the past, our masters schedule has been driven by the specialists. As our principal said at our last staff meeting, instruction comes first. (Interview, 5/12/98, p.4)

The principal spoke at length about how she hoped to change the masters schedule to allow for better integration of students with disabilities into the general education classrooms.

This summer we are taking a look at our masters schedule and address the flexible grouping and organizing for learning objective in our school plan. We are going to pilot a new program this year with first grade, fourth grade, and fifth grade. Teams will be coming in this summer to look at it. Number one we've placed all our students irrespective of their disability in a general education classroom with accommodations for a learning lab that is needed, both for students who need an alternative reading program, possibly a math program and small group support. Small group support can be provided in the classroom or outside the classroom with an integrated setting not just special education students, but other students who may need that support so we are looking at a cross grade level developing flexible groupings based that are not just based on the students in one teacher's class, but may be based across all five classes with the resource persons, a special education or specialist of some sort also taking a group. So we are looking at flexible grouping based on student needs. To give you an example, in language arts we might have one teacher working with a group of students who needed some very basic skill building at a very novice level or emergent level, and another teacher grouping students for a period of time at another extreme, where they can work independently. We can bring in our special education teacher to either support our general education teachers or to do a group of their own based on the assessment of the students' needs. We will be looking at that in language arts and math primarily at first grade, fourth grade, and fifth grade. Working with our specialist to adjust the masters schedule, to look at the success of this particular initiative, then we will be evaluating it. A critical piece of that is evaluation. Our other staff members do recognize that it may mean changes for them in terms of their masters schedule, or their planning time, or what they have experienced in the past. So we will see how it goes. (Interview, 6/15/98, p.9)

Communication. The teachers and administrator indicated that communicating information regarding integrating special education students occurred through the work of the school plan committee, various committees of teachers, grade level teams, building and district in-services, and the principal's newsletters. The staff also discussed inclusion on an informal basis in the faculty lounge and on their own time.

The principals spoke about their role in the initiation and implementation phase of the special education integration model at the school.

Having been selected as one of the principals involved in the special education integration model I first talked with the special education teachers. They became more knowledgeable about what in general were the goals of this model. We looked at how that fit with our own philosophy and then used that philosophy to build on. We then talked with general education teachers who were already working with special education students and gave them some information. In the course of the year we did a needs assessment with

our general education teachers asking them what they would like to know and what we could do for them. (Interview, 6/15/98, p.5)

One general education teacher explained how inclusive practices were recurrently communicated to the staff.

Most of the communication comes through our monthly staff meeting. Though we also have our weekly staff notes on Friday that disseminates a lot of information. I know the grade level teams which include the special education teachers meet weekly. Sometimes we meet more when it is needed. The special education team meets weekly as well. I think my relationship with my teammates is pretty good, so we keep each other informed. (Interview, 5/25/98, p.5)

When the principal was asked about her means of communicating with the staff, she spoke primarily in terms of the school meetings she attended and the weekly newsletter that she has written to keep them informed about important educational concerns. In regard to integrating special education students into the general education classrooms, she remarked that:

I think with the exception of one meeting this year I have attended all of the Local Screening committee meetings. It is a commitment that I feel to special education and to my faculty. We have a large Local Screening Committee. Many of our general education teachers attend. Sometimes at double grade level to consider the needs of students and to provide information. Certainly my role is being somewhat of a PR person. Trying to pick up, make parents feel comfortable, encourage staff to contribute when appropriate, discourage staff when we are going on too long of a time and trying to move the meeting on because we are on a tight schedule and we want to make sure we do meet expectations for their time. So it's one of a facilitator. Although I have an excellent chair of the Local Screening Committee who takes the lead. In facilitating myself a kind of behind the scenes supporter and facilitator. (Interview, 6/15/98, p.6)

Professional development. The faculty has been involved in a variety of professional development activities. These include attending school and district level inservices, taking graduate level classes having to do with inclusive practices and collaboration, and visiting schools that have model inclusionary programs. The teachers are also involved in coordinating and presenting special education workshops at the school based on the results of an annual needs assessment which was developed by the special ed team.

When asked about what training had been provided for teachers in regard to preparing them for a more inclusionary environment the principal explained that we continue to look at ways to adapt instruction.

Waystoorganizeforlearningforourspecialeducationstudentstoprovide
themacontinuumofserviceswhiletheyareincludedintheregulareducation
activitiesandsettingssotheyareceivingthespecializedinstructionthey
need.Our inserviceshavefocusedonlearningstrategiesformeeting
individualstudents'needsirrespectiveoftheirdisability.Weavedonethings
aboutlearningaboutthevariousdisabilities,lookingparticularlyatreading staff
andthealternativereadingprograms.Ourdistrictdoesagreatdealwith
developmentandwecertainlychampiontheefforts.I'vebeeninvolvedin
thoseatthecentrallevel.Iencouragemystaffbothgeneralandspecial.
We'rerepairingpeopletogethertotakeadvantageofcountyofferingsandwhat
wealsodointermsofneedsassessmentthereandthenofferingspecificareas
ofinstruction.(Interview,6/15/98 ,p.3)

Oneofthespecialeducationteacherswhowasinterviewedinformallytalkedaboutthe
needsassessmentwhichwassigniventothestaffandthevarietyofprofessionaldevelopment
opportunitieshatwereavailable.Sheexplainedthat

Wehadavarietyofinterestingprogramsthisyear.Wehadsomeonecomein
totalkabout inclusionarypractices.Wedidalotofdemonstrationteaching.
Thatwasreallythepremiseforallfour inservicesbecauseourteachershad
gonetoconferencesandtheywantedtoseesomeonedoingit.Sowehad
someonecomeinandshowusreadingstrategiesandhowtoteachdiverse
learnerswithintheregularclassroom.Wealsohadan inserviceonhowto
modifylessonssothatyoucanteachalessontoawholegroup.(Interview,
5/22/98,p.1)

Thefourth-gradeLDteacheralsospokepositivelyaboutsomeoftheopportunities
thestaffhadhadthisyeartovisitaninclusiveschoolinaneighboringdistrict.

Wehavehadanopportunityforseveralstaffmemberstogoto Aldrich.Idid
notsignupforthatbecauseIhadalreadyvisited Aldrichaspartofagraduate
classIhadtakenandIjustfeltthatsomeoneelsesouldhaveanopportunity
togo.Yetthatwasanotheropportunitytovisitthatschool.Thereisalwaysan
opportunityifyouwanttogotoanotherschoolthatyou'veheardabouta
particularprogram.Again,ifyouhearaboutsomethinggoodatthisschool
andyouwanttocheckitout,that'susuallysomethingthatcanbeworkedout.
(Interview,5/28/98,p.7)

Thefifth-gradegeneraleducationteachertalkedaboutthe inservicedaysthestaffhad
receivedaspartofthefundingforthespecialeducationintegrationmodel.

Withthespecialmodelwehavehadmoredaysallocatedtouseforsub
coveragesowe'vehadquiteafew inservices.Mostoftheworkshopswedid
weremaybetwohourslongduringthedaysoitwasn'textremelydisruptive.
Justenoughtogettheinformationorwhetourappetite.Oneof the

workshops was on multiple intelligence. We have had Judy Wood come out and talk about diversifying education. Another time the special ed teacher and I requested to go to a computer technology workshop on integrating more computers with special ed students. Our principal let us go as a team because she thought it was important. (Interview, 5/11/98, p.7)

Summary of themes. A total of six different themes emerged from the data which was collected through interviews, observations, and a review of school documents.

The first theme had to do with a positive school climate. The principal and many of the teachers interviewed reported feeling ownership for all of the students in the school. Teachers spoke about setting high expectations for all students and staff members. Each individual was encouraged to reach their highest potential. A feeling of mutual respect was seen in the way that the principal, teachers, and students related to one another. General education students were observed helping children with special needs in the regular education classrooms.

The second theme of principal support was exhibited in a number of ways. Teachers talked about the abundance of instructional materials and computers they had access to at the school. They also spoke about the principal's willingness to seek additional staff when needed to support the inclusion model and her excellent problem-solving skills.

A third theme that emerged from the data was the principal's leadership style in regard to making decisions. Teachers were given many opportunities to participate in the decision-making process regarding curriculum planning, scheduling, and class size in an effort to integrate special education students successfully into the general education classrooms.

A fourth theme had to do with the master schedule and its importance to sound instruction. All of the teachers interviewed felt that the school schedule needed to be changed to provide for more flexible instructional groupings and to give them more time to plan for the needs of all students in a more inclusive setting. A fifth theme which emerged as critical to the success of the integration model was open communication among all staff members. All of the teachers involved in the study indicated that they had opportunities to participate in many discussions regarding inclusion of special education students in regular education classes at faculty meetings, grade level team meetings, and individual conversations with the principal or other teachers. The principal was viewed by the teachers interviewed as a leader who did an excellent job in communicating her vision of working with students in an inclusive school environment. A final theme that emerged was related to the professional development opportunities that the principal and staff had participated in regard to collaborative and inclusive practices for working with students in an inclusive setting. Staff members indicated that they had been involved in a variety of in-service training at the school and district level. The teachers were also involved in coordinating and presenting their own staff development workshops.

Collinwood Elementary School

Community. Collinwood Elementary is located in an established suburban community that is easily accessible to all the cultural and recreational opportunities of a progressive metropolitan city. The school serves an ethnically diverse community. The neighborhood includes moderate sized single family homes, apartments, and townhouses. A busy interstate, an industrial park, and the Southern Railroad serve as the eastern and northern boundaries. The public library is located approximately two miles from the school. There are several mid to large sized shopping centers located to the east and west. There is also a county park nearby.

Many of Collinwood's students come from working-class homes where English is their second language. Most of the students live in the neighborhood. However, the majority of the students in the autism program are bused in from other school attendance areas. There are also some students who come from different areas of the district to attend the School Age Child Care (SACC) program. Despite the diversity, Collinwood is perceived to be a place where children from different ethnic and social backgrounds enjoy a feeling of acceptance and work well together.

There are a variety of special programs at the school including English as a Second Language (ESL), Step Up Language Arts (SULA), Reading Recovery, a reduced ratio program in first grade, and services for students who require special education.

The PTA works very closely with the school faculty to do everything possible to keep the standards of achievement high. Although many parents work more than one job, there are many volunteers in the school and there usually is a good parent turnout for classroom related activities or school wide functions. They include reading and computer activities, curriculum meetings, and cultural art events. The school's International Night is a long standing tradition in the community.

