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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

by

Margaret Elizabeth Constantino

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School of The University of Southern Mississippi in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2011
ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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The purpose of this study is to examine special education teacher perceptions of principals’ instructional leadership behaviors and students’ academic achievement on the Georgia Comprehensive Criterion-Referenced Tests. The researcher sought to determine if a relationship between specific instructional leadership practices in the areas of setting direction, influencing others, and redesigning the organization as performed by the principal and as perceived by their teachers is related to the achievement of special education subgroups in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. Special educators from elementary schools, identified by the principals, were surveyed to measure the extent to which they perceived their principal exhibited specific leadership behaviors. Data for this quantitative study were collected using a survey, developed by the researcher based on current literature regarding instructional leadership practices. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the responses. Archival data collected from the State of Georgia school report cards was used in an effort to more comprehensively examine special education teacher perceptions of the extent to which principals exhibit instructional leadership behaviors.
There was not a significant correlation between special education teachers’ perceptions of principal leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities. The findings indicate a moderate negative correlation between special education teachers in Title I schools and non-Title I schools in their perceptions of principals’ behaviors related to setting direction and goals. Differences in achievement were found between Title I schools and non-Title I schools.
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

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by

Margaret Elizabeth Constantino

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School of The University of Southern Mississippi in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 illuminated the flaws in providing a quality public education to all for the benefit of the individual and the greater good of society. The Coleman Report, as it is commonly known, set in motion decades of scrutiny and analysis of the public education systems across the country. It can also be said that the report brought to light the conflicting demands placed on schools to answer social and political problems that reach beyond the bounds of academics (Bonstingl, 2001). As a means to an end, public education is designed to provide students, regardless of race, gender, social class, or socioeconomic status, with the skills and knowledge required to participate productively in all aspects of society. Armed with a quality education, all students may be provided with the opportunity to become gainfully employed and to lead a productive life (Bonstingl, 2001). Why then, have the nation’s schools found the attainment of such a goal to be so elusive? And who will be held accountable for a school’s success or failure at meeting the goals for educating *all* children?

This chapter introduces the research study and states the purpose and problem to be examined in the study. In order to establish its importance and the need for the study, background information will be presented. Research questions, delimitations, and assumptions of the study are offered in this chapter, as well as definitions of related terms that may assist the reader. A justification for the study is given at the conclusion of the chapter.
After almost four decades of research in educational leadership, a direct effect between leadership practices and student outcomes remains elusive. Established initially in the findings of effective schools research, the impact of leadership practices continues to have a significant although indirect influence on student achievement (Brookover & Lezotte, 1982; Edmonds, 1979; Leithwood, 2005; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). The improvement of leader practices that support student learning is a significant issue embraced in research communities for the last 30 years. Following the release of the Coleman Report, researchers began an earnest exploration of the qualities of effective schools. The resulting research led to numerous conclusions about how effective schools operate, including a focus on basic skills, a safe and orderly learning environment, and strong school leadership (Brookover & Lezotte, 1982; Edmonds, 1979). With the knowledge that leaders do in fact make a difference in achievement, contemporary researchers have developed several models of school leadership that propose to enhance and support the need for both immediate and sustainable change within schools.

**Problem Statement**

How many effective schools would you have to see to be persuaded of the educability of poor children? If your answer is more than one, then I submit that you have reasons of your own for preferring to believe that pupil performance derives from family background instead of school response to family background. We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that.
Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far. (Ronald Edmonds, Harvard University).

With the introduction of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) and increasingly high levels of public accountability, more emphasis has been placed on evaluating the capacity of the school staff and organization to respond to student needs while producing results. Specific attention has been drawn to the role of the school leader in an effort to uncover a magic formula for school level success. With targets set for *all* students to meet proficiency standards in *all* schools by the year 2014, the Obama Administration proposes a blueprint for change that may provide some respite for struggling schools. In President Obama’s Blueprint for Reform for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, schools and districts will implement a growth model to monitor individual student achievement and school progress over time (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Under this two-year growth model, schools that demonstrate improvement in student achievement will be rewarded for making gains in closing the gaps in student achievement rather than penalized for missing the mark in a single year. In its proposal, the Department of Education concedes the flaw in using a single measure to determine the achievement of students or the value of public schools.

Through Race to the Top Assessments (RTTA) and General Supervision Enhancement Grants (GSEG), the Department of Education has committed to developing appropriate and accurate measures of student performance, including the performance of students with disabilities. The proposed changes to ESEA will not completely negate the NCLB accountability system but rather charge school leaders to
further their efforts aimed at continuous improvement and school-based data collection and analysis of the achievement of all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

As the keeper of a school’s mission and vision, the school leader influences the culture and climate through personal beliefs about student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Shields, 2010). If the achievement of all students is important to the principals, then their actions should be directed towards those desired outcomes. At the end of the 2009–2010 school year, 92 schools across the state of Georgia failed to make adequate yearly progress benchmarks due to the performance of their students with disabilities, a 24% increase over the 2008-2009 school year (Georgia Department of Education, 2010). A reprieve by the U.S. Department of Education that allowed for states to provide a one-time-only 2% flexibility formula when calculating AYP status explained the success of 89 of those failing schools to be deemed progressing, thus avoiding the needs improvement list for one more year (Georgia Department of Education, 2010).

Regardless of school report card status, the achievement results indicated that large populations of students with disabilities continued to perform below the proficiency level across the state.

With changing demographics and diverse student needs, more principals find themselves ill equipped to produce results in student achievement and even less prepared to initiate change directed at improving outcomes for students with disabilities (Lashley, 2007). As schools began to report data for all students, particularly those in subgroups such as minorities, economically disadvantaged, and students with disabilities, it becomes painfully apparent that these students continue to be underrepresented in the ranks of the high achieving (Boscardin, 2007; Lashley, 2007). Even schools of
excellence have been faced with disaggregated data that shows unattended gaps in student achievement. In the nation’s lowest performing schools, once hopeful and aspiring school leaders’ careers fade under the wand of high stakes testing and accountability.

Of additional significance in building effective leaders and effective schools is the often forgotten aspect of moral responsibility, equity, and social justice (Shields, 2010). The road to accountability for the outcomes of special needs populations began because of decisions made in Brown v. Board of Education (1954) and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. With minority students making up a disproportionate representation in the category of cognitively disabled students nationwide, the accountability for this subgroup takes on new meaning (U. S. Department of Education, 2010).

During the 2008–2009 school year, students with disabilities made up 13% of all school age children (U. S. Department of Education, 2010). Special education students are often counted among other subgroup populations as well, including economically disadvantaged, minority, and second-language learners. Minority students are nearly three times more likely to be classified as intellectual disabled than their White peers and two times more likely to be identified with an emotional disability. Nearly half of all primary and secondary students with disabilities live in poverty compared to one fifth of their general education counterparts. Only half of students with disabilities receive their education for at least 80% of the time in the general education setting. Those students with severe disabilities will spend far less or no time at all in the general education setting (McLaughlin & Rhim, 2009).
The inclusion of students with special needs in all aspects of the general education experience, particularly the inclusion of those with significant cognitive disabilities, at the onset only offered these students opportunities to participate in educational experiences with their non-disabled peers. The increased inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting has placed new demands on school principals. Principals are now expected to establish and monitor programs that ensure the academic progress of all students (Bays & Crockett, 2007). With the passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, also known P.L. 94-142, students with disabilities became more visible in public schools and schools were held accountable for providing not only access to education but to beneficial educational experiences (Board of Education v. Rowley, 1982). Following years of litigation, schools are now held accountable to provide meaningful educational benefit to students with disabilities (Polk v. Susquehanna, 1988; Shore Regional High Sch. Bd. of Education v. P.S., 2004) and federal legislation requires that special education students be full participating members in accountability systems at the state and local level.

The convergence of the IDEA and NCLB brings to a point the responsibility to individual educational needs and that of all students. There is a strong argument that it is impossible to meet the needs of the individual (IDEA, 2004) while at the same time holding students accountable for meeting the same standards as their non-disabled peers (NCLB, 2001). Single standardized measures of achievement rarely reflect the true picture of academic gains. Quite to the contrary, arguments have been made that to label schools as failing is an arbitrary practice since there is no standard measure of performance across or within schools. Many states maintain dual student achievement
targets, allowing a school to meet standards for progress at the national level but fail to meet expectations based on state level targets (Meyers & Murphy, 2007). Further, Meyers and Murphy argue that the failing school label is deceiving since a school needs only one year of improvement to reach safe harbor while students continue to perform well below standards.

Students at risk for failure on high stakes assessments are generally already behind grade-level peers and their progress is best measured over time (Kim & Sunderman, 2005), yet they are all expected to make the same gains as peers in the same annual measure. The requirements of NCLB, while designed to promote equity, has inherent inequities in its expectations for schools and students to achieve the same standards even when they do not begin on the same platform. Beyond test scores are variables of teacher and leader quality, parent satisfaction, school safety and other contextual considerations that influence school-wide effectiveness (Meyers & Murphy, 2007). It is left to the schools to sort out how to ensure that students achieve and to determine just how important it is to them to meet the needs of all students. There is much research to show that low achieving schools can and do make AYP through a strong focus on instruction and high levels of collective accountability (Reeves, 2009). The direction and focus for the change necessary to attain goals for improved student achievement begins with the school leader (Fullan, 2005; Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Reeves, 2007).

Research confirms that there is a limited pool of talented principals, while the needs and challenges of school level leadership continue to grow exponentially (Boscardin, 2007; Lashley, 2007; Murphy, 2002). Leaders of school improvement will
lead both the school organization and the individuals within the school community. These leaders of reform must have the necessary skills to navigate the contextual variables that will influence the appropriateness of the leadership approach as well as the level of change (Lindahl, 2007). The Blueprint for Reform identifies teacher and school leader preparation and support to be a major factor in school improvement and has made it a priority to insure highly effective teachers and leaders are present in high needs schools (U. S. Department of Education, 2010). Despite a decades long movement to improve inclusive education practices in schools, school leaders remain limited in their knowledge of quality special education practices (Boscardin, 2007). As schools face further scrutiny regarding student achievement, specifically in the area of students with disabilities and their impact on AYP and school ratings, school leaders will continue to benefit from a rich understanding of their ability to positively influence student outcomes (Boscardin, 2007).

Most of the research in special education is aimed toward experimental design meant to identify strategies and instructional methodology that accommodates for barriers to learning for students with disabilities. The study of leadership practices is relegated to associations between best practices in leadership, such as providing professional learning, and the leader’s knowledge of special education programming (Crockett, 2002). Without empirical evidence to support a relationship between specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities, the significant influence of an inclusive school vision, collaborative practices that build teachers’ capacity for high impact instruction, and a positive organizational culture with high expectations for all is merely implied. The increase in levels of accountability for
student outcomes and the inclusion of students with disabilities in standardized assessment programs challenges school leaders to seek out those strategies and behaviors that create the best opportunity for student success (Bays & Crockett, 2007).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of principal instructional leadership practices and the achievement of students with disabilities. This study provides an examination of the relationship between each of the three dimensions of instructional leadership and the performance of students with disabilities on statewide assessments related to AYP. Although current research acknowledges the contributory effect of instructional leadership, studies have not sufficiently examined the relationship between specific instructional leadership practices and the outcomes of students with disabilities.

This study contributes to the empirical research measuring the impact of leadership behavior on student achievement and to the limited number of quantitative research studies in special education leadership. The research focuses on the practices of school principals as instructional leaders, which is considered second only to teacher impact as a precursor to positive student outcomes (Leithwood, 2005). The role of the principal in setting direction and shaping a culture focused on teaching and learning is illuminated by the era of accountability. The achievement of students with disabilities is high profile and can be the determining factor in a school’s success or failure.

In their 2004 study, Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Whalstrom noted that despite decades of research there are lessons remaining in the study of leadership behavior and its impact on student achievement. Through an investigation of the
leadership practices of elementary school principals and longitudinal achievement data related to students with disabilities in a large suburban school district in Georgia, this study enhances the book of knowledge for leadership development, educator preparatory programs, and leadership practice.

The Georgia CRCT determines school performance for elementary and middle schools. The CRCT is used to measure student performance on the Georgia Performance Standards. For AYP, students must meet or exceed state targets in the areas of Reading/English Language Arts and Math in Grades 3 through 8. Student performance on these measures determines whether individual schools or school systems meet AYP targets (Georgia Department of Education, 2010).

This study examines the relationship between the perceptions of special education teachers of the extent to which elementary principals demonstrate instructional leadership practices and the achievement of students with disabilities as measured by Georgia’s CRCT results in Grade 3 through 5 in the areas of Reading/English Language Arts and Math. This quantitative research study focuses on the understanding of leadership practices and their impact on the achievement of students with disabilities through the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant relationship between special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in Reading/English Language Arts?

2. Is there a significant relationship between special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership
behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in Math?

Significance of the Study

As accountability turns to blame, the inclusiveness of schools is in jeopardy as leaders seek to avoid the labels and corrective actions that come with school failure. The ability of school leaders to direct their energies to those habits and behaviors most closely tied to student achievement, particularly those that affect the learning outcomes of students with disabilities, may offer a direct link to specific school needs.

An examination of teacher perceptions of leadership behaviors enhances the discussion of the relationship of principal behaviors as influential factors in the achievement of students with disabilities. The results of this study contributes to the empirical literature on instructional leadership by exploring the way that specific leadership behaviors interface with school contexts to influence the outcomes of students with disabilities. This study provides knowledge to school-level administrators regarding instructional leadership behaviors that are positively associated with special education behaviors involving the achievement of students with disabilities as measured by the Georgia CRCT in Reading/English Language Arts and Math.

The principal’s skill as an instructional leader is central to promoting student learning and achievement (Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood & Strauss, 2009; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003). In order to fulfill the role of lead learner, school leaders must be knowledgeable in those instructional approaches to teaching and learning that insure students with disabilities meet specialized academic goals. With the reauthorization of NCLB, all students with disabilities will continue to be assessed with their peers and held to common expectations for performance. In a review of research,
Leithwood et al., (2004) challenged the profession to continue the exploration of the relationship between leadership behavior and student learning. This study of the impact of leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in the state of Georgia contributes to the improvement of leadership preparation and development programs at the school district and university levels.

Limitations

The sample includes 70 elementary schools in the district and represents a continuum of student cultural, socioeconomic, and disability levels. Mitigating factors such as familial influence, environmental factors, and factors associated with specific areas of disability will impact individual student achievement. Natural variations exist between categorical disabilities and individual student responses to interventions. The achievement data collected accounts for a smaller population of students than does overall achievement data. The study is also limited by the self-reporting nature of the survey respondents. The respondents’ interest in making a good impression and a tendency to underreport negative or inept behaviors impact survey responses garnered from self-perceptions (Creswell, 2003).

Delimitations

The delimitations of the study include several variables that have both mediating and measurable influences on its results. Survey participants are limited to elementary special education teachers in a large suburban public school district in the state of Georgia. The leadership behaviors are limited to practices found in instructional and transformational models of leadership, which will not account for the amalgamation of leadership styles that principals possess and employ in the context of their schools. The
school populations represent a range of cultural and demographic areas throughout the school district. The Georgia CRCT report card is a matter of public domain and school-level achievement data will be retrieved from the Georgia Department of Education (2010) website for all schools participating in this study. The data recovered for the 2007 through 2010 school years represents consistent and fully implemented standards of learning in the areas of Reading/English Language Arts and Math.

Assumptions

The researcher assumes that all participants completing the survey provided honest and accurate answers. Participants in the study meet the requirements to be highly qualified, holding appropriate certification and training to perform in their respective positions as required by the State of Georgia Professional Standards Commission. The researcher assumes that the respondents followed all directions and that the manner in which the survey was completed is consistent with its purpose.

As an acceptable assessment of AYP, the Georgia CRCT is assumed to be a valid and reliable measurement of student achievement in the areas of Reading/Language Arts and Math. While schools differ in demographics and populations, the consideration of a covariance will account for variances between schools attributed to free and reduced lunch student populations and the length of service of the principals.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions provide meaning for terms used in this study and are meant to assist the reader.

*Annual yearly progress.* Adequate yearly progress (AYP) is a measure of a school or school district’s measure of proficiency in meeting required federal student
achievement targets based on state performance standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2010).

*Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT).* The CRCT is designed to measure how well students acquire the skills and knowledge described in the Georgia Performance Standards. The assessments yield information on academic achievement at the student, class, school, system, and state levels. This information is used to diagnose individual student strengths and weaknesses as related to the instruction of the Georgia Performance Standards, and to gauge the quality of education throughout Georgia. These assessments are used to measure AYP under the No Child Left Behind mandate for accountability (Georgia Department of Education, 2010).

*Instructional leadership.* This type of leadership involves the principal’s engagement in activities related to the design, implementation, and monitoring of curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; Heck & Hallinger, 2009).

*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).* IDEA, also known as P.L.108-446, is a Federal program that provides funds to states and local education agencies to support education for children with disabilities age 3 to 21. Parts B and C provide funds for states to support early intervention services for children birth to age 3 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

*No Child Left Behind (NCLB).* The NCLB legislation focuses on testing and accountability in order to guide states toward national educational goals. All states administer annual proficiency tests in reading and math in Grades 3-8. These tests align with current academic performance standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).
**NCLB accountability.** The NCLB legislation requires states to establish standards of student proficiency using a mixture of indicators. The definition of proficiency is based on either the scores of the lowest achieving demographic group or the scores of its lowest-achieving school. Schools that did not meet state-defined adequate yearly progress goals for 2 consecutive years are identified by districts as needing improvement and are subject to sanctions by the state department of education. These schools receive technical assistance to improve performance and develop a plan with goals and objectives aimed to increase performance (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

**Transformational leadership.** This type of leadership involves behaviors identified with innovation and inspiration, such as developing common goals, influencing others, and redesigning the organization around teaching and learning goals (Leithwood, 2005).

**Students with special needs and/or disabilities.** This category encompasses students with diagnosed disabilities who participate in curriculum and instruction leading to a general education diploma. For the purpose of this study only, this excludes those students found in low-incidence categories for which a modified curriculum and alternate assessment program may be most appropriate.

Summary and Organization of the Study

There is little debate that the road to standards-based reform and high levels of accountability for student achievement has its roots in the report *A Nation at Risk* (1983). The passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 solidified the need for states to examine curriculum standards and accountability systems. As a result, school principals are accountable for delivering quality educational programs that are evidenced by
improved student outcomes for all students. It is not enough for schools to meet state definitions of AYP without looking deeper at the data to determine if all students are making adequate progress. The leaders ability to monitor and analyze individual student data will continue to be important as the reauthorization of ESEA will not diminish school level accountability for student achievement but rather it may measure more accurately the progress of every child (U. S. Department of Education, 2010).

In their work, Waters et al. (2003) demonstrated that leaders can have an indirect but significant impact on student achievement when they increase their proficiency in key practices associated with achievement gains. Although a clear and agreed upon definition of instructional leadership is elusive, making it difficult to build the most effective leader, there are commonalities that emerge in reviews of the literature suggesting that setting direction and the ability to exercise influence can have an impact on overall effectiveness (Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Leithwood, 2005; Leithwood & Strauss, 2009; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Principals in search of the means to close gaps in achievement for their subgroup populations will do well to engage in reflecting on their abilities as leaders in setting direction for teaching and learning, influencing others in ways that increase collaboration and pedagogical discourse, and establishing an inclusive organizational culture.

In Chapter I, the researcher introduced the study by providing the background and research framework for the study and a statement of the problem to be examined. A review of literature related to transformational and instructional leadership, student achievement, and special education leadership is provided in Chapter II. Chapter III consists of an explanation of the chosen methodology and discussion of variables. The
results of the study are reported in Chapter IV. In Chapter V, the researcher provides a summary of the major findings of the study and conclusions.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the last decade, the rules of engagement have changed significantly for the school principal. Today’s school leaders are expected to grow themselves into instructional experts while maintaining the same level of capability as building managers. The role of the principal has been re-engineered with a focus on teaching and learning, placing new demands on the school level leader (Hallinger, 2005). With the introduction of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and increasingly high levels of accountability, more emphasis has been placed on evaluating the skill sets of the principal in an effort to uncover a magic formula for school-level success. With an array of day-to-day responsibilities and increased public accountability, principals must set clear priorities as to how to spend their time to attain the most benefit.

Since the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2001, there has been increased accountability for the participation and performance of students with disabilities in statewide assessments. While the proposed changes to accountability measures in NCLB will recognize differences in student readiness and progress over time, schools will continue to be judged as succeeding or failing based on student achievement (Department of Education, 2010). These requirements for public reporting outlined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are intended to be a construct for accountability that leads to improved student outcomes. For all schools, including high achieving schools, these subgroup populations present an Achilles heel in the assessment of school performance and success.
The conditions of NCLB require that all children, regardless of culture, circumstance, or ability, must benefit from the teaching and learning that is provided in the school setting. Through the disaggregation of student achievement data, it became clear that the past exclusion of subgroup populations in the reporting of achievement data had rendered a false sense of accomplishment in education reform. In 2009, students with disabilities made up 13% of the school-age population in the nation (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Even with the advent of IDEA, which mandates that students with disabilities access the general education curriculum and assessments, reform efforts have been insufficient in closing the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers (Boscardin, 2007; Lashley, 2007). Formerly driven by compliance and legalities, the field of special education has developed a stronger instructional focus and taken its place at the center of outcome-based educational reform.

As more federal dollars flow to low-achieving schools, principals face higher levels of accountability for instructional leadership and collaboration, as well as organizational and educational reform (Lashley, 2007). From manager to instructional leader to transformational leader, roles and expectations for principal behavior remain in flux. The convergence of NCLB and IDEA precipitated an examination of leadership behaviors and their impact on the achievement of students with disabilities (Boscardin, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

Years of research yield a variety of leadership models describing and prescribing traits associated with principal effectiveness. During the 1980s, as policy makers began
the march towards school accountability for student achievement, researchers responded by searching for evidence of behaviors that influenced those outcomes, including school contexts, teachers, and leaders. The findings from nearly 40 years of research have provided a range of leadership models and styles that could potentially impact school reform efforts and student outcomes. Although they were contributors to the understanding of organizational leadership and effective schools, early studies were not necessarily designed to produce the answers to questions about a relationship between leadership and achievement (Hallinger, Bickman & Davis, 1996; Hallinger, 2005). Over time, through a growing body of knowledge and improved research design, the models of school leadership have evolved to include not only the influence of school leadership behaviors on school effectiveness but also the influence of school context on leadership behaviors (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 2010).

From the school effectiveness literature comes evidence of key elements that contribute to school success, with specific attention given to the high level effect of leadership. Schools that demonstrate strong leadership, a safe and orderly climate, a focus on basic skill development, high expectations for their student achievement, and regular monitoring of student performance also demonstrated achievement gains (Brookover & Lezotte, 1982; Edmonds, 1979). The influence that these elements have on student achievement are supported in the later work of Hallinger (2005) as well as Leithwood and Strauss (2009) through investigations seeking empirical evidence of the impact of leadership on learning organizations.

Researchers of effective schools identified common behaviors linked to average to above average performance in students from disadvantaged schools (Brookover &
Lezotte, 1982; Edmonds, 1979). From these studies, a broader exploration of leadership behaviors emerged in models that identify the effective leader’s interactions with tasks related to developing healthy school cultures, organizational design, quality teaching and learning environments, and positive interpersonal relationships. Models of instructional and transformational leadership provide the framework for a review of effective leadership practices that influence student achievement, particularly that of students with special needs.

The influence of school leadership also appeared in the work of Sheerens and Bosker (1997). Contrary to the results of the effective schools studies, they found that leadership had the least effect size on student achievement behind that of cooperative environments, school climate, progress monitoring, content coverage and homework, use of time, parent involvement, and the pressure to achieve. The effect of leadership was predicated on how well the leadership role was defined, how the leader functioned as resource provider and the leader’s ability to facilitate decision-making (Marzano, 2003).

Although a clear and agreed upon definition of instructional leadership is elusive, making it difficult to build the most effective leader, there are commonalities that emerge, suggesting that setting direction and the ability to exercise influence can have an impact on overall effectiveness (Leithwood, 2005; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). In describing leadership influence, Yukl (1994) proposed that a leader’s ability to choose and prioritize goals, organize the work, motivate and enlist support, build relationships, and cooperate with external customers is all encompassing in describing an instructional leader. Others have identified the ability to create a positive school culture as the critical
attribute (Hallinger, 2005), with principals setting expectations for achievement and engaging in collaborative processes that improve teaching and learning.