School. Collinwood Elementary was built in 1957. It is a traditional two-story red brick building with self-contained classrooms. The school has been renovated several times over the years. In the 1960s, two major additions were added to the building. A separate wing was built onto the school which included several classrooms and a pod area. A large gymnasium was also built at the other end of the school at that time. A new administrative office was added and several classrooms were renovated in 1993-1994. The classrooms, hallways, and exterior of the building was observed to be well maintained. The school has a fenced in ball field and two separate playing areas with a jungle gym for the students.

The main floor of the school contains an administrative office, cafeteria, gymnasium, second and third grade classrooms, a reading resource room, and a fourth-grade special education room. A set of stairs near the main office lead to the library and several other primary and special education classrooms. There is an elevator near the office which gives all students and staff full access to all areas of the building. The area surrounding the pod contains two kindergarten, three English As A Second Language (ESL) and one Title I Step Up Language Arts (SULA) classrooms. The fourth, fifth, and sixth grade classrooms, as well as the counselor's office, is located on the second floor.

Collinwood Elementary is one of the smallest schools in the district. It has 415 general education students in kindergarten through sixth grade. Approximately 34% of the students are categorized as Caucasian, 11% are African American, 26% Hispanic, 26% are Asian, and 1% are multiracial. The mobility rate of the students last year was 21%.

There are 18 general education classrooms which include two kindergarten classes, four first-grade classes, three classes each of second and third graders, and two classes of fifth and sixth graders. First-grade students attend classes in which fewer students are assigned to each teacher, allowing them the opportunity to receive a strong foundation as they begin their formal education. The fifth and sixth grades support the middle school model, and students change classes for a variety of subjects.

Special education services are designed to meet the needs of each individual student, combining general education resources with services provided in a learning lab. The school has a learning disabilities and autism program. There are approximately 21 LD self-contained students and 44 LD resource students. There are a total of 17 students with autism who receive more than 50% of their instruction in a special education classroom and three students with autism who receive a resource level of support.

Collinwood also has three ESL and two Title I classes. The presence of the ESL program has had a major impact upon the school. There are 80 students this year who began the year with no oral English language ability. Many of them ride buses from neighboring school boundary areas to participate in the ESL program. The entire school's master schedule is organized to accommodate the ESL students so that they may participate in physical education, music, art, math, science, and social studies with other children at their grade level.

Staff. There are 18 general education teachers and eight special education teachers at the school. The special education team consists of four LD teachers, three autism teachers, and one full-time speech and language clinician. There are also three general education instructional assistants and five special education assistants. In addition, there are three ESL teachers and two Title I teachers. Collinwood Elementary also has a full-time counselor, a music teacher, a reading specialist, and a librarian. There is also one full-time and one part-time physical education teachers. The special education itinerant staff who work at the school include a psychologist, a social worker, a gifted and talented resource teacher, an autism resource teacher, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, an adaptive physical education teacher, a physical disability teacher, an emotional disabilities resource teacher, and a hearing specialist. Other itinerant staff who work at Collinwood include a band teacher, a string teacher, and a regional technology specialist. The leadership of the school is provided by a full-time principal and an assistant principal. Many of the teachers have earned their master's degrees.

"Camille." Camille has been a principal in the district for 19 years. She began her career in general education teaching physical education and social studies in the county. After obtaining her master's degree in special education, she worked as a special education resource teacher in a private school and in a public school district in a neighboring state since there were no positions available in special education in the study district at that time. Later, she returned to

the district to open a staff development institute where her primary responsibility was to work with a teacher training group to develop special education programs for students other than the mentally retarded. Her position was funded for 5 years with grants that were provided by the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped. Camille then went to work at a special education center for the orthopedically impaired to serve as a lead administrator for 5 years. She has also been the principal of three elementary schools in the district including Collinwood where she has been the administrator for the past 3 years.

Camille is a dedicated professional who is very knowledgeable about special education procedures and legal issues. She has a doctoral degree in the field of special education. She openly discussed her experiences with integrating students with disabilities into general education classes at Collinwood with the researcher. Camille takes an active role in Local Screening/Child Study meetings, grade level team meetings, IEP conferences, and eligibility decisions. She was frequently seen talking with students, parents and staff, helping organize school activities, and carrying out her administration duties.

Camille indicated that she strongly believes in providing the best possible educational program for each student at the school. In regard to providing special education services, she stated:

I think one of the ultimate goals here is that we are not looking at Collinwood to provide a totally inclusive school. We are looking to continue to provide a continuum of services for students. Our philosophy is not that total inclusion is the only way a school can go, but a school needs to continue to have a continuum of services. And that continuum needs to change year by year, student by student, and group by group. So what's needed is flexibility on all parts to do that. To take a look at what kids need first and what adults need second. Until we get to that point, we will not have reached our goal until people can articulate that as their major focus. (Interview, 6/19/98, p. 19)

Camille also spoke about the specific skills that she strongly believes a principal needs in order to be an effective instructional leader for general and special education teachers, students, and parents.

I think you need a good solid general education background. I think you need to know what the expectations are for general education students. That's the benchmark in which you operate. And then you have to have a fairly good repertoire and knowledge base and understanding of various disabilities. I think you have to have a pretty good knowledge base of adaptations that are possible and reasonable within a regular classroom setting. I think you have to be able to help people work through their own fears on disabilities that they have so you have to be able to understand people in general, or if when you hear a teacher says something you have to be able to look beyond that and where it is really coming from. Is it coming from their lack of knowledge about the instructional program, or their fear of not being able to be

successful with that particular child. So you have to be reflective in a way and listen to teachers on both sides to be able to understand. And for parents, I think you have to be a for all parents. So I don't care if they are general education or special education. I hope that I would be championing a child who has special needs whether they be at one end of the spectrum or the other. So I don't see a real difference for that. I would want to have the same individualized attention as I would for any child, either special education or general education. (Interview, 6/19/98, p.8)

"Suzanne," assistant principal. Suzanne has been the assistant principal at Collinwood Elementary for 3 years. She taught second and third grade for 6-1/2 years in the district prior to becoming an administrator. Suzanne is a very vivacious individual who was observed to be highly visible in all areas of the school. She was frequently seen problem solving with teachers and engaging in conversations with staff and students. In spite of Suzanne's busy schedule, she always gave the researcher as much time as needed to answer her questions.

Suzanne described herself as a collaborative leader in regard to her role as assistant principal as well as the process of integrating students with disabilities into general education classrooms. She spoke about her role in supporting special and general education teachers.

I like to think of myself as someone who can help people and other staff members to see how we can best help kids. I can be an avenue for getting resources and for moving us along. I think that is what leadership means. It's showing here's where we want to be. What do we need to get there? That's really my style. I truly don't understand how difficult it is in the classroom. I feel my role is to try and make it easier for teachers. I don't believe in telling people what to do. I'm much more comfortable with collaboration. (Interview, 5/1/98, p.4)

When Suzanne was asked how she viewed inclusion, she indicated that:

Inclusion to me means looking at individual children one by one. What program, what support are they going to need to be successful? That is going to vary. I see a whole continuum. I think we've done really well in providing that continuum here. Whether it be an autistic child being mainstreamed full day in second grade. That may mean inclusion for one child. For another it may just mean inclusion for music and P.E., and some small parts of the day. I think that the goal of inclusion is to have every special education student fully receiving an equal opportunity for the regular curriculum just as every child does in every classroom. (Interview, 5/1/98, pp.3-4)

"Carol," general education teacher. Carol teaches first grade. She has been a teacher for 16 years and has taught in this district for 3-1/2 years. She spoke positively about her experiences with integrating students with disabilities into her classroom.

When I was hired at this school, I was told that I would more than likely be having an autistic student and was asked if I would be able to do that. And I certainly was! It was something new and challenging and I was excited about taking it on. (Interview, 5/19/98, p.3)

This year, Carol has 15 students in her class. She has one student who has emotional disabilities and one student with autism. Carol has an instructional assistant who works with her during the time the special education students are in the classroom. Her role is primarily to assist children when needed, while Carol is responsible for teaching and monitoring their behavior. Carol team plans weekly with the emotional disabilities and autism teachers.

Carol shared how her role has changed as a result of having more special education students integrated into her class.

I think that it has made me aware of the real need to be flexible and also how advantageous it can be to have the children here from other programs. It causes the general education students to take on roles that they normally might never have had to. They become buddies, monitors, and peer tutors. (Interview, 5/19/98, p.3)

Carol also talked about the principal's support in facilitating the integration of special education students into general education classes.

I think probably what I lack is a lot of the details of what goes into integrating. I know what goes on when the children get there. She has all the data. She is able to store it all in her head somehow and retrieve it whenever necessary. She knows exactly where the children are supposed to be and what period of time and what intervals. I very much respect her for being able to do that. (Interview, 5/19/98, p. 3)

"Lee," general education teacher. This was Lee's third year teaching school. She graduated from a northeastern college and is certified in both special and general education. She was initially hired for a special education position in the district. However, because the principal at Collinwood was trying to foster a more inclusive environment at the school, she offered Lee a third-grade teaching position. Lee has both LD and ESL students in her classroom.

Lee spoke positively about her relationship and co-teaching experiences this year with the LD teacher. She stated that:

It's kind of progressed. We're at the point where we wanted it. It's taken a while. We needed to get to know each other a little bit and our styles. But we're at a point now where it's very even. She'll do whole group lessons and direct and I'll assist, and I'll do whole group lessons and direct and she assists. It's really great now. (Interview, 5/26/98, p.2)

Observations in Lee's classroom also allowed the researcher to see firsthand the comfortable working relationship that existed between the two teachers. The children appeared equally at ease getting assistance from both teachers.

My conversations with Lee left me with the feeling that she is a strong advocate of the inclusive school model. She commented that:

I think for every student the benefits are immeasurable. For the special ed students to be integrated with regular students they learn so much socially. I think regular ed students learn so much about acceptance and diversity and tolerance for lack of a better word. We live in a world that is diverse and people are always going to be different and have different needs. I think starting in the elementary school that to me is such a huge benefit. Sometimes you have to look at do I sacrifice the academic for the social. And I think that part of it is so important. (Interview, 5/26/98, p.8)

"Nancy," general education teacher. Nancy teaches fourth grade. This is her first year teaching. During her educational training she spent 120 hours in an inclusion setting at an elementary school that had persons with disabilities.

It was apparent from the researcher's conversations and observations of Nancy's classroom that she really enjoyed working with students with special needs. She explained that:

I think the benefit is that it has helped me to grow as a teacher. It's made me realize that there is not just one way of teaching and I can approach things in different ways. I think all students have within them gifts and talents. I think it's up to teachers to make sure they work toward their potential. (Interview, 5/28/99, p.4)

Four of the 17 students in Nancy's room this year are learning disabled. Special education services are provided by the LD teacher in a co-teaching or small group situation within the general ed classroom and in a pull-out resource model.

Nancy described the principal as someone who was willing to listen and is highly sensitive to the needs of her staff: "I think she is concerned about pleasing her teachers and seeing ways of getting in put from teachers" (Interview, 5/28/99, p.3).

"Bonnie," special education teacher. Bonnie has been at Collinwood for 3 years. She is in her third year in a new district position as a lead special education resource teacher. Prior to getting this position, she had been a Speech and Language clinician for 11 years. She has taught in several places in the United States due to her husband's military career. Bonnie is currently pursuing her doctoral degree in special education administration.

Bonnie talked about her job responsibilities and her experiences as a lead special education teacher in the school.

I guess my role this year has been a change agent. I think I am the focus point of the fact that we are changing what we have done. And for our school it is a big change! Last year most everything was pulled out. Everything was separate. I'm coming in and using the word inclusiveness which has been kind of a bad word to use. I am really becoming the person who is advocating for more integration and more inclusion. Another part of my job has been a lot of coordination and making sure people have what they need and that things were going smoothly. And problem solving with people and troubleshooting. Because of the new IDEA a lot of it has been that I'll go to the meetings and digest the information and then I'll come back and help everyone with what they're doing. I'm a point of contact. If they need to know something I can get on the phone and find out when they don't know what to go or what to do. So I guess I'm a coordinator. I've also served as principal designee for a whole lot of IEPs and done the scheduling for that. So I think I have sort of a leadership role for the special education department and a lot of quasi-administrative kinds of things. (Interview, 5/1/98, p.3)

Bonnie also spoke extensively about the advantages of inclusion and shared some of her personal experiences about having a disabled relative.

I grew up in a family with a disabled uncle and he never went anywhere because everyone stared. My grandmother was too embarrassed. She just stayed with this uncle. I think about what these children are going to be like when they've had this disabled child in their kindergarten class and this child has gone with them all the way through school. They're not going to stare. They're going to know exactly what's going on, and it's going to make life better for the disabled students. But I think it's going to make it better for other students as well. You see caring and concern. We have parents that come in and say who's Ben? All I hear about is Ben. And it will be the disabled student. And they won't have heard necessarily about the child's disability, but they'll hear about how their child has to go to school today because they have to help Ben at lunch. So it brings out some responsibility, some caring, and compassion that you don't always see. (Interview, 5/1/98, p. 13)

"Brittany," special education teacher. Brittany teaches students with learning disabilities. She began her teaching career in the Fall of 1976 and has had experience teaching kindergarten through sixth grade. She started working as an LD teacher in the study district in 1985. This was her third year at Collinwood. Currently, she is responsible for providing LD service to 9 fourth-grade LD students in a co-teaching and pull -out resource model.

Brittany talked a lot about the importance of communication and collaboration.

I think inclusion works well when the staff that is involved is willing to communicate and invest a lot of time planning and working things out. You really have to have people that offer that and can create that kind of relationship where a classroom teacher really wants to team and welcome someone in and treats them as someone that is equal. (Interview, 5/27/98, p. 8)

"Meredith," special education teacher. Meredith teaches students with autism. This was her second year at Collinwood Elementary and her second year in the district. She stated that she began teaching in 1970, but had some lapses in her career while she was living overseas. All of her 16 years teaching has been in the field of special education with the exception of her first year when she taught regular ed. Several teachers commented about her strong organizational skills and her knowledge of different teaching strategies. Classroom observations revealed an extremely confident professional who exhibited care and compassion for each of her students.

Meredith spoke frequently about how important collaboration is to ensuring inclusive school. She feels that her own experience has been positive at the school.

I've been fortunate this year because the fourth grade teachers have always considered me part of the team, and included me in the team meetings. Sometimes they feel bad for me because they start talking about things that really don't apply and they say if you need to leave now it's okay. Sometimes I stay and maybe I can contribute something because all of a sudden they start talking about some child with a specific behavior that is a regular ed student. I can say have you tried this? Had I not been there and stayed there for the meeting, I wouldn't have known the problem. It makes me feel good to know that I can add something to what they are already doing. Collaboration is that team effort. Everyone is responsible for all children. (Interview, 5/27/98, p. 4)

Other participants. Informal discussions with the Collinwood staff included conversations with the guidance counselor, reading specialist, instructional assistants, and other special and general education teachers. Ellen, the reading specialist was quite willing to share her time and opinion on how she viewed the acceptance and comfort level of teachers with regard to integrating special education students at the school.

I feel that it is changing. We've come a long way this year as far as our moving toward comfort with inclusion. I know that many of the teachers who are not adjusting to it have chosen to transfer. (Interview, 6/5/98, p. 1)

The school counselor talked about the positive attitude of the general ed students in regard to their disabled peers. She gave examples of what activities had been done at the school to help integrate students with special needs successfully into the general ed classrooms.

There have been several schoolwide assemblies. For example, we had the Kids on the Block program one year. The classroom teacher or I are now

doing lessons on disability awareness as needed. Students are informed about the child's disability before he or she enters the classroom so they can be aware of how they can interact appropriately and assist the special ed student if necessary. (Interview, 5/21/98, p.1)

School climate. A positive change was viewed by the researcher from the previous school year's observation in regard to the teachers' acceptance of integrating special education students into the general education classrooms. This appears to be primarily attributable to a significant staff turnover this year.

Many of the teachers reported that they felt responsible for all of the students at the school not just those that were in their classroom. The principal and the staff were observed enthusiastically greeting students in the morning as the buses arrived and in the hallway as they entered their classrooms. Several teachers were seen sharing materials and collaborating on various lesson plans.

The principal was very willing to discuss the changes that had occurred in the school climate since the previous year.

Oh, I think it has changed significantly in the last year. We certainly through the hiring process made it very clear what the expectations were when you came on board. I think that although you can't talk about those in an interview, once you get in it is so often difficult to follow through on that and realize that without some additional training in what collaboration and co-teaching mean. But what we have now is a group of people who are willing to learn and willing to try. And we have many of our general education teachers now taking the lead. It is interesting to see in IEPs general education teachers are now leading some of the IEPs now because they've sat in as many of them and are understanding of the new process more than some of the new teachers who are coming in from out of state. So I think we are beginning to see teachers taking on that. We keep coming back and reminding teachers why we are here for all students. And I think that's what made it work. We started off the year on a retreat. We talked about the focus of the four major initiatives here. One of which has been the integration of special education students. And although it is a difficult process to actually implement, I think philosophically, we have most people on board just looking for more and new training on how to do it better. (Interview, 12/7/98, p.2)

Meredith, the fourth-grade autism teacher, spoke very positively about her experience with integrating her students into the general education classrooms.

I think the school climate has been very favorable and I've been very fortunate since my autism kids are older they have been accepted. The teacher I work with is an experienced teacher who hasn't had experience working with special needs students. She has easily accepted us coming in and out of the

classroom. Both of the fourth-grade teachers have been very accepting. They talk to their own students about kids with special needs and what happens when my kids are in the room. It's a very comfortable working relationship. (Interview, 10/19/98, p.2)

A new third-grade teacher who was interviewed informally also felt that the climate at the school was positive for integrating students with special needs.

I think that at this school the climate is very positive toward inclusion. For third grade, we have almost half of our population on some kind of IEP which is a lot out of 60 students. In our grade level, we are trying to include the kids as much as we can. (Interview, 10/5/98, p.1)

Communication. Camille discussed some of the changes that she had made in the way she communicated with her staff this year.

I think this year I do way more communicating through e-mail. We are now totally connected. Everyone is connected. Everyone is registered including the instructional assistants, the cafeteria, the custodians. So I find that I do more teacher activities. I do it three or four times a day. I check my mail. I think that teachers feel now that they really are going to get a response so they are beginning to use it a lot more. We have reserved in our school corner that the principal's news is strictly my box so that when important notices come up and there is a red flag, they know to read that and I need a response for that. So that has become an effective way where staff news is for everyone. We are working toward moving that online, although we don't have the technology to cross platforms. And a lot of what I do, I do on Windows so I can't send an attachment to most of the Macintoshes. So we probably will continue to have a hard copy of the weekly calendar and weekly newsletter. But we will continue to look for new ways to improve things. (Interview, 12/7/98, pp.4-5)

The principal also spoke about how she and the staff planned to accomplish the school goals by having less, but more productive meetings.

One of our goals is to try and establish how many conferences we want to have so that first grade teachers can have a conference or different teams can have a conference. We do less meetings because we have developed a different organizational structure. So we are not spending as much time in meetings. Committees under four (sic). And we try and accomplish our goals by having those four large committees and having subcommittees work under that. Our focus continues to be the development of good, solid meetings. Our training with Xerox on how to conduct a productive meeting was highly successful. Our agendas are very well done and we do time checks and we analyze our time at the end. (Interview, 12/7/98, p.5)

Most of the teachers interviewed seem to be in favor of the principal using e-mail to communicate with the staff. Carol, the first-grade teacher, described her experience in a positive manner.

I think our principal is very much on top of technology and has begun a whole system of e-mailing within the school and within the county so that we have access to others that are teaching in the special needs program and the integration climate. She frequently e-mails us and let's us know things. A lot of the communication that we do across the board in this school is done by technological means. We sort of pride ourselves on that. (Interview, 5/26/98, p.5)

Camille also discussed her role in promoting a positive attitude about integrating special education students into general education classes.

I think my role continues to be one of setting the vision. To say over and over again what our mission is. Whether it be in a team meeting or maybe modeling integration. If I'm expecting the students are operating within the general education framework, then I would expect that I would have all the materials that a teacher would need no matter who they are or what category they fall in. I see continually being a child advocate so I am aware and I believe that when a certain decision has to be made about a student's educational program then I will stand up and make that decision for the child. So I continually feel I have to be the advocate for children, but I have to provide the support and the means. (Interview, 6/19/98, p.11)

When asked about whether the staff this year felt free to come to her with concerns and issues regarding school-related matters, Camille indicated that she was not exactly where she would like to be at this time.