While leadership models offer a blueprint for behavior and practice, they remain static until a principal is moved to action. In a review of lengthy descriptions of instructional leadership, Hallinger (2000) identified three overarching categories of influential practice: (a) defining school mission, (b) managing instructional programs, and (c) promoting a positive school climate. Hallinger (2000) found the principal’s ability to define the school’s mission to be the most influential characteristic of the leadership behaviors.

Waters et al. (2003) sought to more clearly define the blending of instructional and transformative leadership behaviors, developing a comprehensive model of balanced leadership that offers tangible responsibilities, qualities, and tasks that effective leaders must demonstrate in order to positively impact student learning. Their work identified the ability of the principal to foster collaborative processes such as professional learning communities in support of teaching and learning to be the most significant predictor of student outcomes. Eight important cultural predictors emerged from their meta-analysis: (a) nurturing a community of shared beliefs, (b) celebrating accomplishments, (c) building personal awareness with staff, (d) establishing two-way communication with teachers and students, (e) engaging in professional learning with staff, (f) adapting leadership behaviors to different situations, and (g) sharing decision-making behaviors. Bryk and Schneider (2002) also identified early on that trusting relationships were influential to the school climate and its contribution to student performance. Relational
trust is described as the qualities of personal respect, integrity, and personal regard for others that shape a professional learning community.

Through this large scale quantitative study, Waters et al. (2003) moved beyond the broad leadership effects to research the impact of specific behaviors in a variety of school-level contexts, including school culture, resource management, and the principal’s knowledge related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. In this meta-analysis of over 70 studies, the researchers identified 21 principal behaviors that were significantly related to student performance. The study also moved beyond simply identifying behaviors to the principal’s knowledge of when and how to employ them. These results mirrored Elmore’s (2003) work, which concluded that a leader’s knowledge, skills, and judgment must come together in order to set direction for school improvement.

Several critical attributes are found consistently across the research to form the basis for effective instructional leadership. These attributes include setting clear direction, exercising influence and identifying and supporting learning (Leithwood, 2005; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2009). Of the three, the ability to develop a mission and set clear direction carries the most influence on student achievement (Hallinger, 2005; Witziers, Bosker, and Kruger, 2003). The ability to establish and promote a clear vision for instruction appears repeatedly in the research as a primary attribute of effective leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Witziers et al., 2003).

Few studies have found leadership to have a cause-effect relationship with student gains in achievement. In a review of the research, Hallinger and Heck (1996) found that
not many studies supported a direct relationship between a hands-on approach to classroom supervision, teacher effectiveness, and student performance but there was evidence of a significant relationship in studies that targeted specific leader contributions. In compiling the results of studies conducted between 1980 and 1995, Hallinger and Heck found leadership had a small but significant direct effect on student outcomes, accounting for approximately 25% of the total variance that can be explained by school level factors after accounting for the influence of school SES. In situations where these results were found, they were identified at the elementary level and were often explained by the size of the school. In a study of principals’ implementation of the federal Reading First grants, Nettles and Herrington (2007) reported that an increase in implementation across several areas of school-wide assessment practices generated student gains in reading, including those of students with disabilities and second-language learners.

Walters et al. (2003, 2005) outlined the principal’s responsibilities in establishing instructional and organizational goals for the school, including both long- and short-term goals and the ability to challenge the process as needed. The principal must also possess the skillfulness to advocate for the school within the district and school community. The research on principal leadership and its impact on student achievement generated three specific areas of effective principal leadership (Leithwood, 2005). First, an effective leader must motivate others to work with purpose toward common goals. Second, the effective leader develops others through habits of emotional intelligence, inspiration and collaboration (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002; Schlecty, 2011) and establishing stimulating learning pathways for all. Third, the effective leader re-cultures the
organization to encourage learning communities, strengthens school culture, and promotes engagement in collaborative processes. Instructional leadership continues to emerge as an identifiable attribute that predicts student performance (Waters, et al., 2003; Schlecty, 2011).

In a review of research pertaining to the level of emphasis that principals placed on instruction, Leithwood, Jantzi, Silins, and Dart (1993) found that a leader’s high expectations for instruction and support for teachers commanded influence over school culture and climate. Waters et al. (2003) established that a principal’s knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment was also of significant influence over these factors. In addition, the meta-analysis confirmed that a principal’s direct involvement in curriculum implementation and monitoring of instruction were predictors of student success. The study also found that leaders negatively impacted student achievement results by focusing on the wrong things, such as improperly identifying achievement goals. In a longitudinal study of Chicago schools, Sebring and Bryk (2000) confirmed a relationship between quality leadership behaviors, such as goal setting, high expectations for learning, resource management, and the academic success of students.

Since the passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, the nation’s schools have been required to educate all children with disabilities, regardless of the type or severity of the disability. Over time, research and legislation have changed the landscape of special education, promoting more inclusive environments in which disabled students are educated along side their non-disabled peers. Supporters of NCLB suggest that it has reshaped the principalship through its inclusiveness of forgotten
student populations and the careful monitoring of the achievement of all students (Elmore, 2005).

The original accountability models for students with disabilities centered on issues of compliance and due process rather than academic outcomes. A well-written and compliant individual education plan (IEP) does not guarantee student learning is taking place. The world of special education changed dramatically in 2001 when the NCLB legislation was passed in an effort to improve the achievement of all students. Under this federal mandate, all public schools must demonstrate progress on academic outcomes over several years and by 2014, all students must meet or exceed state-determined achievement targets (NCLB, 2001; Crockett, 2002, McLaughlin, 2010).

Each school’s report card consists of all students and subgroup scores for ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and second-language learners. In order for a school to make AYP, all student populations must meet or exceed the targets for achievement. Schools may no longer opt out of reporting the achievement of students with disabilities. With performance gaps between subgroup populations illuminated, school leaders are held accountable, both internally and externally, particularly when otherwise high-achieving school come under fire because of the performance of students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

This renewed emphasis on accountability delivered challenges to school leaders (Boscardin, 2007; Lashley, 2007)). Many principals have little or no knowledge and training in the area of special education, yet they find themselves responsible for the learning outcomes of students with disabilities. Although absent of quantitative evidence in the achievement of students with disabilities, the Georgia Department of
Education (2010) outlined a framework for school leaders that proposes to improve the achievement of all students, including those with disabilities. This framework recognized key areas of focus for school instructional leadership, including the identification of schools needs, a systemic review of student data, high-quality classroom instruction, instructional alignment, action planning, and continuous improvement.

The Georgia Department of Education supported the findings of the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO), which promotes a principled approach to the assessment and accountability practices for students with disabilities. At the center of their work is the belief that all students, including those with disabilities, can be expected to achieve the same academic outcomes as their non-disabled peers. This can be accomplished with the provision of access to the general education curriculum, instruction that is of high quality, and a balanced assessment program that includes systematic standards-based formative and summative assessments (NCEO, 2009).

The NCEO outlined core principles that they believe can promote student success through best practices for including students with disabilities in high-stakes assessments. These best practices include (a) assurance that all students are included in ways that hold the school accountable for learning outcomes, (b) assessments allow all students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the same content, and (c) high quality decision making is in place to determine how students participate. More than ever, school leaders must challenge the status quo and engage in cultural change within their schools in an effort to meet the needs of all students, especially those whose performance is furthest from the target. This kind of courageous leadership requires
both a steady moral compass and highly effective skill as they seek to bring about school-wide change (Senge, 1990; Sheilds, 2010).

**Leadership and Organizations**

Armed with the most advanced statistical technology of the time, James Coleman engaged in the Equality of Educational Opportunity study, also known as the Coleman Report (National Commission on Education, 1983). This expansive study sought to identify any relationship between school factors and student achievement on standardized assessments. At its conclusion, the study involved 60,000 teachers, 640,000 students in Grades 1, 3, 6, 9, and 12 in 4,000 schools. The findings suggested that school-level factors had little or no impact on student achievement. Contrary to the separate but equal argument of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the Coleman report suggested that schools were not the great equalizer in students’ ability to overcome environmental factors nor did the contextual differences between schools have any relationship to student achievement.

In an analysis of Coleman’s findings, Jencks (1972) concurred that schools do little to reduce the achievement gaps between subgroup populations and student success is primarily a function of students’ background. Even more disheartening to the school reform movement was the suggestion that there was little evidence that reform efforts would succeed in improving student outcomes (Jenks, 1972). Although the results were not encouraging, this early study of school-related factors and their influence on student achievement laid the groundwork for decades of further study and research in the areas of school effectiveness and school leadership that has yielded much guidance through a number theoretical models of leadership (Waters et al., 2003).
Most of the research in leadership that took place during the 1970s came out of the private sector and business models. The work of Peters and Waterman (2004) in their study of effective companies offered a backdrop for the study of leadership and its impact on the overall success of an organization. With higher levels of accountability, the nation’s public schools must increase their productivity by placing higher achievement scores on the board for all students. As some schools achieve while others fail, the research points to the role of the principal in improving teaching and learning. Schools that focus on instruction and have high expectations for student achievement may have a better chance of meeting accountability benchmarks (Findley & Findley, 1992; Reeves, 2009).

Principals that lead their schools with a focus on instructional leadership and cultivate a learning rich environment for their lowest performers demonstrate the largest gains (Findley & Findley, 1992; Hallinger, 2007). If this is the case, how do these leaders promote this kind of focus within the school organization that in kind generates commitment from their teachers who ultimately maintain the greatest influence on student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004)? In order to lead schools through necessary and perhaps urgent change, school leaders must first understand their own beliefs and values, the framework of the organization in which they work, the capacity of the people within the organization to implement the change required and the social mores of the community at large (Fullan, 2003; Schlecty, 2011).

At the height of the Industrial Revolution, researchers began to explore the relationship of working conditions and productivity (Peters & Waterman, 2004). Not unlike the current issues in school accountability today, the quick expansion of
technology and the need for increased volume generated a competitive edge for businesses and a scramble to identify the one best way to manage the changing expectations. The ability to lead school improvement presents a challenge to principals who must lead organizational and cultural change within the context of their schools. The extent to which school leaders understand human motivation and the context of the organization may influence their leadership behaviors as well as outcomes of student performance (Lindahl, 2007).

Schools as learning organizations. A school organization is reflective of the manner in which resources of time, personnel, space and materials are allocated to achieve the maximum impact on student achievement. This organizational plan is the framework that provides stewardship to the school’s vision, mission and focus on learning (Reeves, 2009; Zepeda, 2007). Influenced by a global economy and competitive market, businesses recognized the value of the individual and the importance of the contributions of all stakeholders in the process. Whereas work was once driven by materialism as a means to an end, the value in the work began to address more the intrinsic needs and values of the individuals in the workforce (Senge, 1990). Emerging from the body of research and analysis within business models came the branding of schools as learning organizations, describing places in which people focus on continuous improvement and seek to learn new things together (Senge, 1990; Reeves, 2009).

The difference between a learning organization and its autocratic counterpart is evident when the practices of continuous improvement and collaboration become habit. Following a review of research and writings in business, Senge (1990) offered five
disciplines of learning organizations that, when developed together, would move an organization from mere invention to grand innovation. Senge calls the discipline of personal mastery the spiritual foundation of the learning organization in its capacity to provide opportunities for learning and growth to benefit both the individual and the organization. The act of self-reflection and challenging of assumptions contributes to the discipline of mental models by which paradigms can be explored and altered within a group of organizational learners. Leaders who build a shared vision, foster engagement over compliance, and develop learning teams make complete the disciplines within a learning organization (Schlecty, 2002, 2011). True learning organizations engage in meaningful dialogue and collaboration rich in ideas and production.

Senge (1990) pointed out that the learning team is an essential component of modern organizations and it is through the synergy of the five disciplines that organizations advance into adaptive learning that will in due course develop its future. The fifth discipline of systems thinking, the recognition that each element of an organization is threaded together, is a key conceptual framework for managing change and solving problems and is critical in the sustainability of the other practices (Fullan, 2002; Senge, 1990). The capacity of the learning organization, in the case of public schools, to affect large-scale change, specifically in closing achievement gaps, depends upon the principal’s focus on the development of teachers’ knowledge and skills, building of professional communities that encourage learning, the coherence of the educational program and the schools vision, and the employment of technical resources to support the school’s work (DuFour, 2002; Fullan, 2002; Schlecty, 2011).
Leadership and Student Achievement

Leadership is defined as equal parts perception and reality. Beginning with the great man theory and culminating in today’s conceptual models of leadership, behaviorists and researchers alike have mulled over the personal characteristics and behaviors of leaders and their influences on others in an effort to define best practice. It is critical that the leader is perceived by the followers to be intellectually capable of effective leadership (Schlecty, 2011). Principals swing on a pendulum between managers and instructional leaders in an effort to meet the demands of an ever-changing role and to respond to increased expectations of accountability (Spillane, 2006). Today’s school leader continues to face the managerial demands of a bureaucratic organization while at the same time massaging the ideals of a diverse constituency. In order to identify effective principalship behaviors, it is valuable to explore the evolution of leadership theory and theoretical approaches to the practice of school leadership.

The work in leadership during the 1900s contributed to models of practice by identifying personal traits and behaviors associated with effective leaders and describing their impact on successful organizations (Burns, 1978). Burns described managers as transactors who were keepers of policy and procedure within the organization. Leaders were transformers within the organization who initiated vision and identified organizational goals. In the first study of the effects of leadership styles on organizational effectiveness, Lewin, Lippit, and White (1939) proposed three distinct styles of leadership, specifically related to decision-making practices: (a) autocratic style, in which the leader is task oriented, making decisions in isolation; (b) democratic, in which the leader involves others in the decision making process; and (c) laissez-faire,
in which the leader has minimal involvement in the decision making process. Today’s leader must demonstrate both transactional and transformational leadership skills in the complex role of school principal (Lindahl, 2007).

In any organization there appear to be distinct leaders and followers. Behaviorists sought to examine those skills most significant to effective leadership. Stodgill (1974) identified traits that separated the leaders from the followers: (a) adaptability, (b) alertness to the social environment, (c) assertiveness, (d) cooperation, (d) decisiveness, (e) dependability, (f) desire to influence others, (g) energetic, (h) persistent, (i) self-confident, (j) resilient, (k) and willingness to assume responsibility. The results suggested that these individuals do not necessarily choose to lead but rather they emerge as leaders when a given situation illuminates the traits they possess. The followers’ perception of their principal’s leadership approach within the context of the school organization impacts credibility and support for initiatives and reform (Lindahl, 2007).

Additionally, McCall and Lombardo (1983) identified primary traits that they believed could make or break a leader: (a) the ability to remain emotionally stable during times of stress, (b) acknowledging mistakes and admitting error, and (c) the ability to demonstrate a wide area of expertise. In an analysis of literature on leadership traits, Northhouse (2001) supported this thinking in the identification of five key traits of highly effective leaders: (a) self-confidence, (b) determination, (c) integrity, (d) intellect, and (e) sociability. Effective leadership traits were found to be beneficial but not sufficient for success in leadership. The behavioral sciences brought a new approach to leadership in its emphasis on social interaction and the work environment, sending the
research in a new direction more concerned with actions and behaviors of leaders in the contexts of their work environments (Robinson et al., 2008).

*Instructional Leadership*

Emerging from effective schools research (Brookover & Lezotte, 1982), instructional leadership does little to define quantifiably the qualities of effective leaders, but has become a widely accepted label for behavior that supports student achievement through knowledge of instructional practices (Leithwood et al., 2004). Moving from managers to leaders of instruction, the principal became the catalyst for improved teaching and learning in the school. According to Leithwood, the importance of instructional leadership emerged from the research on school leaders. The growing examination of the change process (Fullan, 2002), effective schools (Edmonds, 1979), and school and program improvement (Edmonds, 1979; Waters et al., 2003) has brought attention to the significant function of the principal as the school’s instructional leader.

The most frequently cited model of instructional leadership comes from an analysis of 125 studies completed between 1980 and 2000. From this analysis came three categories of practice identified with instructional leadership and school success: (a) defining mission, (b) management of the instructional program, and (c) the promotion of a positive school learning environment (Hallinger, 2003). Edmond’s (1979) study of urban elementary schools provided some impetus for the model’s development in that the role of the principal was found to be influential in managing needed school reform. Instructional leadership defines the principal’s role in bringing stakeholders together in setting school goals, defining the mission, and maintaining focus on student achievement (Hallinger, 2003). In defining the purposes of the school,
the principal exerts the most influence effecting successful outcomes that are
extraneously impacted by factors such as school size, socioeconomic status and
community demographics (Hallinger & Heck, 2002, 2010; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987;
Heck & Hallinger, 2009).

Evidence suggests that the principal’s impact on student achievement and overall
school effectiveness is tied to the actions taken to improve classroom instruction
(Boscardin, 2007; Hallinger, 2003; Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007). The
principal influences classroom instruction by way of active supervision of classroom
practices, monitoring curriculum implementation, and the regular assessment of student
progress (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; Reeves, 2007, 2009; Robinson et al., 2008). Blasé
and Blasé (1999) characterized instructional leadership as seven behaviors that
inform instruction and ultimately influence academic achievement: (a) making suggestions, (b)
providing feedback and commentary, (c) modeling effective instruction, (d) gathering
opinions, (e) fostering collaboration, (f) providing professional development, and (g)
offering positive feedback and praise for effective instruction.

Principal behaviors that direct attention to classroom instruction foster a climate
of academic success (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Halverson, Grigg, Pritchett, & Thomas,
2007; Heck, 2009). Principals who provide strong school leadership focused on
instruction are more likely to have higher achievement than those who are perceived to
be weak instructional leaders (Fullan, 2002). Weber’s (1971) study of reading
instruction in inner-city schools explored the variables in achievement between 17
schools. Weber’s results demonstrated that strong instructional leadership was among
the characteristics of the four successful schools. In a 2007 study, Sherman and Crum
supported these findings, demonstrating that a principal’s core beliefs about reading instruction, when acted upon, can influence reading outcomes for students. Strong instructional leadership then appears to be sufficient in the context of schools requiring immediate and urgent reform. Reeves’ work with 100/100/100 schools identified gaps in leaders perceptions of the quality of reading instruction and that of teachers’ reports of the quality of instruction within the classroom. Principals must develop the knowledge and skills that enable them to recognize ineffective instruction and subsequently offer appropriate feedback that leads to improvement (Reeves, 2008).

While all levels of leadership maintain an indirect impact on classroom practices, Leithwood, et al. (2004) suggest that the challenge is to direct attention to those activities that will increase student achievement. While many leadership models have emerged over the years, the instructional leadership model and the transformational leadership model are the most recognized by educational leaders as having an indirect relationship with student achievement. Effective principals engage in practices that promote collaborative inquiry rather than managerial tasks (Halverson et al., 2007).

In research designed to explore the effects of leadership practice on teaching practice, Marks and Printy (2003) cited the positive influence of transformational leadership when the principal and teachers shared the role of instructional leadership. Teacher survey responses suggested that principals who inspired teachers to be innovative, provided intellectual stimulation, supported teachers, and practiced shared leadership were most influential in making changes at the classroom level that would ultimately impact student achievement. Additionally, the practice of shared leadership came about only when the principal was purposeful and intentional in its development.
and implementation (Marks & Printy, 2003). Three factors related to principal behaviors emerged that were deemed critical in making sustainable change in classroom practice: (a) a focus on organizational missions and goals, (b) development of a culture of trust and collaboration, and (c) a commitment to supporting instructional improvement.

Principal behaviors that foster such influential teacher practices as collaboration focused on teaching and learning have a significant impact on student outcomes (Marks & Printy, 2003; Printy, 2010). Contrary to the research that supports the principal’s influence in changing classroom practice, Miller and Rowan (2006) studied the relationships between contingency instructional leadership and growth in student achievement in elementary and secondary schools, finding that the reciprocal effect was not necessarily a strong predictor of student achievement.

In a review of the literature, Printy (2010) identified recurring themes in instructional leadership related to the principal’s ability to improve student learning and influence teachers in improving their practices. Marks and Nance (2007) approached a quantitative study of leader perceptions of their ability to influence outcomes through personal responsibilities and their interactions with stakeholders. Perceptions of their influence were cited in the areas of curriculum, setting standards for performance, providing professional development, hiring and evaluating teachers, budgeting, and developing policies for managing student behavior. The results confirmed that the level and context of accountability played a role in their perception of how effective they could be. Principals felt most competent in their abilities in areas of curriculum and teacher supervision when teachers shared in decision-making. Differences were also found between the level of local and state accountability systems and the principals’ self-
efficacy to influence outcomes. Principals perceived their greatest abilities were in the areas of supervision and instruction when these practices were shared with teachers (Marks & Nance, 2007).

As teachers respond to the varying needs of a diverse student population, they must adjust their professional practices and, in some cases, reflect on their personal beliefs about student learning. While it is important for students to learn in environments that are open to risk taking and high levels of interdependence, it is likewise critical for their teachers to be part of an engaging professional community. An effective leader must encourage teacher exploration of best practices in a culture of trust and collaboration (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Effective school leaders stay close to the pulse of their school communities, knowing their constituents and the community mores well (Kouzes & Posner, 1997). With increased skepticism from society in an era of higher expectations and accountability, school leaders must build trusting relationships with both their internal and external customers. A school community built on trusting relationships encourages open communication, fosters opportunities to employ community resources, focuses on problem solving rather than blame, and develops collective commitment to school goals (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership in the context of educational environments grew from the early work of Burns (1978), whose model came from the political and industrial worlds. The first models of transformational leadership were employed during the rebuilding of Japan’s business economy in post World War II. Like the attributes of
effective businesses highlighted by Peters and Waterman (2004), the concept of transforming schools into productive and synergized work environments became an important notion for schools. At the core of transformational leadership are the ideas of innovation, inspiration, and sustainable normative change in an organization. This kind of transformation requires a new order in the way that schools approach the business of schooling through the evolution of the social norms that define rules, policies and relationships within the organization (Schlecty, 2005).

Beyond any immediate and urgent need for results, transformational change seeks to develop the organization apart from the leader to build the capacity of the followers. Transformational leaders are highly aware of their school environments and recognize they must address the hierarchy of individual needs in order for change to be sustained, beginning at a very basic level and gradually moving towards self-actualization. These leaders develop the school culture through individual consideration, shared visions and goals, building the culture, providing intellectual stimulation, setting high expectations, and modeling for others (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). The culture of the school becomes one of empowered individuals who work collectively toward agreed upon goals.

In their 2006 study of transformational leadership, Leithwood and Jantzi sought to address the ambiguity that surrounded some transformational models of leadership by testing the direct and indirect effects of distributed school-specific leadership behaviors at the classroom level and ultimately in student gains on standardized assessments. A criticism of transformational leadership is its reliance on qualities that are not easily quantifiable, such as emotions, values, and beliefs (Yukl, 1999). Leithwood and Jantzi’s study used motivation, capacity, and work settings as key variables in an attempt to
measure the impact of transformational leadership on student achievement during the implementation of reading and numeracy programs in schools in England.

Though the Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) study has limitations in its low survey response rate and its measure of annual gains rather than longitudinal data, the researchers feel strongly that the results adequately provide insight regarding characteristics of transformational leadership. Altered classroom practices show the strongest link with capacity (both $r = .50$), followed by motivation ($r = .30$ and .29). The results of the correlation study shows that leadership has a significant although weak relationship with classroom practices related to both motivation and capacity. Clearly, top-down implementation of strategies and instructional practice will not bring about systemic, sustainable change.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) proposed that leadership significantly influences the probability that teachers will adjust their instructional practice. Despite limited recognition in teacher surveys that transformational practices had influenced the implementation of instructional programs, the researchers believed that transformational behaviors have the greatest influence when directing teachers towards classroom practices that are proven to increase learning (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Since transformational leadership encourages the distribution of leadership beyond roles, it is difficult to know the exact impact of the leader’s behavior.

A further thought about transforming school environments comes from a view of transformative leadership (Shields, 2010). This approach takes the need for change well beyond the schoolhouse to the global stage. The issues addressed in NCLB reach deep to concepts of social justice and equity by setting the expectation that all students,
regardless of predisposition for failure, will have more than just an opportunity for success. The transformative leader adds to the practice of change by directing the analysis and dialogue required to make sweeping change in the nature of schooling.

In this transformative approach, leadership decisions are made with clear moral purpose and attention to the achievement of unaccounted for populations. This leader not only acquires power at the school level to improve issues of equity and justice, but also uses positional power to make change on the community stage. Together, these three approaches to school leadership present a mix of skills and knowledge that can be adapted to schools at any stage of change and in any school context. Effective leaders must know when and how to employ their skills and knowledge if they are to be effective (Lindahl, 2007; Shields, 2010).