I think some do, but I think it's going to take some time as it does with new people. I think they've known me for eight or nine weeks and I don't know that there's been enough time to know where they stand. All twenty-five are in the evaluation cycle. That presents a different problem in developing a relationship. But I think over the course of time I think we will begin to do that. We are at the crossroads of change. All the literature on change says that it takes five to seven year change cycle for this school. And I think it's there and it's in place and it's right for the growth of that. So hopefully, as time goes on and the staff and I develop that rapport. If I feel like it's there for many of the new people. I think some of the people who are still here from before and that might be in the nature of the way they're much more positive, but still don't feel comfortable coming to an administrator. (Interview, 12/7/98, p.12)

Principal's decision-making style. The teachers interviewed appeared to be divided on the issue of whether Camille supported a collaborative decision making process for decisions related to school matters.

Brittany, the fourth-grade LD teacher, talked about Camille's democratic style of leadership.

I would say that her style is very open so that people can volunteer to be on committees that they want to be on, so there is a lot of room for people to have a voice. Then as committees work on things there is always connection back to the teams so that the teams are asked for input. So it is very open. Communication is welcome. Most of the things seem to be decided by groups of people who have the open door for input. Also, there is an open door for feedback. (Interview, 5/27/98, p.8)

Meredith, the autism teacher, also felt that Camille is extremely sensitive to the needs of her staff and students.

Tom she is always open to ideas and always asking what do you think we should do or how could we handle it? She is not dictatorial and coming down saying this is the way we are going to integrate the kids. She makes sure that it's always a team effort and a group effort for how the program is implemented. At the same time, I think she sees that the course that we take is not necessarily the course we are going to stay on if we see that it's not working. She doesn't feel that whatever we do is set in stone. That we have to do it the whole year. I think she is open to making changes as needed. (Interview, 5/27/98, p.2)

Carol appeared to be somewhat cautious in her remarks when asked about whether the principal encouraged the staff to participate in making school related decisions.

I think in a limited way she does. I think that a lot of what is going on in our school, our principal has real strong beliefs and really wants to be on board with it. But I think that if push came to shove she knows what she wants and we need to be aware of that. (Interview, 5/26/98, p.6)

Camille talked about her own style of leadership as more directive this year due to the large number of new staff members at the school.

I think where we are and start all over brand new with 25 staff members you do a little bit more direction just by the nature that you have 25 new people who need to know how to start in a brand new county, in a new system, and get to know one another. And get to know what the culture of the school is, and what the expectations are for a lot of things. We're just now starting to gel as a group. We've done some nice things together and we've actually had

some experiences that have kind of brought everybody together in a way that we are now ready to move on and actually do some more planning. I think our meetings are all being conducted in a very positive way so that we are doing a little more problem solving in a way that takes the personal out of the "p" and puts it into kid terms. So where we are right now is that I think I still am doing some direction to help some people get a focus and put them into a framework. I feel that I'm able to put something out and let people respond. (Interview, 12/7/98, p.4)

Principals support. The teachers spoke mainly in terms of resources, staffing, and the administrator's visibility in the classrooms when questioned about the principal's support in helping to provide a more inclusive environment at the school. Most of the teachers interviewed felt that they had adequate supplies to support their instructional program.

Brittany, the fourth-grade LD teacher, felt that the principal had been very proactive in providing the educational materials and equipment that her students needed to meet their IEP goals. She stated that

She's the best principal I've ever had in terms of getting things we need. She's the one who ordered a dozen Alpha Smarts. Then she ordered I think another ten. Whatever materials we need in terms of alternative reading instruction she makes sure we find the money for it. There were no materials when we came three years ago. I don't know why. We were a newly renovated school and there were no alternative reading materials. (Interview, 5/27/98, p.3)

The autism teachers shared her concern about the lack of appropriate reading materials for her students at the start of the school year. She spoke positively about the principal's role in allowing her to order whatever instructional supplies she felt were needed. She explained that

It was rough, especially for kids who were beginning readers. Children with autism do better with actual photograph pictures instead of books that have lined drawings. We needed emergent reader books that had photographs. So the school went ahead and ordered a lot of books that had true photographs so these were the books kids used. Also we used a lot of different supplies like velcro and the magnetic letters, and picture symbols. Not everything was available at the beginning of the year, but there wasn't a problem. I don't think in getting most of the stuff ordered for the class throughout the year. (Interview, 5/27/98, p.3)

The principal felt that the teachers were satisfied with the availability of instructional materials in the school. However, she talked about the staff's need for more computer training. 1

I don't think resources right now are an issue with most of the teachers because they have just about everything they ask for. Technology as a school we are not up to par and we are one of the targeted schools because we have

not been a model tech school. I understand that if the budget goes through we could be on the windfall of that because we are not a tech school. So I'm hoping that will happen. But every teacher does have a computer that is internet accessible and tie in, at least ones so they can run some of the current CD ROMs and programs on them. I think we have more than enough language arts materials. The question teachers ask most frequently is how do I pick and what do I use. We have every kind of alternate program that you can imagine. We have all kinds of manipulative programs. We use Touch Math, Project Lead, Project Wilson, Reading Mastery, Stevenson. We have them all here. So I think material wise that hasn't been a problem. When anybody's asked we've always been able to buy and in fact we've gotten a little bit more resourceful. Velcro has become our second name and we're using the picture symbols system. So you become specialists in using velcro and pocket charts. (Interview, 12/12/98, p. 10)

Principal visibility and staffing needs. Several teachers who interviewed indicated that the principal needed to spend more time in their classroom to actually understand the types of problems they were experiencing in regard to integrating students with disabilities into the general education classrooms. Many of the teachers felt that they needed more staff in order for the inclusion model to be successful.

Brittany, the fourth-grade LD teacher, spoke positively about Camille's visibility in the school but expressed a desire to see her more in her classroom.

She's soft there at the close of day and the beginning of the day. She did cafeteria duty for at least two months and I think that's why the kids are so well mannered in the cafeteria. She did cafeteria duty by herself before we had a cafeteria hostess. I think that's happened for the last two years. She set up the whole organization so we have a very calm lunchroom. It's the only school I've ever worked in that has done. Kids are so well behaved. Her door is always open in her offices unless someone is in there you can always go in. She never really seems rushed. I never felt she didn't want to talk to her. You can schedule her to come to meetings and conferences. I wish she was in the classrooms more. She's very welcome. She's only come in my classroom only once or twice, but I wish she would be visiting more. (Interview, 5/27/98, p. 8)

Lee, the third-grade teacher, appeared to be quite emotionally distraught about her current situation with integrating special education student into her classroom.

I definitely like to see the resource staff help more often than I do. Each grade level with the population we have now needs their own special ed teacher. We are just swamped and I don't think one for every two grade levels is cutting it. So I would like to see a special ed teacher for every grade level. More assistants in the classroom for those who have students with a high population

of special needs. Definitely more team collaboration and things like that. I'd like to see the principal and the assistant principal and the lead teacher more involved in the classrooms and what's going on in the decision making. Much more supportive of the staff than they are. (Interview, 10/5/98, p. 7)

Another third-grade teacher who was interviewed informally appeared to be very concerned about the lack of personal support and involvement on the part of the principal in implementing the inclusion model in her classroom.

I think our principal means well. I think she wants to support you. It may not even be her, just administration in general. We've had grade level meetings where we have addressed issues and they just kind of seem to be pushed under the carpet. They'll say yes, we understand you are having a problem, but after that you don't really get much more. So that's just the kind of feeling I'm getting so far. I feel that she wants to be very supportive and maybe that's why she is saying those things right up front. Then we need some action to back it up. The AP does a pretty good job of coming into my room. However, the principal, the only time she came in was to do an observation of the resource teacher and to pick up a boy for time out. She says she understands what we are going through, but she really hasn't been in the room to see it. I don't really feel I know her very well. (Interview, 10/5/98, p. 1)

A fifth-grade teacher who was interviewed informally seemed to be very frustrated that the principal had not been in her classroom more to see how the integration model was working this year.

I feel that the administration is almost invisible. I never see them. Both of them have been in my classroom once this year and they're using the internet much more. That's just so impersonal. It's an easy way to communicate and it's convenient, but it's just so impersonal. You can't carry on a dialogue over the internet. (Interview, 12/12/98, p. 3)

District support. The principals spoke honestly about the type of support from the districts she felt was the most helpful in implementing the inclusive pilot program.

Probably the most beneficial has been the sub time. The sub money that has been available for us to do staff development and to do planning. Beginning curriculum planning days that we have set out this year have probably been the most successful. The biggest eye opener to help us get on board and on track. And to help us kind of see where we are headed. These half day planning sessions pulled together general education, resource, special education teachers to lay out the curriculum for that particular nine weeks. And that way it was the one place where everybody knew they could get the most current information about what was happening curriculum wise. So that was probably the most helpful. And probably the second most helpful thing

was being able to purchase some site licenses for some specialized software so that we could have them in general education classes. Ford Makers is a software program for visual pictures symbols and we now have five stations located within general education classrooms which allow general education teachers to make the necessary picture symbols that they need for general students. As well as special education students that are integrated. As well as having a new software program, Write Out Loud, which is the program we use which certainly helped a lot of our students in terms of passing the literacy this year in terms of writing. (Interview, 6/19/98, p. 14)

Camille also talked in great detail about the staffing that had been provided by the district to support the new special education integration model at the school.

I feel they have left basically your staffing intact. And we do support that staffing not under the same categorical guidelines. But we support it with numbers cross categorically. Where we are out of synch and have determined we are the one school in the pilot that has the demographics we do is that you cannot continue to bus in large numbers of high incidence, high intensive special education students into an already needy school with large numbers of ESL, large number of students in low socioeconomic ranges and expect to provide inclusive environments under the ideal guidelines. So we either have to decide if we are going to do that we are going to have to service children within our own community and look at staffing in relationship to that. We are still staffing under the old model trying to be in a new model. And we haven't addressed what the staffing changes need to be in order to really accommodate students in an inclusive environment. We have approximately 420 students on any given day. We have over 80 students with IEPs. We continue to have over 80 students in our ESL program, so it's a significant impact. If we just looked at our students, we could take down at least 20 of those high incidence students who don't live in this school area and that would make a significant difference in our particular situation. (Interview, 6/19/98, p. 11)

Masters schedule and planning. Many teachers who the researchers spoke with felt that the masters schedule needed to be revised in order to provide for more common planning time. However, two of the teachers at the school discussed the positive experience they had this year.

One of the special education teachers who was interviewed informally indicated that the masters schedule this year has given her the opportunity to team with Lee, one of the third grade general education teachers.

That has actually been a positive thing here because in my last setting the masters schedule was not conducive whatsoever. Here the third grade teacher and myself the way the masters schedule is designed at any given point we are doing the same thing. (Interview, 12/7/98, p. 1)

Lee also spoke about the positive aspects of the master schedule.