In a study designed to measure the differential effects of leadership models on student achievement, Robinson et al. (2008) found the impact of instructional leadership ($d = 0.42$) to be three to four times greater than that of transformational leadership ($d = 0.11$), while other types of leadership, specifically a blend of practices showed an effect size of 0.30. One explanation offered for this difference is the outcomes measured in transformational leadership studies tended to be social in nature, while instructional leadership outcomes were mostly academic. Instructional leadership has evolved since its inception to represent actions shared by both principals and teachers.

Following their meta-analysis of 24 published studies related to leadership, Robinson et al. (2008) found strong effect sizes in five domains: (a) setting goals and expectations, (b) providing resources, (c) monitoring the instructional program, (d) encouraging and participating in professional learning, and (e) developing a safe and
orderly learning environment. Twenty-one indicators in the domain of goal setting and expectations yielded an effect size of 0.42, which researchers deem moderately large and educationally significant (Robinson et al., 2008).

In a review of literature on educational leadership, Leithwood (2005) found four themes that supported the contribution of leadership practice to school success: (a) setting direction, (b) influencing others, (c) monitoring the instructional program, and (d) redesigning the organization. The work of Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) in investigating what they call turnaround schools suggests that the indirect relationship between leadership behavior and student achievement remains significant. In their study of four elementary and four secondary schools, Leithwood and Jantzi found all four themes in teachers’ perceptions of leadership behaviors, with setting direction ranking first. The results showed a correlation coefficient of .80 in the relationship between leadership behaviors and school conditions and an effect size of 0.62 on classroom conditions. This shows a positive relationship between the leader’s influence on the overall school environment and classroom practices. Leithwood and Jantzi contended that leadership behaviors account for 17% of the variance in achievement between groups.

Setting direction. According to Reeves, schools are like ships and should be sailed. He further suggests that school leaders must clearly chart the course for the sail by providing direction for the teaching and learning that will take place. But how do leaders know where to go? Elmore (2005) noted that leaders who know where they are going will do much good but those who do not will do harm if they focus on the wrong things. A lack of vision and persistence in direction can be a significant barrier to school
improvement efforts (Schlecty, 2005). Effective leaders must develop self-awareness and knowledge of their school community before they set sail.

Effective school leadership can be defined by its purpose in setting goals that represent the beliefs and values of the school community (Murphy et al., 2007). As the school leader’s impact on student achievement is mediated through teachers, the vision must be focused on teaching and learning. The effective leader is masterful in communicating the school vision through their relationships with others and by modeling expectations. The vision is kept at the center of the organizations’ daily practices (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Murphy et al., 2007).

According to Schlecty (2011), visions are not simply accomplished but rather they are realized through clearly established goals designed to support the school’s purpose. In establishing and attaining meaningful school goals in support of student achievement, leaders must explore the nature and content of the goals. Instructional leaders tend to set goals with clear ties to content, whereas transformational leaders presume more generic goals (Robinson et al., 2008). If they are to have the most impact, the direction of the school must become a part of school-wide systems and processes. Studies show that goal setting is a part of human nature (Latham & Locke, 2006) and provides groups with a sense of purpose. The dissonance created between current levels of performance and desired outcomes motivates individuals to act. When individuals are equipped with the needed knowledge and skill, there is a linear relationship between the difficulty of the goal and their performance in reaching that goal (Latham & Locke, 2006).

In a quantitative study of the relationship between secondary principals’ instructional leadership and student achievement, Graziel (2007) found the role of
leadership to be indirect but pivotal in impacting student gains however the influence of specific behaviors remained vague. In this study, designed to identify indirect relationships between different domains of instructional leadership and student achievement, the sample consisted of 256 teachers in 26 secondary schools in Israel. Respondents rated principals in the areas of visibility, framing school goals, supervision and evaluation of instruction, coordination of curriculum, and monitoring student performance. Graziel’s findings suggest that 49% of the variance in achievement could be explained by school socioeconomic factors, class size and the school leader’s ability to frame organizational goals and communicate with school staff.

In a 2009 study of instructional leadership, Graczewski, Knudsen and Holtzman also found a positive correlation between the principal’s ability to develop and communicate a clear school-wide vision focused on teaching and learning. In their research of quasi-experimental design, the researchers collected three years of school reform data from principals and teachers. In order to measure teacher and principal perceptions of different aspects of instructional leadership, scales were developed in the areas of coherent school-wide vision for instructional improvement, focus on student learning, follow up and instructional support, and leadership engagement in instructional improvement. These four aspects of leadership were compared to aspects of teacher professional development related to literacy instruction, including the plan’s coherence and relevance and content/curriculum focus. Patterns emerged in the findings to suggest that a significant positive relationship exists between a principal’s ability to foster a coherent vision for instructional improvement and a coherent and relevant professional development plan related to literacy instruction. Principals indirectly impact classroom
instruction by the extent to which they develop a strong connection between the school-wide vision for school improvement and the actions taken to improve the quality of classroom instruction through teacher development. The results also found that in those case studies in which there was a low coherence of vision and professional development, the principals reported this as an area of weakness. Principals perceived to be instructional experts and resources were reported by teachers as more desirable than those who were co-learners. School leaders who demonstrate weakness in setting direction for the school may have a negative effect on classroom instruction and ultimately student achievement (Graczewski et al., 2009).

In bridging gaps in student achievement, school leaders must recognize that changes in school environments and contexts require an assessment of goals and strategies that support student learning. Schools with past success in student achievement face conflict when once effective strategies no longer produce results (Latham & Locke, 2006). The school leader is then tasked with regulating the direction of the school by focusing on goal-relevant actions. Bandura (1991) stated that two sets of beliefs interact to determine the strength of motivation in attaining goals. When teachers believe they can accomplish the goals and find the context of their work congenial to the situation, they are more motivated to engage in the tasks. Because of setting clear goals and task direction, leaders foster self-efficacy in others that is required for sustainable school reform (Latham & Locke, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

Elmore’s (2005) model of accountable leadership underscores the value of shared vision. School leaders must first hold themselves to a high level of internal accountability and in turn influence others to accept that same grade of responsibility
School leaders who can influence their staff to combine personal and 
organizational responsibility in order to gain power over work environments and 
productivity. Principals who are committed to working \textit{with} teachers rather than 
working \textit{on} them develop trusting environments in which the vision is supported and 
nurtured (Schlecty, 2011). Through practice, and not simply accountability and 
expectations, people internalize the values of their organization, which allows them to 
move from individual effort to organizational effort. Like Covey’s (2004) circles of 
influence and concern, Elmore’s model cited leaders as the promoter of their schools’ 
ability to influence factors deemed beyond control.

As a transformational and transformative leader, the school principal must assess 
his or her own values and beliefs about curriculum and instruction, human nature, 
organizations, and the role of leader. Strong leaders have a sense of self and a well-
developed personal mission statement that guides their practice (Covey, 2004; Schlecty, 
2011). Their own beliefs about social justice and equity will be at play, along with their 
own feelings about NCLB and IDEA. Principals with deep understanding of their own 
beliefs are better positioned to collaborate with others and set direction for the school 
(Schlecty, 2011). Leaders must answer their own questions about the participation of 
parents and families in their students’ education, the inclusion of special needs students 
in general education environments, and the importance of providing opportunities for 
those who have come to school disadvantaged by circumstance.

If the school is to improve the performance of students with disabilities, it is 
important to create a vision and mission that includes them fully when setting direction 
for the school. Leaders must arm themselves with real data and hard evidence when
identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the organization and determining direction (Boscardin, 2007; Lashley, 2007). The most effective organizations maintain a bias for action and plan for success by their willingness to examine and explore the needs for change (Peters & Waterman, 2004). Schlecty (2002; 2011) contends that one of the most important actions of the principal is to insure the shared understanding of the direction and purpose of the organization among staff, students and community. If schools are to improve, then principals must exercise their influence by engaging others in discourse regarding matters of concern to the school.

Leaders in turnaround schools must work in the symbolic and political frame of the organization to identify what is embodied in the current school culture and the community at large (Bolman & Deal, 2000; Leithwood & Strauss, 2007). An assessment of the needs and values of the community provides important information when determining which direction to go and when determining which rituals and ceremonies should stay as the school embarks on a journey of change (Bolman & Deal, 2000; Fullan, 2005). A leader’s ability to communicate and provide a map for the journey is critical at all stages but is no more important than at the onset. With a well-communicated direction, a shared mission and a thorough analysis of the organizations’ needs, both leader and followers begin a journey of reform with clarity and purpose.

Influencing others. Fullan (2003) provided advice to those who have clearly identified the need for reform and set out on a journey of change. The leader must recognize the importance of building the capacity of others. Educational reformers recognize that for real school reform to occur there must be a concerted effort to decentralize decision-making, increase teacher empowerment and promote parent
involvement. By empowering others to lead, the leader strengthens the sustainability of the organizational goals. By building teachers as leaders, the effective principal will influence the way in which knowledge is shared, problems are solved, and curriculum is taught (Schlecty, 2005).

High achieving schools are representative of positive and empowering school cultures that build confidence in teachers’ ability to meet the needs of students. School environments committed to learning communities and collaborative practice can enhance their effectiveness in producing results by building academic capacity (Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Schlecty, 2011). Schlecty describes 4 actions of highly effective principals that encourages and sustains change through the development of others. Principals increase the awareness of their followers through the questions they ask, the feedback they provide and the things they reward and celebrate. Effective principals invest in the professional learning of themselves and the staff. Professional learning that supports school goals will model what is expected, respected and celebrated as part of the school’s vision for student learning. Highly engaging principals are always teachers. Schlecty believes that professional growth is at the heart of the role of a principal (p.143). Teachers are more influenced and find greater value in professional learning when the principal is present. By regularly commenting on strategies and instructional practice, principals clarify the school’s direction and reinforce priorities.

Most research is approached from a cross-sectional design that provides a snapshot of the leader’s impact on achievement at one moment in time. In a growth model study of the effects of distributed leadership on math achievement, Heck and Hallinger (2009) recognized the need to explore the impact of leadership on school
improvement over time. The concept of distributed leadership is an action that takes time to implement and requires efforts to develop others in areas of decision-making and participatory governance. The researchers surveyed elementary school teachers to determine levels of academic capacity.

For the purposes of their study, Heck & Hallinger defined school leadership for school improvement to include setting direction, motivating staff and coordinating an environment that strives for improvement. The effects of the school leader are mediated by the academic and social conditions of the school. Survey data collected from teachers included levels of decision-making, school governance and participation in the evaluation of school programs as compared with 3rd grade math achievement. The results of the study suggest that leaders’ influence is indirect but significant in improving student achievement and in increase of 1 standard deviation in the area of academic capacity was associated with a growth rate of almost 40% in the area of math achievement (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Therefore, principals who distribute leadership through purposeful actions that increase individual and collective knowledge and skill may exert significant indirect influence over student achievement.

Teachers who possess strong perceptions of self-efficacy are more likely to endure when confronting challenges within the context of their schools. Teacher efficacy is a reliable predictor of student success and is strongly influenced by the actions of the principal and the relationships within the organization (Youngs, 2007). Principals develop the capacity of teachers through their ability to inspire, encourage and activate the potential and output of teachers (Hall & Simeral, 2008). Hall & Simeral refer to multi-faceted Administrator Responsibility Diamond that contains those areas of
responsibility that build teachers’ capacity for high performance. Facet 1 challenges leaders to know each teacher’s strengths, talents, and skills. Through daily, intentional classroom supervision in Facet 2, the principal visits classrooms with purpose, utilizing look-for’s and curriculum guides. The reflective feedback in Facet 3 requires the principal to engage in the development of examples, direct commentary and probing questions that spark instructional discourse and learning. Finally, in Facet 4, professional development plans represent individual teacher goals, including collaborative work and evaluation components. These collaborative responsibilities serve to clarify school visions and goals as well as a reinforcement of beliefs. As an educational organization, the school is in the people business and the leader must provide opportunities for all stakeholders to build trusting relationships that foster engagement over compliance (DiPaola & Tschunnan-Moran, 2003).

Transformational leadership has a strong positive influence on outcome variables and teacher behavior (Ross & Gray, 2006). Substantive change, particularly transformational change, cannot be sustained until it has affected every classroom (Schlecty, 2011). Ross and Gray (2006) define teacher efficacy as the set of personal beliefs that are tied to specific domains of teacher behavior. Expanding earlier research that supports the principal’s influence on teacher efficacy and student outcomes, Ross and Gray examined the mechanisms through which this influence occurs. Through a contribution to collective efficacy, transformational leadership provides a source of increased self-efficacy for teachers by setting attainable goals, identifying clear standards for teaching and learning, developing cultures of collaboration, and linking teacher actions to student achievement results. Collective efficacy is a powerful
mediator of a commitment to school-community partnerships as teachers develop the belief that they can respond effectively to external demands. Principals play a critical role in developing teachers who can identify cause-effect relationships between classroom practices and achievement results (Ross & Gray, 2006).

Leaders must model their expectations for communicating with students, parents and each other through collaboration and shared decision-making. To insure effectiveness, the leader recognizes the importance of staff readiness for leadership and the level of importance of the task when implementing shared leadership practices (Hersey & Blanchard, 1999). Establishing practices in which teachers and community members begin to solve school problems together will employ the highest levels of commitment toward the collective goals of the organization (Fullan, 2003, 2002; Peters & Waterman, 2004).

Comer (2005) provides a framework for changing school-family interactions based on the premise that students’ behavior, preparation for school, and academic achievement can be improved through positive stakeholder collaboration. Through increasing levels of parental participation and shared decision making, students will develop optimistic views of academic learning. The effective school leader embraces the school community as a valuable resource whose support is not only vital but is required for sustainable change. The astute principal is knowledgeable of the community that the school serves (Schlecty, 2011).

In a study of 87 elementary schools, Hallinger, Bickman and Davis (1996) examined the relationship between leadership and student achievement in the area of reading by answering the question, “Do principals make a difference in student
learning?” By its design, the study sought to counter criticism that earlier studies failed to account for the interaction of principal leadership with prevailing school-related variables. While they acknowledge that principals may have some direct effects on student achievement, Hallinger et al. contended that the effectiveness of school leaders is most associated with the actions of others. Their findings supported the notion of a significant although indirect relationship between leadership behaviors that influence classroom instruction and school effectiveness. Most significant is the relationship between the principalship and the instructional organization of the school.

In a more recent study, Supovitz et al. (2009) examined both leader and peer influence in matters related to instructional practice and student achievement. Both principals and teacher peers have a detectable effect on student achievement by way of their influence on instructional pedagogy. The results suggested that principals unidirectionally influence student achievement by maintaining a school-wide focus on teaching and learning, setting and communicating achievement targets, and by building trusting learning communities in which teachers participate in instructional conversations.

Supovitz et al. (2009) proposed that principals exercise indirect influence over classroom practices through instructional leadership that is mediated by the influence of their peers. Of interest to the field of educational leadership are the differences found in levels of influence within content areas. Peer influence carried twice the impact as leadership influence in the area of math as compared to English Language Arts, suggesting that leaders are less apt to be content experts in math. The study relied heavily on self-reports from teachers and leaders and it is acknowledged that teachers are
influenced by leader behaviors in different ways and to varying degrees (Supovitz et al., 2009).

*Redesigning the organization.* Effective school leaders are highly skilled at creating dynamic learning organizations and encouraging collaborative communities of learners (Murphy et al., 2007). It is not sufficient that principals and teachers are highly skilled in the design of instructional programs. The organizations in which they work must be transformed from bureaucratic organizations to learning organizations (Schlecty, 2011). Hallinger and Heck (2010) concluded that leaders contribute to student learning through the development of organizational and socio-cultural processes that identify the school’s ability to improve (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Robinson et al., 2008). Principals no longer lead alone and the study confirms the need to promote leadership beyond the role of principal. Comparing the four conceptual models of research–direct, mediated, reversed mediated, and reciprocal–Hallinger and Heck (2010) proposed that most research supports the idea that leaders contribute to student outcomes but do not always identify the *how.*

Scholars suggest multiple ways to redesign an organization in order to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Student learning must take priority with a consistent practice of effective instructional behaviors such as feedback, support of collaborative work, and a system of praise and rewards for effective teaching practices (Zepeda, 2007). Common practices found in the research include the use of data to examine achievement gaps, root cause analysis, development of strategies to address areas of need, and continuous monitoring programs to assess the effectiveness of the
strategies (McLaughlin, 2010). Learning-focused leaders promote professional development and insure systems exist that support continuous improvement.

Leadership for school improvement must include clear goals for improving teaching and learning. Equally important, however, is the creation of environments that support the development of effective teaching practices in areas of needed change (Fullan, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003; Murphy et al., 2007). In what they call collective leadership, Hallinger and Heck (2010) synthesized earlier models of shared and distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006) that encourages change in governance models and decision-making practices. In the mediated effects model, the results showed a small positive indirect relationship between changes in collective leadership and student outcomes in math and reading. The strength in these findings is the idea of leader-driven change. In situations where the leader encourages collective leadership and shared decision-making, there was evidence of impact on classroom practices and student learning ($d = .98$).

Heck and Hallinger (2009) explored the dimensions of distributed leadership as a vehicle for sustainable change and proposed that changing the academic capacity within the school has a direct and significant relationship to increased student achievement in math. In composing their growth model, they include student composition and principal stability as predictors of these outcomes. Their analysis supports the mediated-effects model of leadership in the belief that principals impact student learning through their impact on people, organizational processes and the structure of the school.

Over a four-year period, the researchers used random teacher survey data to examine changes in practice as compared to math achievement data (Heck & Hallinger,
2009). The results support the hypothesis that changes in distributed leadership were directly and significantly related to increased academic capacity (standardized \( y = 0.46 \), \( p < .05 \)). In turn, the increase in academic capacity directly influenced growth in student performance in math (standardized \( y = .018 \), \( p < .05 \)). The combined effects of distributed leadership had an indirect but significant effect on student outcomes in math. Heck and Hallinger (2009) imply that an increase in the academic capacity of an organization by as little as one standard deviation may increase the overall school growth rate by 40 percent.

In the mediated effect model, the school leader was the impetus of the change; whereas, there were no data to support that the school’s growth in outcomes was the agent of change. The findings support the notion that improvement-driven leadership must be linked to school contexts, specifically school profiles and the capacity of the staff for making change (Fullan, 2005; Lindahl, 2007). A strong organizational culture supports the work of its members and should be congruent with the school’s plan for improvement (Bandura, 1991). Building the capacity of the school leader is beneficial when it is embedded in a school-wide comprehensive plan for improved student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

The transformative leader approaches their influence at both the school and community level by examining values and beliefs. A focus of this type of leadership is to engage others through a state of agency in which followers find individual satisfaction as a result of organizational success (Shields, 2010). They direct attention to those who may be underrepresented, such as special education staff and parents. They move to provide individual attention to staff development needs and empower others by
providing professional learning needs. They address issues of self-efficacy through the human resource frame by being sensitive and responsive to personal needs and fears about issues related to school progress, such as diversity, socioeconomic status, and disabilities. On the political stage, they use their influence and power to change attitudes and policy that inhibit progress in achieving goals for student achievement (Shields, 2010).

The culture of the school evolves over time and personifies the people within the organization and their interactions. The effective leader recognizes the iceberg analogy of school culture and climate, knowing that what exists below the surface is the real representation of what the school believes about teaching and learning (Reeves, 2006). The transformational leader influences others in such a way that the issues lying deep below the surface come forward so that they do not interfere with the school vision and mission. They have strength in their own resolve to withstand the ugliness that may appear when teachers or members of the community do not find value in educating all students. School staff that harbor resentment towards minority or special education students will undermine the mission if the beliefs are acknowledged. The interpersonal skill and emotional intelligence with which the leader approaches these ‘bergs’ will set the tone for the school (Hersey & Blanchard, 1999; Reeves, 2006, 2007).

In an analysis of 24 restructured schools across the nation, Marks and Printy (2003) examined the impact of principal and teacher engagement in instructional discourse and its relationship to increased student performance. With instructional and transformational practices as the conceptual models of leadership, the study broke from the traditional model of instructional leadership to include a shared instructional
leadership model. Marks and Printy (2003) hypothesized that while transformational leadership is necessary for schools in need of reform, it is not sufficient to ensure effective teaching and learning. Their model suggested that the effective principal employs both transformational and instructional qualities and when they coexist, the impact on school outcomes is significant (Marks & Printy, 2003).

Balanced leadership. The most comprehensive review of educational leadership practices and student achievement comes from Waters et al. (2003) in their balanced leadership model. In their extensive review of 30 plus years of articles and research on the topic, they found only 69 of the nearly 5,000 documents that met the criteria for quantitative research in which the independent variable was leadership behaviors and the dependent variable was student achievement. The study is unique in its scope and the size of the sample, which included over a million students and thousands of teachers. In a meta-analysis of the results Waters et al. found an indirect but significant relationship between the behaviors of leaders and student achievement expressed in a correlation coefficient that defines the nature and strength of a relationship between variables ($r = .25$). The research produced a list of 21 principles or actions that were found to have a relationship to student achievement ranging from $r = .25$ to $r = .31$. A multiple regression was used to account for the relationship that exists between and within variables such as principal gender and school socioeconomic status and was used to predict outcomes (Waters et al., 2003, 2005).

As a result of the analysis, Waters et al. (2003, 2005) provided an example of the influence principal leadership can have at any school. They proposed that given two schools of relative similarity in populations, teachers, and student populations, there
could be an achievement difference of 1 standard deviation if one of the principals improved performance in each of the 21 behaviors. If leaders can identify and improve specific behaviors that are tied to increased student achievement then they could have an impact on hundreds or thousands of students. If leaders could identify behaviors associated with improved achievement for students with disabilities, then perhaps there would be a decrease in the gap in achievement between them and their non-disabled peers (Waters et al., 2003, 2005).

Leadership in the era of accountability. As American schools began to receive report cards of their own, researchers began to look for stronger connections between leadership behaviors and desired outcomes. The changing landscape of the principalship increased the value in research designed to provide models of effective behaviors that could influence student achievement. Leadership becomes most relevant when it has an impact on the teaching and learning that ultimately improves student achievement (Leithwood, et al., 2004).

Leadership self-efficacy. After research began to focus on the behaviors and practices of school leaders, the results pointed toward a significant indirect impact on student achievement (Heck & Hallinger, 2009). Bandura’s (1991) theory of self-efficacy, the belief about one’s own ability to achieve a goal, or collective efficacy, the belief about one’s colleagues’ collective ability to accomplish a task has significant importance for school leaders. These variables play a vital role in leaders’ ability to function effectively within particular environments (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) cited two types of self-efficacy for school leadership: beliefs about one’s ability to directly influence student learning and beliefs
about the collective capacity of one’s staff and district level staff to improve student learning. According to Bandura’s (1991) theory, individual’s beliefs have a direct impact on their choice of activities and behaviors as well as the intensity of effort they expend in accomplishing a task. School leaders face challenges presented in the unique contexts of their school environments. For effective leaders, their level of self-efficacy in meeting those challenges and solving problems will influence their ability to move the organization forward (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

In their study aimed at understanding the nature of school leader efficacy and its effect on student learning, Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) measured leaders’ efficacy in three core areas of successful leadership: setting direction, developing others, and redesigning the organization. While leader self-efficacy was not related to achievement based on longitudinal data, leader efficacy did play a role in the variation in annual achievement scores. Compared to earlier studies that suggest setting direction to be of high importance, this study found it to be a relatively weak contributor to student success and a weak but significant player in effects on classroom conditions.

Heck and Hallinger (2010) continue to describe the most effective leadership behaviors as setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization. In addition to the leaders’ self-efficacy, the principal must build the self-efficacy of others through their practice. A leader’s ability to inspire others through a clear and well-communicated vision has ramifications for the ability of others’ to share in and act on the vision. In order to develop others, the leader must first have a well-developed sense of emotional intelligence and an advanced skill set in the areas of teaching and learning to influence classroom behaviors directly (Goleman et al., 2002). The practice of shared
decision-making and distributed leadership provides a framework for building the self-efficacy in others as a means of influencing school culture (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008).

Leadership and Achievement: Special Education

In response to the public outcry for a new level of accountability in public schools, Elmore (2005) proposed that schools have always been accountable for student achievement and that it is the standards for measurement and the level of public review that has changed. Elmore further suggested that the era of accountability has done little to alter leadership practices and behaviors related to student outcomes. Although there is much research to support the successes that come from engaging instruction, teaching practices in many classrooms remain stagnant even though the stakes for school level performance are higher. Teacher effort impacts outcomes as much as ability and Elmore (2005) proposed this same scenario is true for school leaders who must now practice outside their zones of competency to run more effective and productive organizations.