For third grade, they moved the special ed classroom up to the same hallway which has made a huge difference. For example, for DEAR time we open up those classrooms. So that's made a huge difference in flexibility. Our master schedule has all fourth-grade teachers on the same break so we have common planning time. The special ed students are included in all my specials-P.E., Music and Art. (Interview, 10/5/98, p.5)

The assistant principal discussed the scheduling problems at the school and the innovative ways in which the administration and teachers were attempting to resolve them.

This is an objective for next year to get more common planning time. We don't have a lot of that built in our scheduler right now. And that is probably the single, biggest complaint and difficulty that teachers have of not having the time to collaborate the way they need to. We've tried to do things like pay people after school. I know teachers are even meeting on some Saturdays. So that's how they make up for it. As far as looking at the master schedule we need to look at that and try to provide some common planning time. It's difficult when you have a small school because you only have two teachers on a grade level and it's also a very full load for the PE and music schedules. And that's how we provide common planning time. Fortunately, with the autism program we have a high ratio of instructional assistants so we have in some cases been innovative in using them to cover classes to free up some teachers. We also have a lot of pilot money for collaborative planning days. So that's one way we have tried to help. But I do think we need to look at the master schedule for more collaborative planning time within the day. (Interview, 5/1/97, p. 8)

Professional development. The principal and teachers at Collinwood have been involved in a variety of professional development activities at the school and district level. The staff has had opportunities to attend local and state conferences and visit to other school districts to view special education inclusionary programs. A mentor program has also been established with an inclusion school in another district.

The principal talked about some recent staff development in services that the faculty has been involved in and her plans for future activities.

All of the special education teachers have been involved in the fall in either content training that they need for standards of learning, or for their own discipline, or they have been involved in testing training. We just started this month actually doing training with the entire staff on co-teaching and collaboration. In fact, on Monday we had a session on defining what those terms would mean at this school, establishing some parameters and getting

somedifferentsuggestionstoestablishacommonvocabularyforwhatwe wantteacherstobeabletodoandtalkinalanguagethatweallunderstand. Ourgoalthenfromhereistotakethecommonvocabularyandsomeofthe articlesoncollaborationonthenewmainstreamingwehandedouttoteachers andanotherhandoutthatspeaksmoreaboutassessmentoftheirownstyleon howtheyliketoruntheirclassroom.Sowestartedthismonthwiththat.Our nextactivitythatweplannedtogoalongwiththatisthewehavetraditionally hadquarterlyplanningmeetingswherewetalkaboutcontentonly.Sothefocusofthenextgroupofquarterlymeetingswillbetotalkaboutthecontent, butwearethenactuallygoingtoworkthroughhowyoudoco-teachingand howyoumightdothatparticularcontentareainacollaborativeway.Using theworkandsomeofthebooksonco-teachingthathavebeenavailabletous, wewillbeusingthataasortofframeworkforthatinournextquarterly planningmeeting.(Interview,12/12/98,p. 2)

Theprincipalindicatedthatshefeltitwasimportantforhertoparticipateinasmany oftheschool inservicesaspossiblewiththeteachers.

IattendallofthetrainingIcanpossiblyattendthatgoesonherewithmy teachers,soIhaverunningrecordsandhaveattendedmyfourrunning records inservicesasaretoolingandretrainingrecentlybecauseIdon'tdo runningrecordseveryday.IjustattendedAWordsTheirWay inservicethis afternoonsothatIcanbetterunderstandthenewcomplexitiesinlookingat languageandwordsandlookingatthenewliteraturethatisoutthere. (Interview,12/12/98,p.8)

Camillealsocitedsomeexamplesofhowimportantshelthertraininghasbeenin supportingherstaff.

Ithinkasanadministratoryouhavetobetakingeveryclassnomatterwhatit is.Unfortunately,manyoftheclassesIhavewantedtotake,particularlyI havebeeninterestedintheTeach inservicesthathavebeenofferedtowork withchildrenwithautism.Ihaveallthe literatureandIhavetheirwebsite andI'vereadallthematerials.Ihaveactuallyrearrangedtwooftheroomsto meetthoseparticularthings.SoeventhoughIhaven'tbeenabletoattendthe sessionsI'veactuallyhadthethestobeeabletohelptwonewteachersto redesigntheirroomsaroundthat.I'mworkingondevelopingmyexpertisein Boardmaker,whichisthepicturesymbolsystemandhaveinstalledthaton mycomputer.Thephysicaleducationteacherwhohasstudentswithautism, aspartofmyobservationIsaidyou needtohaveapictureschedule.AndI gavehimapictureschedulewhichImademyself(Interview,12/12/98,pp.8-9)

Thespecialeducationleadteacherspokepositivelyaboutthevisittotwospecial educationinclusivedemonstrationsitesinthestate.

We visited two of the four in the state. We took teams. It's required by the demonstration sites that you have general ed teachers, special ed teachers, administrators, and parents on the team. So we made two of these visits. That was very helpful because a lot of times people you can read about it, you can talk about it, but you need to go. You need the picture. People don't, especially in this district where people have gotten used to having a specialist for everything. They don't believe. If you just read about this they would say that they don't have kids with the same disabilities that we have. They don't have kids with the problems that we have. But to go out there and actually see they do and they have kids with more severe problems than our kids have. And they're in general ed classes all day gave teachers a different perspective of what was going on. And also to see that schools were able to do it with less staff than we have. I think that was beneficial. (Interview, 5/1/98, p.9)

The principal commented in great detail about some of the things that had been happening with their mentor school.

Roosevelt Elementary came and spent some time with us in the Fall. They also spent some time with us in June. They took a look at our school and made some recommendations and changes about facilities, structures, scheduling, and some of the nitty gritty details that were successful for them in an inclusive environment. And they came back in November to see where we were. They took a tour of the school and met with us. They discussed our plan that we had been working on. Our grant was up at the end of September so we were going to see where we were with that. We had met all our goals. We had purchased the materials we needed for doing COACH, procedures for getting parents ready for IEP training, had done our staff retreat which we ended up having Xerox paying, and having us for the day out at their Leesburg facility. We had our next steps as to where we wanted to go. We agreed that we wanted to continue our mentorship for another year. We set our goals and objectives. We took a look at our needs assessment that we had completed. And we did an analysis of that and targeted several goals for the Fall for this year. We are in the process of finalizing our plan and we are setting up two site visits back there. Since we have 25 new people, we now are almost starting over. So we will be sending two groups of parents and teachers to visit with them in January. We reviewed the article about them and passed out the article. They were featured in an Education Week article. We shared that with our staff to get an idea and flavor about what that school was all about and that's where we are going. We've been asked by the state project director for this particular project to begin work on a book on how to start the inclusive school process. So Roosevelt and several of the staff at our school will be talking about developing an outline in January to look at a handout or a project as a part of this whole process. So I think we are moving

along the way, and are still excited about continuing with them. (Interview, 12/12/98, p.5)

The autism teachers spoke about their experience with staff development training at the district level.

Tom that's a plus for this county. I didn't have this in previous states. There is a lot of in-service training going on. Not only what we have had at the school. There are courses and training going on all the time. Through the autism department on how to do integration, besides what has come into the school. We now have access as autism teachers to all the reading in services, and writing, and learning how to do this. In the past that probably would never have taken place. They would never have included an autism teacher as somebody to attend a reading conference or something like that. Now they do. To me the in-services are really a plus. It's out there. It's just the teacher has to make the commitment to do it. (Interview, 10/19/98, p.7)

The assistant principal and a few of the teachers talked about what training they felt would be helpful for the staff in regard to integrating special education students into the general education classes.

Lee, the third grade general education teacher indicated that

I would like to see more training in strategies to use with special ed students; strategies for inclusion. I think a lot of people didn't know how needy some of these kids were and didn't have the experience to do it. It's hard, so hard! So I'd like to see that, and I'd like to see an outside person come in and do it. Someone like Judy Wood who gives you some take home with you kind of strategies. (Interview, 10/5/98, p.8)

A fifth-grade teacher who was interviewed informally spoke about visiting a school where she could see a successful inclusion model.

I'd love to go and see a classroom that is successful. I would like to be able to observe the entire day all the transitions and be able to sit down at the end of the day and discuss what I've seen with the teachers who are implementing it. (Interview, 12/12/98, p.1)

Summary. Six themes emerged from the data collected from selected staff members and classroom observations at Collinwood Elementary. The most obvious theme was related to the school climate. All of the participants felt that there was a much greater acceptance level among the staff for integrating students with disabilities into the general education classrooms this year which was attributed to the high staff turnover. However, many of them spoke about the need to continue providing special education services within a continuum of services model.

A second theme that emerged from the data was communication. Staff members talked about good working relationships and feeling comfortable expressing their opinions in meetings and with the principal about school-related matters. Many teachers indicated that there was more collaboration between the general and special education teachers.

A third theme was related to the decision-making process. The teacher who were interviewed appeared to be divided on this issue. Some of the teachers spoke about the principal as being more relaxed and willing to implement suggestions offered by the staff while others felt that she was very directive and reluctant to try new ideas regarding integrating special education students unless it had been proven by research to be successful.

A fourth theme had to do with the principal's support in implementing a more inclusive environment. All of the staff members interviewed agreed that they had a wide variety of instructional materials to work with general and special education students. Many of the teachers, however, believed that the principal needed to be in their classrooms more often to really understand how the integration model was working.

A fifth theme that was seen as important to the success of the integration model was adequate planning time and a master schedule that allowed for more flexible groupings of students. The majority of the teachers spoke about a need for more common planning time to discuss students and the curriculum. They felt that the master schedule needed to be changed in order to integrate children with disabilities more effectively.

The final theme that emerged was related to the amount of professional development opportunities which the staff had had in regard to working with students with special needs. A staff needs assessment survey done at the beginning of the school year revealed that collaboration and teamwork were viewed as critical to the success of the integration model and should be an on-going process. All of the staff members interviewed felt that a substantial amount of training in team building and the use of inclusive practices had been offered at the school and district level. Several general education teachers spoke about being more comfortable working with learning disabled students, but felt they needed additional training to work with autistic students.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how three elementary school principals in a selected school district collaborate with their teaching staff to facilitate a commitment to educating students with disabilities in the general education classroom. The study focused on teachers' and principals' experiences with integrating special education students, particularly with regard to the principal's role. The researcher used a multiple case study approach to gather data at the three schools which were selected for the study. The research questions that were addressed in this study are as follows:

1. What educational training or experience have these principals had with models or practices that support the integration of disabled students into general education classrooms?
2. What are the educational practices used by these principals to help ensure that students with disabilities are successfully integrated with non-disabled peers?
3. What leadership style or behavior of each of these principals influences these teachers' efforts to integrate students with disabilities into general education classrooms?
4. How does each principal collaborate with teachers to facilitate the integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms?
5. What experience or training has the principal provided for general education teachers in regard to making academic and behavioral accommodations for special education students?