Successful programs that support the achievement of students with disabilities require skilled and competent leaders (Bays & Crockett, 2007; Salisbury, 2006). School leaders will require a breadth and depth of knowledge if they are to successfully impact student achievement directly (Leithwood, Riedlinger, Bauer, & Jantzi, 2003). For principals in schools with significant populations of at-risk learners, this means their breadth of knowledge must include the intersection of IDEA and NCLB.

Under current NCLB accountability standards, all students, including students with disabilities, second-language learners, minority students, and students from low socioeconomic families, are expected to meet 95% proficiency on state assessments (NCLB, 2001). Principals and school systems will be held accountable for the
achievement results of all students regardless of external factors that may significantly affect their learning. For students with disabilities, the provisions of IDEA are not sufficient to ensure that all students meet the NCLB targets. Beyond AYP data and school report cards is the importance in leaders knowing who these children are and whether or not they are receiving equal benefit and equitable opportunities for learning (McLaughlin & Rhim, 2007).

Pre-NCLB. Levels of accountability have become more transparent since the inception of NCLB (NCLB, 2004). Before 1997, students with disabilities received most of their education in separate settings and educational programs provided little access to general education curriculum standards. With the reauthorization of IDEA in 1997 and Goals 2000, students with disabilities began to participate in state assessment but the reporting of their scores remained optional (McLaughlin & Rhim, 2007).

Post-NCLB. NCLB brought a wave of change for schools and the level of accountability for special needs populations. The policy mandated that students with disabilities, in all categories of disability, participate in grade-level standards-based content and be assessed in accordance with grade-level targets for achievement. NCLB functioned as the impetus for change and reform as schools began to adjust instructional practices to meet the needs of all learners (NCLB, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Research suggests that the era of standards-based accountability has provoked a change in beliefs and expectations about student learning and, as a byproduct, has afforded students with disabilities more opportunities for learning (McLaughlin & Rhim, 2007). However, for some an increase in the requirement to achieve proficiency on state
assessments as criteria for graduation has also played a role in an increased number of students with disabilities who end their public school career without anything to show for it (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

In a discussion of school principal practices and special education, DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, and Walther-Thomas (2004) reviewed five dimensions of leadership that influence the academic success of students with disabilities. The five key practices of effective leaders that promote educational benefit for all students include (a) creating an inclusive school culture, (b) providing strong instructional leadership, (c) modeling collaborative leadership, (d) providing organizational leadership, and (e) building and maintaining positive relationships. The extent to which the school culture embraces the challenges of a fully inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities is highly influenced by the school leader and the context of the school community. Although there is little in the literature to support these five dimensions as having a positive influence on the achievement of students with disabilities, its relevance is implied. (DiPaola et al., 2004). The role of the principal in supporting special education programs requires the development of an inclusive vision, school-wide collaborative practices, and a culture of acceptance and high expectations (Bays & Crockett, 2007).

There is little disagreement that the most influential factor in student achievement is the classroom teacher (Waters et al., 2003) and for the field of special education this is no exception. More than ever, the weight of increased levels of compliance under IDEA and the expectations for students with disabilities to meet grade level standards have affected already sharp attrition rates among special educators. Effective school leadership is a powerful predictor of positive teacher attitudes in schools as they practice
inclusive leadership for the benefit of students with special needs (DiPaola et al., 2004).

Effective school leaders must insure that a highly qualified staff is equipped to provide research-based instruction (Bays & Crockett, 2007). Principals influence positive student outcomes by creating school-wide opportunities for collaboration between special and general educators, parents and the community.

IDEA sets standards to ensure students with disabilities receive the accommodations and scaffolding necessary to guarantee that their disability is not a hindrance to demonstrating knowledge and skills as measured by state-mandated assessments. The guiding principles within IDEA state that, “Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy for ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities” (P.L. 108 Sec 1, pp. 5-6) and that a “disability [a]s a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the rights of individuals to participate in or contribute to society” (P.L. 108 Sec 1, pp. 5-6).

In its reauthorization of IDEA in 2006, Congress guaranteed that students with disabilities would receive early intervention services, specialized educational programs, and related services within their local school district. Inherent in IDEA is the protection of individual differences in abilities, learning styles and developmental time lines for success.

Embedded in NCLB and IDEA are goals for reporting the participation and performance levels of students with disabilities in standardized state assessments. In a study of trend data for students with disabilities, Klein, Wiley, and Thurlow (2006) found that between 2002 and 2005, fewer than 30 states had publicly reported data for
students with disabilities. For those states reporting data, there was only a moderate increase in the proficiency rates for students with disabilities in both reading and mathematics. An increase in proficiency rates in elementary grades on alternative assessments suggests that low expectations have been set for this population of students. With longitudinal achievement data for students with disabilities still hidden from view in most states, the level of transparent accountability set forth in NCLB and IDEA has yet to be achieved (Klein et al., 2006).

Despite little empirical data to use as a foundation, researchers in special education continue to speculate on leadership and school-wide practices that most impact the achievement of students with disabilities. Researchers in the field of special education promote evidence-based leadership, which places emphasis on outcomes over processes (Boscardin, 2007). Principals who exercise influence over those initiatives that lead to increased achievement levels for all students are proposed to have the most benefit for special education populations. Principal leadership that offer the greatest results are those that maintain a clear focus on strategies that are most effective for special education students (Bays & Crockett, 2007).

Effective leadership practices that most improve outcomes for special education students include an environment that focuses on teaching practices that lead to successful student performance, a consistent system for monitoring student progress, and a culture of collaborative problem solving (Boscardin, 2007). The new data-driven school cultures are fertile ground for the identification of leadership practices that produce higher achievement for students with disabilities. In Boscardin’s (2007) view, the transformational and instructional leadership models focus more on process than
outcomes. Bays and Crockett (2007) established that principals negotiate priorities in legal compliance, administration and evaluation, as well as contextual, systematic, and personal factors. The researchers concluded that principals should "pursue an instructional vision that address improved conditions in special education teaching and learning" (p 158).

To increase effectiveness, Boscardin suggested that leaders practice evidenced-based leadership that meets the needs of all students as required in NCLB while also meeting the needs of each student as outlined in IDEA. Evidenced-based practice, by definition, is the act of correctly identifying, clarifying, and prioritizing the most critical questions related to student achievement and then collecting necessary data to insure that the targets for improvement are accurate (Boscardin, 2007). Schools that approach instruction for special education students from a deficit model, focusing more on student limitations than potential, are ineffective in closing achievement gaps (Lashley, 2007). Effective leaders do not ignore achievement gaps between special education students and their non-disabled peers but instead they frequently engage school constituencies in activities designed to solve problems related to that achievement (Lashley, 2007).

The school principal has an effect on the achievement of students with disabilities through the support of teachers and the monitoring of the instructional program. Boscardin (2007) summarized research findings by identifying four ways that school leaders affect student learning: (a) attending to basic team tasks and setting clear priorities, (b) making knowledge-based decisions through the use of problem-solving, (c) encouraging instructional flexibility and appropriate instructional groupings, and (d) developing strong professional bonds among teachers through teams (p. 27).
School Leader Preparation and Development

With mounting demands and increasing accountability, the role of school leaders has grown beyond the ideal heroic principal. The school leader not only answers to staff, students, and parents but also to the district hierarchy including local, state, and federal accountability systems. Developed in 1994 by educators and personnel from 24 states agencies and professional organizations, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISSLC) produced a model of standards for school leaders designed to guide school leadership reform. Drawn from a blend of research linking educational leadership with effective schools, the standards embody both the theoretical basis for leader behaviors and the environmental factors that influence the effectiveness of those practices. The standards reflect a vision of the leadership that will meet the changing educational and social needs of society (ISSLC, 2008). Recent shifts in the economic landscape have altered family dynamics and the fabric of many communities. The framework for leadership provides a pathway for school leaders to adapt to learner-centered reform.

In facing the needs of a culturally and racially diverse school population, school leaders must command a broad knowledge and be swiftly responsive to solving problems related to student achievement. Focused on matters related to teaching and learning, the ISSLC standards are presented with the use of subheadings in the areas of knowledge, dispositions, and performances. Embedded in these principles are the themes central to instructional and transformational leadership. The ISSLC standards mirror expectations for the instructional and transformational leader through its six standards of quality: (a) developing a vision for learning; (b) sustaining a school culture
and instructional program that promotes teaching and learning; (c) managing the organization and resources effectively; (d) developing collaborative relationships with families and the community; (e) leading with integrity, fairness, and ethics; and (f) understanding and responding to political, social, and cultural contexts that impact the school community (ISSLC, 2008).

Some researchers agree that improving the quality of school leaders can influence the outcomes of students in their charge, specifically those with disabilities (Crockett, 2002; Crockett, Becker, & Quinn, 2009; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Lasky & Karge, 2006). It remains a challenge to develop quality standards for leaders into sustainable professional development programs that improve principal effectiveness. If students with disabilities are to be successful in meeting educational standards, then school cultures must be inclusive of their participation in the full academic program.

The school principal is responsible for the organizational, instructional and cultural reforms needed to insure the success of all students (Lasky & Karge, 2006, Salisbury, 2006). State directors of special education identified the most common challenges to successful programming for students with special needs to be the general educators knowledge of appropriate specialized instruction, the need for professional development in the areas of research-based strategies for supporting student disabilities in the classroom, the time needed for planning and meaningful collaboration between general and special educators, and the continuing cultures of low expectations for students with disabilities. Principals influence student achievement by leading organizational, cultural and instructional reform that targets these challenges (The Access Center, 2008).
In their research on principal perceptions of their readiness to respond to the challenges of special education programming, Angelle and Bilton (2009) found that 53% of principals surveyed had no classes in special education during their principal preparation and 32% had one class. While the standards of accountability for student achievement have increased steadily, the study results suggested that preparation programs for school leaders have not kept pace with these demands. Recent graduates of principal preparation programs were no better prepared in the area of special education than those who completed programs more than 15 years ago (Angelle & Bilton, 2009).

Research findings suggest that internships are insufficient in providing the knowledge and skills necessary to support special education programs; however, even one course in special education leadership can be beneficial to the novice principal. The role of principal in developing special education programs requires that they assist teachers in implementing effective strategies for teaching and learning, allocate resources, and monitor progress toward academic goals as well as IEP goals (Bays & Crockett, 2007; Lasky & Karge, 2006). This implies that principals must maintain a repertoire of skills in the area of specialized instruction. In their work in preparation and leadership in special education, Robicheau, Haar, and Palladino (2008) investigated the perceptions of educators regarding their effectiveness in implementing special education programs. The findings indicated a need for stronger efforts to prepare principals for leadership in special education environments, particularly in matching effective instructional programs to student disabilities. To have impact on outcomes, principals must recognize special education as a set of services that are embedded within the school rather than a location or program. Students with disabilities who are included in learning
environments in meaningful and salient ways will find educational benefit (Robicheau et al., 2008). In reporting the findings, Robicheau et al. (2008) suggested that principal preparation programs must establish outcomes to include (a) assumption of responsibility for the learning of all students; (b) knowledge in the areas of special education processes, procedures, and programs; (c) knowledge and skill in instructional leadership, specifically research-based interventions; (d) skill in resource allocation and intervention implementation and monitoring; and (e) skills in data-driven decision-making and support of collaborative special education and general education networks. Principals require specific training and skills related to special education programming if they are to promote an inclusive culture (Salisbury, 2006).

Highly effective transformational leaders are in high demand and in short supply. Federal and state mandates have taken their toll on many leaders in the public schools. Schlecty (2011) proposes that principals faltering under the weight of the many roles and responsibilities now placed on them should sharpen the focus on reinventing the future of the principalship. He suggests there are three choices for school leaders in reacting to the demands of the job. First, principals can complain about the challenges of the role but then succumb to the pressures by finding a way to cope while waiting for retirement. Alternatively, principals can simply quit and move on to other less stressful career opportunities. The truly transformational principals work side by side with those that define the role, such as superintendents, state and federal leaders, to insure the job is one that can be accomplished by those with reasonable skills (Schlecty, 2011). Principal attrition, like teacher attrition, is fueled by perceptions of support and ones’ ability to meet the expectations of the job.
While years of research clearly links leadership to student achievement through their actions in setting direction, influencing others, and the design of the organization, it does not provide the cause and effect relationship to student achievement that some hope to find. It remains of quantitative value to investigate further the results that can be seen when leaders improve their practice. The interaction of leadership practice with overall student achievement has been defined but not so the achievement within subgroups. Does this same kind of prediction hold in the disaggregated data of students with disabilities? Are the scores for subgroup populations improving at the same rate as the overall student data? Based on NAEP scores, a significant gap exists between students with disabilities and non-disabled peers.