This chapter is intended to summarize this study in terms of the research data, the conclusions drawn from the study, and finally the recommendations which were developed from the findings. Six themes which emerged from the interview data and observations will be discussed.

Discussion

School climate. The first theme that was identified as important to the successful integration of special education students into the general education classrooms in each of these schools was the school climate. The results of the study produced data that led the researcher to believe that, in order for a school to become more inclusive, the staff has to change the way it views the educational process, including changing the paradigms of learning and teaching,

teachers support, and staff development practices. The leadership behavior of the administrator has an essential role in promoting effective acceptance of schoolwide change (Ingram, 1997). If a climate of openness, change, reflective practice, and self-renewal is to be implemented, then it must be modeled by the principal (Sergiovanni, 1991). This is consistent with the findings of the study.

The three principals involved in the study spoke about the positive changes they had seen in the school climate since the process of integrating students with disabilities had been initiated. The administrators of Bakersville and Collinwood also discussed the process of change itself. Marlena, the principal at Bakersville Elementary, indicated that one of the things that occurred as a result of change at the school was having to assess where they were in implementing more inclusive practices and to be more accountable as to how they were doing in regard to reaching their goals. The principal felt that the most difficult part of the process was helping each other to understand where they were coming from philosophically and to recognize the strengths and the ways they could work together and yet be themselves and validate their own styles and needs. Marlena spoke about how this had adversely affected the school climate as she acknowledged that the faculty had experienced a moderate level of stress and discomfort as a result of the changes that had been made. She indicated that she believed the process had been a positive one overall.

The findings of the study indicate that in inclusive schools, it is important that administrators articulate a philosophy that reflects the belief that all children can learn, that all children have the right to be educated with their peers in age-appropriate general education classrooms, and that meeting the educational needs of all students is the responsibility of the school system. This is consistent with the work of Ingram (1997). The three principals worked with their staff to agree on a building philosophy of integrating special education students into the general education classrooms. The mission statement at each school clearly reflected the staff's belief that all children can learn and their commitment to helping each student be successful. The Bakersville and Collinwood staffs included a section devoted to inclusive practices as part of their school plan. The principals and teachers who participated in the study indicated that they shared the responsibility of integrating special education students.

The data revealed that the principals at Robert E. Lee, Bakersville, and Collinwood Elementary Schools have worked extremely hard to provide an environment in which all children feel accepted. The principals made statements such as, "We welcome all children whatever their areas of disabilities or abilities are," and "We respect and support the diversity of backgrounds and learning needs of all of our students." A variety of student work was displayed throughout the three buildings. The principals were observed interacting in a positive manner with all of the students. It was difficult at times to identify which students received special education services, as the teachers and general education students had created an environment that promoted a sense of belonging for all children.

Communication. These second themes that emerged from the data involved the use of communication as an important part of facilitating a more inclusive school environment. Initiating inclusion in a school requires a significant amount of communication among teachers,

parents, students, and principals (Roach, 1995). All three principals had established a system of communication that gave staff members an opportunity to share their feelings about the inclusive practices that had been implemented and to make recommendations for change if needed. Staff members who participated in this study indicated that they had been involved in district level meetings, faculty meetings, team meetings, committee meetings, individual meetings with the principal, and informal conversations where inclusion had been discussed. All of the teachers interviewed reported knowing what to do when they had a problem or recommendation. Most of the teachers indicated that, although their suggestions were not always adopted, they felt that the principal treated them fairly and listened to their concerns.

The three administrators actively promoted teacher participation in making curriculum-related decisions. They were observed on several occasions encouraging teachers to talk about their experiences with integrating special education students into the general education classroom. Teachers were given scheduled blocks of time to communicate with each other about a variety of school-related matters. The principals also used e-mail and a weekly newsletter to keep their staff informed about instructional issues, meetings, staff development opportunities, and provision of support or information to teachers.

The three principals frequently served as advocates for integrating special education students into the general education classrooms within the contexts of district and parent meetings. They were actively involved in attending Child Study/Local Screening meetings and IEP conferences. However, none of the principals were able to attend all of the meetings due to their other responsibilities. They relied on their assistant principals and special education lead teachers at times to conduct these meetings. General education teachers and special education teachers were observed collaborating with parents to develop appropriate goals for students with disabilities.

Decision-making process. A third theme that emerged from the research was the decision-making process used at each school. Effective leaders collaborate with teachers, parents, and students as equal team members (Goor, Schwenn, & Boyer, 1997). In a collaborative school setting, the faculty work together to provide the optimal learning environment possible for all children. The special needs of students with disabilities can be best served by developing mutual goals and solving problems together.

Each administrator was able to describe clearly the process for decision making regarding policies and inclusive practices at his or her school. It was observed that the staff were actively engaged in making decisions about how students with disabilities were being integrated into general education classrooms. Two of the three principals talked about building trust as being essential to working in an inclusive school environment. They spoke about accepting teachers, parents, and students as they are, listening to their ideas and feelings, and working together to resolve problems.

Principals support. A fourth theme that was identified from the data as being critical to the success of inclusion was the support that the principal gave the teachers. Administrators support is extremely important to the professional development and overall well being of both general

and special education teachers (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Teachers are more committed when administrators offer feedback, acknowledgment, encouragement, collective decision making, and collaboration (Rosenholtz, 1989). Principal support has been shown to have a direct relationship to teacher retention and attrition. Billingsley and Cross found that general and special education teachers who received more administrative support tended to stay in teaching longer than those who received less support.

An effective principal understands that equal opportunities for students with disabilities may require unequal resources and a commitment to all teachers and students is essential (Burello et al., 1993). All of the teachers who participated in the study agreed that their principal had provided them with sufficient instructional materials and assistive technologies such as computers, special keyboards, alpha smarts, and voice-activated software programs to effectively integrate special education students into the general education classrooms. The principals at the three schools had assigned special education teachers and/or assistants to work with general education teachers to give them support in working with students with disabilities. Schedules for in-class assistance were built around the special education students' needs in specific subject areas based on their IEPs.

Most of the teachers interviewed indicated that they were more willing to integrate students with disabilities into their classroom if they had the assistance of the special education teacher or paraprofessional during that time. However, two of the teachers at Bakersville Elementary and four of the staff members at Collinwood stated that they did not believe there were adequate special education personnel to accommodate the needs of the students with disabilities.

Each principal demonstrated skills in listening to the concerns of the teachers and problem solving. They described their roles as being facilitators, directors of the vision, and focusing on the issues even when there may be conflict. The majority of the staff members at each school who were interviewed reported feeling comfortable sharing their concerns with their administrator.

All three principals indicated that they had spent a lot of time in classrooms observing the inclusive practices of teachers and the performance of students. However, they reported that their classroom observations were often curtailed by their other responsibilities. The staff interviewed at Bakersville Elementary felt that the principal was sufficiently involved in the day-to-day operations of the classroom. The teachers at Robert E. Leereported that, although the principal was very supportive of their efforts to integrate special education students, they usually sought the advice of the assistant principal, who has a background in special education, when they had a concern or problem regarding inclusion. The majority of the teachers interviewed at Collinwood wanted more frequent and lengthy visitations by the principal so that she could observe first hand the problems they were experiencing with integrating students with disabilities into very diverse general education classrooms. As a result of the principal's limited visibility and involvement in daily classroom activities, some teachers indicated that they were increasingly reluctant to invest the time and effort required to implement more inclusive practices.

Masterscheduleandplanningtime. A fifth theme that emerged from the interviews related to the development of a masters schedule that provides adequate planning time to allow teachers to collaborate about special education students. Arranging common planning times for teachers is a challenging task for many principals and teachers. Administrators must give high priority to providing coordinated planning time for special education and general education teachers who are working together (Conrad & Whitaker, 1997). A school's inability to provide the necessary time for collaboration can become a significant barrier to the successful integration of students with disabilities (Cole, 1992). This was supported by the findings of the study.

The teachers interviewed at the three schools felt that their principals understood their concerns regarding scheduling and planning time. They believed the principals were working very hard to involve teachers in finding ways to collaborate and to ensure adequate staffing to meet the needs of the students with disabilities in the general education classrooms. The principals and teachers at Robert E. Lee and Collinwood Elementary shared their concerns regarding special programs. These were the Spanish Immersion and English as a Second Language programs, respectively, that caused them significant problems in developing the masters schedule.

The teachers interviewed at each school engaged in collaborative planning on a regular basis before and after school hours. Some teachers also indicated that they used their lunch break to plan together. The masters schedule at each school had been developed to ensure that all grade-level teachers had a common planning time. During these planning sessions co-teachers developed their instructional plans, assigned preparation tasks, and reviewed students' classroom performance, assessment information, and IEP goals. Special education teachers who were assigned to more than one grade level at each school were often not able to attend the planning sessions since they were working with students.

Many of the teachers interviewed indicated that the successful integration of students with disabilities was strongly dependent on daily communication between the general and special education teachers. All of the teachers interviewed felt that collaborative efforts work best when there is sufficient time to plan and discuss the accommodations which are needed for special education students. Some teachers indicated that the planning time they were provided with allowed them to share ideas and build the necessary collegiality and cooperation which is essential in an inclusive school. However, the majority of them felt that they did not have sufficient time to plan for the diverse needs of their students.

Professional development. Staff development, the last theme, was critical to the success of inclusion. In high-quality professional development, schools provide the necessary training and extensive follow-up with guided practice for teachers implementing the changes (Kearns et al., 1998). Principals are responsible for planning and supporting ongoing staff development opportunities by allocating resources, providing release time for team planning, and preparation activities, and establishing coaching systems to maintain and reinforce instructional skills (Katsiyannis, Conderman, & Franks, 1996).

Staff development that supported more inclusive practices was strongly encouraged by the three principals. The principals at Bakersville and Collinwood Elementary School have advanced training in special education. The principal at Robert E. Lee relies heavily on the expertise of an assistant principal, who had previously taught special education students for 25 years. All three principals reported having attended conferences and taking classes to learn more about the needs of students with disabilities and about inclusive practices. All of the teachers appeared to become comfortable seeking information and sharing it with their colleagues. District staff development offerings, building level activities, and individual training opportunities helped to facilitate successful inclusive practices. However, many of the teachers interviewed indicated that they still did not have sufficient training to feel confident working with students with special education needs; particularly children with emotional disabilities or autism. The faculty at Collinwood Elementary were involved in a mentoring relationship with the staff of a school located in another district that has had several years experience with inclusion.

Conclusions of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to identify how the principal works with staff to facilitate the integration of students with disabilities into the general education classroom. The findings support the research that the principal plays one of the most important roles in an inclusive school (Van Dyke, Stallings, & Colley, 1995). Based on the data collected, it is apparent that principals must take an active and positive role in the process. The three principals in this study worked regularly with their teachers to embrace a schoolwide philosophy of inclusion and to provide a positive climate for its success. Each principal met on an ongoing basis with their staff to plan strategies for inclusion, to resolve problems, and to discuss the status of the inclusion program.

It can also be concluded from the study that a principal's words and actions must be able to communicate the importance of inclusion, since a school's success in providing integrated services is highly dependent upon the attitude of the staff. Although the majority of teachers who participated in the study at the three schools felt that inclusion was extremely hard work, they strongly believed that it had a positive impact on their classrooms. They indicated that the self-esteem of the students with disabilities had improved and that the general education students were more accepting of individual differences. However, it was apparent from their comments that they strongly believed that a continuum of alternative placement options must be available to meet the needs of the students as addressed in their individual education program. No one model of instruction is appropriate for all students. There must be provisions made for self-contained and resource classes.

Another key finding from the data was that the amount of support and involvement of the principal in the inclusion process was closely related to the comfort level of the staff in regard to integrating students with disabilities into the general education classrooms. Most of the teachers involved in the study indicated that their principal had provided them with adequate instructional and personnel resources in the classroom. The teachers at Robert E. Lee and Bakersville felt that the principal and the assistant principal had provided ongoing encouragement, understood their problems, and followed through on their promises. Many of

the teachers at Collinwood, however, were disappointed by their principal's lack of involvement in their daily classroom instruction and appeared disillusioned by her inability to provide the emotional support and leadership they were seeking. They indicated that, as a result, they felt less motivated to implement inclusive practices, because the principal was not an active participant in the day-to-day problems they encountered when integrating students with disabilities into the general education classroom.

Another conclusion based on the data collected is the importance of the principal in promoting and supporting collaborative relationships among the staff. All three principals provided the time for their teachers to meet, discuss, and plan for effectively using inclusive practices. They also actively encouraged their staff to be involved in making decisions about the inclusion process. Many of the participants spoke of the need to be flexible and willing to participate in on-going problem solving sessions as revisions or adaptations to individual plans may be needed to successfully integrate students with disabilities into general education classrooms.

The data also support the importance of staff development for successfully implementing inclusive practices. It is imperative that all principals acquire an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the competencies that are needed to be leaders in inclusive schools. Most of the participants at the three schools felt that the staff development opportunities were essential to the success of integrating students with disabilities into the general education classrooms. The general and special education teachers spoke repeatedly about how important it was to fully understand their responsibilities and roles in the inclusion process. Although many of the participants at the three schools indicated they had participated in team building and the use of inclusive strategies that had been offered at the school district level, they indicated a need for more training in integrating the more severely disabled students into the general education classroom.

Recommendations for practice. The following recommendations that emerged from the study could be beneficial for educators in helping to ensure the success of an inclusive school.

1. School districts should develop definitions of what is meant by an inclusive school and should collaboratively develop district philosophies of inclusive practices.

2. School district-level planning helps to ensure that essential resources are available to schools and classrooms to provide appropriate services for students with special needs. School districts must support schools where there are special programs such as language immersion or English as a Second Language in order for inclusion to be effective. It is very difficult to integrate students with disabilities into immersion classes when instruction is given in a foreign language for half of the school day.

3. School districts should ensure that all students who are attending school other than their neighborhood schools should be returned to the classroom they would be assigned if they did not have a disability whenever possible. It is almost impossible to achieve a natural class

integration in schools that serve large numbers of students with particular disabilities such as severe disabilities.

4. Principals should cultivate a school climate that nurtures all students with the expectation that all students belong at the school and that all teachers will teach all students. Every child should be encouraged to meet high levels of educational outcomes and high standards of performance that are appropriate to their abilities. It is important that school administrators understand the importance of their modeling and the symbolism of visiting classrooms, spending time with students, and providing teachers with the support they need to work with students with disabilities in the general education classrooms.

5. Principals should clearly articulate an inclusive philosophy and empower teachers to collaborate to make decisions and to resolve problems.

6. Principals must plan carefully with their staff to assess student need and available resources as student placement decisions and co-teaching assignments are made. It is important that the staff be used in a manner that will promote maximum coverage and support for teachers who are integrating students with disabilities into their classrooms.

7. Extensive professional development opportunities should be provided for the staff before inclusion is implemented at school. It is crucial that ongoing appropriate staff development activities be provided for all school administrators, teachers, instructional assistants, and everyone who works in an inclusive school environment. Teacher training in group process, conflict resolution, communications skills, and effective discipline can be helpful in increasing teachers' confidence and effectiveness in dealing with difficult behavior and promoting more responsible behavior in their classrooms. Team building is a key issue, because both the general and special education teachers will have to work together.

8. School administrators should support the professional development of school staff members by providing release time from instructional duties and allocating additional resources for professional activities. Site visits to model programs, problem-solving sessions with other co-teachers, and mentoring relationships can help to facilitate implementation efforts.

9. Principals should network with other administrators in their district or state who are involved in similar efforts to include students with disabilities.

10. Teachers must have time to plan together with their colleagues and to consult with special education professionals with expertise in instructional strategy, curriculum adaptation techniques, and behavioral management. Collaborative planning is a necessity for successful inclusion and must be made available on a daily basis.

11. Principals must ensure that the staff has access to instructional materials, equipment, and technology that will assist students with disabilities to participate successfully in general education.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. This study should be replicated at the middle-school and high-school level to determine whether the issues of administrative support for integrating special education students into the general education classrooms are similar to the findings of this study, which was conducted at the elementary level.

2. A study should be conducted to determine if there is a connection between perceived levels of support for inclusion based on administrative training in inclusive practices. This would allow school districts to determine if additional training would result in more inclusion.

3. A case study should be conducted that focuses on one school moving toward inclusion in the state of Virginia. A stronger connection among climate, culture, attitudes, perceptions, and administrative involvement in the inclusion process could be determined if the researcher spends a longer period of time at the school.

4. A longitudinal study should be completed with the three schools that participated in the initial research. Two to three years of research should continue to be collected at the three schools. The study should focus on administrator involvement in inclusion, planning time for teachers, classroom resources, staff development training, communication, and problem-solving strategies.

5. Research should be conducted that focuses on administrator training programs. Components of training programs associated with inclusion should be the major focus of this research. It would be beneficial to determine specific types of coursework or training that administrators consider necessary for integration of special education students into the general education classrooms.

6. A study should be conducted to better understand the relationship between leadership style and restructuring for inclusion. Knowledge in this area would help formulate recommendations for necessary role changes for principals in inclusive schools and the critical competencies needed by administrators to fulfill the role.

Researcher's Reflections

The researcher's opportunity to conduct this study at three elementary schools in her district was truly an invaluable learning experience. All of the participants are very dedicated professionals who gave generously of their time to answer questions and assist in finding information that was needed for the study. Many of these individuals were observed long after school hours collaborating to meet the academic and social needs of their students. Although all of the general and special education teachers indicated that implementing inclusive practices was a difficult process, they openly encouraged a sense of belonging and respect for each one of their students. They believed that setting high expectations for all children was important

regardless of their ability or disability. Teachers were observed openly celebrating their students' diversity.

The process of implementing and maintaining an inclusive school environment is not an easy endeavor. School administrators are responsible for providing the necessary leadership for conceptualizing and monitoring inclusive practices. They are important figures in providing appropriate support and education to their teachers. Principals need to recognize teachers' efforts to include students with disabilities in the general education classrooms.

This study has provided critical insight into how three schools are collaborating to implement inclusive practices. It has also contributed some valuable new knowledge in the area of how principals work with their staff to facilitate the integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms.

The researcher has discovered through conducting this study the need for a new type of teacher. There should not be a general or special education teacher, but a teacher who has the technical competencies and training needed to work with all students. The knowledge, skills, and disposition that classroom teachers need to work effectively with students who experience difficulty in school are essentially the same as the skills, knowledge, and dispositions of most special educators. Universities must restructure their teacher education program to include training in the areas of collaborative skills, instructional techniques, curriculum, disabilities, and the accommodations needed for diverse learners to better prepare educators to work in an inclusive school setting.

This study has also shown that the focus of incorporating effective inclusive practices should be on the dynamics within a classroom. It is not only a matter of the school size, the total amount of students within a particular class, or the number of children with diverse needs. It is also important to consider the way in which instruction is organized and the classroom dynamics that are occurring which teachers must deal with on a daily basis. Principals must work with their staff to create generic services that merge content, instructional personnel, and instructional settings. It is essential that all teachers have a clear understanding of their responsibilities within an inclusive school environment. The traditional job roles and responsibilities of special education teachers must be altered to allow them to join with and become general educators in teaching the curriculum in integrated classrooms.

The researcher has found that the key to successfully meeting the educational needs of all students is promoting collaborative relationships and professional growth among the school staff so that expertise may be shared. All teachers need to have opportunities to meld their complementary skills through the organization of collaborative planning and teaching teams. Educators must share the teaching responsibilities rather than work in isolation in the classroom. It is imperative that principals provide on-going staff training that focuses on the development of critical attitudes, communication, compromise, collaboration, and consensus building.

Finally, the researcher has discovered how important the principal's leadership style is in implementing inclusive practices. School leaders must not only articulate their belief that all

students should be educated in the general education classroom to the greatest extent possible, but must be assertive in ensuring that the actions of all teachers and support staff are congruent with this philosophy. Principals must be able to foresee problems and take an active role in planning, providing resources, and assisting teachers in the classroom on a regular basis if inclusion is to be successful.

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Appendix A

Elementary School Principal

Interview Questions

Principal _____ Date: _____

School: _____

Background/Demographics Questions

Gender: _____

How many years have you been a principal? _____

How many years as an elementary principal in this district ? _____

At this school? _____

School Climate

Please describe your school climate as it relates to integrating special education students into general education classrooms. (sensory question)

Please explain how your mission statement was developed and whether it addresses the inclusion philosophy? (knowledge question)

How do you think general (special) education teachers view inclusion? (feeling question)

Principal's Special Education Training or Experience

Have you had an opportunity to teach students with disabilities? If so explain. (experience/behavior question)

What educational training have you had regarding integrating students with disabilities into general education? (experience/behavior question)

Is there any kind of inservice training regarding integrating students into regular classes that you haven't had which you feel would be beneficial for you in your position as principal? Please explain. (opinions/values question)

Principal Leadership

How would you describe your leadership style? (sensory question)

What specific skills do you believe a principal needs in order to be an instructional leader for special education staff/students/parents? (opinions/values question)

What should the goal be in meeting the needs of special education students? (opinions/values question)

How do you encourage general education teachers to be receptive about integrating students with disabilities into their classes? (experience/behavior question)

What can principals do to encourage the acceptance of special education students by their nondisabled peers? (opinions/values question)

Describe how you see your role as principal as it relates to integrating special education students into general education classrooms. (sensory question)

Central Special Education Administration Support

Were you involved in the initial effort to integrate special education students at this school? If so, please describe the process. (experience/behavior question)

What type of support has been most helpful in implementing inclusionary practices? (opinions/values question)

Actual Inclusion Practices

Are you involved in the Child Study/Local Screening or IEP meetings? If so, please describe your role. (experience/behavior question)

How are you involved in the placement process of special education students? (experience/behavior question)

How do you prepare to implement the IEP team decisions for integration? (experience/behavior question)

Does your school have a school-based planning team (e.g. site team) which supports and monitors special education services? If so, please explain. (knowledge question)

What kind of school activities for promoting disability awareness and the need for and advantages of integrated education for students with disabilities are offered at your school? Please explain. (knowledge question)

Parent Involvement

Are there any existing parents support groups? If so, what is the primary purpose?
(knowledge question)

Teacher Support and Training

What kind of resources/support do you provide for teachers to help them integrate special education students into the general education classroom? (knowledge question)

What kind of staff development training programs on inclusionary practices have been offered for teachers? Has this training been voluntary? (knowledge question)

Were staff members provided with inclusion training prior to implementing a more inclusionary service model? If so, what kind of training was provided? (knowledge question)

What kind of training or support do you believe teachers still need in regard to integrating special education students into regular classes? (opinions/values question)

Collaboration and Instruction

How do you decide which general education teachers will work with students with disabilities?
(experience/behavior question)

In your experience as a principal, what accommodations have you found to be most helpful for students who are being integrated into general education classes? (experience/behavior question)

How is the "master" schedule developed to help ensure the successful integration of students into general education classes? (knowledge question)

How can cooperation between general and special education teachers be facilitated?
(opinions/values question)

In what ways do you help facilitate collaboration between general and special education teachers in their efforts to integrate special education students into general education classes? (knowledge question)

Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusion

What have been the major problems in integrating special education students into general education classes? (experience/behavior question)

Havetheseproblemsbeenresolved?Ifso,how?(experience/behaviorquestion)

Whathavebeenthebeneficialoutcomesofintegratingstudentswithdisabilitiesintogeneral educationclassrooms?(opinions/valuesquestion)

AdditionalComments

Isthereanythingyouwouldliketoaddinregardtoyourstaff'sinvolvementinanintegrated program?

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Teachers

Date: _____ Teacher: _____

Teaching Position : _____ M/F

Background/Demographic Questions

How long have you been a teacher?

How long have you taught in this district?

How long have you worked with the current principal?

How long have you worked with special education students?

School Climate

How would you describe your school "climate" regarding integrating special education students into general education classes? (sensory question)

Please describe your role as it relates to integrating special education students into general education classes at your school? (sensory question)

How would you describe your principal's leadership style within the school? (sensory question)

Experience With and Implementation of
Integration Service Delivery Model

What is your experience with integrating special education students into general education classes (experience/behavior question)

Were you involved in the initial stages of your school's integration efforts? If so, how? (experience/behavior question)

What role did your principal play during the initial stages of integrating students with disabilities? (knowledge question)

How has your role changed as a result of the integration of students with disabilities into general education classes at your school? (experience/behavior question)

Instruction

Why were you selected to be involved in your school's integration efforts? (regular educ. teachers only) (opinion/values question)

What kind of integration model have you been involved with? (experience/behavior question)

What experience have you had in regard to making academic and behavioral accommodation for special education students? Please give some examples. (experience/behavior question)

What types of inclusionary practices do you feel most comfortable with? (experience/behavior question)

What kind of inclusionary practices have you found to be successful in integrating special education students into general education classes? (opinions/values question)

Collaboration

What does collaboration mean to you in regard to integrating students with disabilities into general education classrooms? (opinions/values question)

Have you been given released time to plan integration activities? If so, please describe when you meet, who attends and what is accomplished? (knowledge question)

Teacher Attitude

Do you believe that all special education students regardless of their disabilities should be integrated into general education classes for a portion of their school day? Please explain why or why not? (opinions/values question)

Do you believe that the school's "master" schedule facilitates or hinders the integration of students into general education classrooms? Please explain. (opinions/values question)

LD

Principal Attitude and Support

What do you believe is the principal's expectation for integration/inclusion and the extent to which students will be participating in all environments (e.g. cafeteria, auditorium, playground, hallways, gym, restrooms, library, computer room) and activities (e.g. lunch, assemblies, recess, non-academic subjects, etc.)? (opinions/values question)

What role does your principal play in facilitating the integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms? (knowledge question)

What kind of support from the principal has been most helpful in integrating students with disabilities? (opinions/values question)

Inservice Training

What kind of staff development training or inservices regarding inclusionary practices have been provided for teachers at this school? (knowledge question)

If you have had some inservice training on inclusionary practices, what do you believe has been the most helpful to you as you work with special education students in the general education classroom? (opinions/values question)

If you were making recommendations for teacher preparation in inclusion for regular and special education teachers, what would you most strongly recommend? (opinions/values question)

Have you attended any training sessions on inclusion that the county has offered? If so, what? (experience/behavior question)

Concerns

What kind of problems have you encountered as they relate to integrating students with disabilities into general education classes? (experience/behavior question)

Have any of these problems been resolved? If so, how? If not, what is happening to try and solve the problems? (knowledge question)

All Teachers

What didn't ask you that you feel might be advantageous to discuss?

Appendix C

Research Questions

Research Questions	Methods Used to Answer the Questions		Documents
	Observation	Interview	Documents
1. What educational training or experience have principals had with inclusive models or practices that support the integration of disabled students in the general education classroom?			
2. What are the inclusive educational practices used by principals to help ensure that students with disabilities are successfully integrated with nondisabled peers?			
3. What leadership styles or behaviors of the principal influence teacher efforts to integrate students with disabilities into general education classrooms?			
4. In what ways does the principal collaborate with teachers to facilitate the integration of students with disabilities into general education classrooms?			
5. What experience or training has the principal provided for general education teachers in regard to making academic and behavioral accommodations for special education students?			

Appendix D

Planning Sessions

	Planning Sessions		
	A	B	C
Inclusionary Practices			
General Education Teacher Responsibilities			
Special Education Teacher Responsibilities			
Instructional Activities			
Evidence of Collaboration			

VITA

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Fairfax Station, VA 22039
Home: (703) 643-0344

Relevant Experience:

August 1998 to present: Learning Disabilities Teacher and Co -Chairperson of Local Screening/Child Study at Keene Elementary, Fairfax County Public Schools, Fairfax, Virginia

August 1990 to June 1997: Learning Disabilities Teacher and Chairperson of Local Screening/Child Study at Centreville Elementary, Fairfax County Public Schools, Fairfax, Virginia

September 1988 to August 1990: Educational leave from Fairfax County Schools to pursue doctoral degree in Educational Administration and certification courses for elementary school counseling at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

August 1987 to June 1988: Language Delayed-Learning Disabilities Self-Contained Teacher at Clifton Elementary in Fairfax County

Public Schools

January 1981 to June 1987: Learning Disabilities Resource Teacher, Fairfax County Public Schools

August 1983 to June 1987: Newington Forest Elementary School

February 1982 to June 1983: Barden Elementary School

August 1981 to February 1982: Waynewood Elementary and Barden Elementary Schools (scheduled divided equally between each school)

January 1981 to June 1981: Waynewood Elementary and Hayfield Elementary - schedule divided equally between each school)

Job Responsibilities

Elementary Learning Disabilities Teacher

Provides direct instruction to assigned learning disabled students; plans and implements Individual Education Plan (IEP) for each student.

Evaluation and assessment of students referred for testing to the Local Screening Committee to determine if they are eligible for any special education program.

Serves as an instructional consultant by recommending materials and techniques or co-teaching with regular education teachers.

Provides workshops for parents on learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and study skills.

Confers with parents.

Develops and serves as chairperson for Local Screening/Child Study Committee.

Provides in service for local school staff.

August 1975 to June 1980: Elementary School Classroom Teacher, Kilby Elementary School, Prince William County Public Schools, Woodbridge, Virginia.

Experience in second, third and fourth grades.

July 1974 to July 1975: Flight Attendant, U.S. Air.

Special Accomplishments

1982-1983 Team leader for special education teachers at Barden Elementary School

1984-1986 Served as Administrative Designee on several occasions when administrators were out of building

Spring 1985 Interviewed for and was the subject of an article on learning disabilities published in the March 1985 edition of Castle, Fort Belvoir newspaper

Fall 1985 Speaker at county-wide training program for new elementary and middle school special education teachers

1985-1986 Team leader for support staff at Newington Forest Elementary

Winter 1985 Completed Administrative Orientation Program sponsored by Fairfax County Public Schools

1986-1987 Served as County Superintendent's representative from Newington Forest Elementary

1990-1995 Served as Special Education Contact from Centreville Elementary

June 1992 Received Human Relations award at Centreville Elementary

August 1992 to June 1997 Served as member of Centreville Steering Committee

August 1998 to Present Served as member of Language Arts and Human Relations Committee

Professional Organizations and Education

Present Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University- Completing doctoral degree in educational administration

June 1995 Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University- Received CAGS in educational administration- Achieved a GPA of 3.8

June 1991 Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University- Obtained certification in elementary school counseling

January 1981 George Mason University- Received Masters of Education with a concentration in special education (Learning Disabilities). Achieved a GPA of 3.6

June 1974 George Mason University- Received a baccalaureate degree in elementary education. Graduated with honors.

Memberships

National Education Association (NEA)
Virginia Education Association (VEA)
Fairfax Education Association (FEA)
Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)