Most articles about educational leadership and student achievement end the same way: there is much more research to be done in order to identify clearly those practices that significantly influence student outcomes. In the interest of social justice, equity, moral purpose, and the salvation of public education, the question must be asked until answered. Therefore, this study will seek to determine if a relationship exists between teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities on CRCT in Reading/English Language Arts and Math.

Summary

A review of the literature in educational leadership supports the role of instructional and transformational leadership in the effectiveness of schools. The principals’ knowledge and skill in all aspects of their role, particularly in areas of special education, impact their effectiveness within the contexts of their schools. Strong leaders
understand the breadth and scope of their influence on student gains while accepting the limitations and boundaries that affect their decisions. In defining goals for student achievement, effective leaders acknowledge the moral and ethical charge that comes with their role as principal, assuring that the needs of all students and the needs of each student, especially underrepresented populations, are adequately addressed.

The research on principal leadership and its impact on student achievement generate three specific areas of leadership that lead to effective schools. If schools are to meet achievement goals that include low achieving subgroup populations, an effective leader must motivate others to work with purpose toward common goals and shared beliefs about student learning. Principals must seek to develop others through habits of emotional intelligence and by establishing stimulating learning pathways for all. Through a re-culturing of the organization, the leader encourages learning communities, strengthens overall school culture, and promotes engagement in collaborative processes. Instructional leadership continues to emerge as an identifiable attribute that predicts student performance. This study seeks to identify a relationship between effective leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities as measured by the Georgia CRCT. Chapter III provides a discussion of the methodology utilized in the study.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study proposes to determine if a relationship exists between teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities on CRCT in Reading/English Language Arts and Math. This chapter contains a description of the research design, study sample, instrumentation, and procedures for data collection and analysis.

Research Questions

If principals are to set effective direction for schools that maintain focus on instructional practices that enhance the learning of all students, including those with disabilities, then they must be aware of leadership practices that have the most significant influence on classroom methodology. With the understanding that school leaders affect achievement indirectly through their influence on setting direction, classroom practices, and organizational culture, it is important for principals to identify those leadership principles that exert the greatest influence over the achievement of students with disabilities (Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Leithwood, 2005). This study examined the instructional leadership behaviors that may be most closely linked to the achievement of students with disabilities.

Most studies that contribute to the literature supporting the indirect but significant link between leadership styles and achievement use overall student achievement gains as a measure without deeper disaggregation of subgroup performance. In order to extend the link between leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities, the study included a multiple regression to determine if a relationship exists between
specific leadership practices and the achievement of students with disabilities in the areas of Reading/English Language Arts and Math as measured by the Georgia CRCT. The leadership behaviors of principals were analyzed based the perceptions of special education teachers as the attributes of data collection (Creswell, 2003; Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002).

This quantitative study is aimed at improving the understanding of leadership behaviors and their effect on the achievement of students with disabilities. The study focuses on these research questions:

1. Is there a significant relationship between special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in Reading/English Language Arts?

2. Is there a significant relationship between special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in Math?

Research Design

A cross-sectional quasi-experimental study design was employed for this quantitative study in order to relate the degree to which teachers’ perceptions of leadership behaviors are related to indicators of student achievement for children with disabilities.

Hypotheses will be tested as follows:

H₁. To determine whether there is a relationship between teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors (IV)
and the achievement of students with disabilities in Reading/English Language Arts (DV), language arts achievement will be regressed onto teachers’ perceptions of principal leadership in the three leadership domains (setting direction and goals, developing others, redesigning the organization and structure of the school).

H2. To determine whether there is a relationship between teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors (IV) and the achievement of students with disabilities in Math (DV), math achievement will be regressed onto teachers’ perceptions of principal leadership in the three leadership domains (setting direction and goals, developing others, redesigning the organization and structure of the school).

Participants in the Study

The sample surveyed is limited to elementary special education teachers in a large suburban school district in Georgia. The population of the metro-Atlanta school district includes a student enrollment of 106,574 students (Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, 2010). The special education population in the school district is 11,348 students or 10.6% of the total student enrollment. The school district maintains a diverse ethnicity and socio-economic make up with a student population that includes 4% Asian, 47% White, 37% Black, 15% Hispanic, and less than 1% Native American. The schools represent a continuum of achievement levels with 29 of the selected schools falling in the Title I category. Each school in the sample has a subgroup of students with disabilities and students who meet the criteria for economically disadvantaged.
All but one of the elementary schools met AYP targets for FY 2010 however the annual measureable objectives (AMO) for Reading/English Language Arts will increase from 73.3% to 80% for the FY 2011 school year. The AMO for Math will increase from 67.6% to 75.7%. The school district did not meet AYP targets for the past three years for students with disabilities in the area of Math.

Instrumentation

A survey instrument, developed by the researcher, includes 42 questions related to aspects of instructional and transformational leadership models that are considered the most significant in increasing student performance (Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Waters et al., 2003). The survey is comprehensive in its coverage of three domains of instructional leadership with accompanying indicators to be used in the analysis in the areas of setting direction, developing and influencing others and redesigning the school organization (Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood, 2005, Waters et al., 2003).

The survey instrument was developed independently with questions based on the domains for measuring the role that school leaders play in effecting student achievement as reflected in the literature (Leithwood, 2005; Waters, et al., 2003). The survey has been designed to measure teacher perceptions of principal behaviors related to qualities of instructional and transformational leadership. Questions 1-13 represent measurement in the domain of setting direction and goals for the school. Questions 14-26 measure the domain of developing others. Questions 27-42 measure the domain of redesigning the organizational structure of the school. Using a Likert scale, the survey measured
teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate practices in key areas of instructional leadership.

The surveys were tested for reliability and validity through sample and pilot administrations of Special Education Administrators to include the Georgia State Director of Special Education, three Metro-Atlanta District Directors of Special Education and a Supervisor of Special Education. A pilot study of the teacher survey included eight special education teachers at middle schools.

The results of Georgia Criterion-Referenced Comprehensive Test (CRCT) in the areas of Reading/Language Arts and Math in Grades 3, 4 and 5 will be used as a measure of student achievement. The CRCT was developed as a measurement of the Georgia Performance Standards for Learning. Georgia’s testing program is deemed reliable and valid (Georgia Department of Education, 2009). During development, the Georgia Department of Education convened a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of five internationally known experts in the field of measurement and assessment. In addition to the TAC review, the Georgia Assessment Program has been reviewed by the U.S. Department of Education in the areas of development, alignment, maintenance, process and technical reporting (Georgia Department of Education, 2009). Each test item on the CRCT was developed specifically for the State of Georgia to align with the state’s performance standards. Test specifications or blueprints were developed to identify those performance standards that were appropriate to be measured and to determine how they were to be represented on the test. Field tests were designed to embed the questions in operational tests in order to analyze data from a representative random sample of subjects in a standard testing environment.
Data Collection Procedures

The data gathered consisted of standardized assessment results and a teacher survey (Appendix A) designed to solicit perceptions about leadership behaviors to be provided to elementary principals who will select special education teachers at each school. This data provided insight regarding successful leadership practices for schools with students with disabilities meeting and exceeding standards in Reading/Language Arts and mathematics. Reminder emails were sent to non-respondents to achieve a high rate of participation.

School level achievement data was collected from the Georgia Department of Education public web site and will not include student identification. A 3-year analysis of individual school CRCT results in the areas of Reading/Language Arts and Math was used to determine school level effect scores. A mean of the 3-year average was used in order to limit the variances in academic achievement that may occur due to differences in student populations.

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Southern Mississippi (Appendix B) and the school district’s Office of Accountability and Research (Appendix C), identified elementary school principals received written communication regarding the study. Ethical research requires that participants be afforded the opportunity to make informed consent regarding their decision to participate in important educational research (Appendix D).

The conditions under which the study was carried out includes district and principal approval of the methods of data collection, the protection of student confidentiality, the right of schools to withdraw from the study without penalty, and the
privacy of the individual must be protected. Permission was granted to survey special education teachers and invitations to participate were sent via personal emails (Appendix E). Surveys were distributed to select individuals via an online survey instrument.

Summary

In this study, the theoretical framework for instructional leadership provides hypotheses and variables for collecting and testing data (Creswell, 2003). By discovering the extent to which leadership behaviors affect the achievement of students with disabilities, principals may become more effective in directing and influencing school level change that improves AYP performance.

The findings relating principal leadership behaviors to achievement of students with disabilities are reported in Chapter IV. The narrative of findings, conclusions, and implications for further study are summarized in Chapter V.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

A cross-sectional quasi-experimental study design was employed for this quantitative study in order to relate the degree to which teachers’ perceptions of leadership behaviors are related to indicators of student achievement for children with disabilities. A survey instrument, developed by the researcher, contained three domains of instructional leadership: (a) setting direction, (b) developing and influencing others, and (c) redesigning the school organization. A three-year analysis of individual school CRCT results in the areas of reading/language arts and math were used to determine school level effect scores. The study focused on two research questions:

1. Is there a significant relationship between special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in reading/English language arts?

2. Is there a significant relationship between special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in math?

Description of the Data

Seventy-three special education teachers in 37 schools responded to the online survey. Sixty-seven teachers reported that they have been in education for an average of 12.5 years (SD = 7.7), ranging in experience from 2 to 32 years. Experience at their current school ranged from 1 to 24 years (n = 67, M = 6.0, SD = 4.5).
Reliability of the Scales

Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was obtained for the three scales of the questionnaire (see Table 1). The values obtained were at the high end of the range for the coefficient alpha statistic, suggesting that the items in each scale are similar and maintain high levels of internal consistency (Vogt, 1999). The average scale scores across all teachers who completed the survey are presented in Table 2. Possible scale scores ranged from 0 (not at all) to 4 (frequently, if not often). The teachers rated their principals’ leadership skills on the three scales as high, indicating that the behaviors were observed between 3 (fairly often) and 4 (frequently, if not often).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th># of items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Setting direction and goals</td>
<td>13</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing others</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redesigning the organization and the structure of the school</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>.92</td>
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Table 2

Scale Scores on the Principal Leadership Questionnaire (n = 71)

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<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
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<th>SD</th>
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</thead>
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<td>.41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing others</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>.73</td>
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<tr>
<td>Redesigning the organization and the structure of the school</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>.65</td>
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</table>
The teachers’ scale scores from each school were aggregated to obtain one score for each school. Table 3 contains the variables of interest that describe each school. The Title 1 status of the schools was used as a proxy for SES of the students. The variable was dichotomous, with 1 indicating the school as a Title 1 school and 0 indicating the school was not a Title 1 school.

Table 3

*Aggregated Scale Scores by School ID (n = 37)*

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<th>School ID</th>
<th># of teachers</th>
<th>Title 1 1=yes 0=no</th>
<th>Average years of teaching experience</th>
<th>Average years of current school</th>
<th>Setting direction and goals</th>
<th>Developers</th>
<th>Redesign organization/structure</th>
<th>Reading/language arts</th>
<th>Math</th>
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<td>23.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>3.85</td>
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<td>86.83</td>
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<td>170</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>43.20</td>
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<td>10.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>73.13</td>
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<td>173</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>56.83</td>
<td>39.20</td>
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<td>175</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>67.97</td>
<td>46.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>176</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>68.90</td>
<td>56.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>85.80</td>
<td>74.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>71.60</td>
<td>51.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .01

Univariate Relationships Between Variables of Interest

A correlation matrix was created by using the Pearson Product Moment correlation procedure to determine the univariate relationships between the variables of interest (see Table 4). As expected, moderate to high significant positive relationships were found between the English/language arts and mathematics test scores ($r = .92$), among the leadership scale scores (ranging from $r = .64$ to $r = .95$), between SES (Title 1 school or not a Title 1 school) and the English/language arts and mathematics tests scores ($r = .81$ and $r = .74$, respectively), and between years of teaching total experience and experience in the current school ($r = .72$). A moderate, significant negative correlation was found between Title 1 school and the principal leadership scale of setting direction and goals ($r = -.45$). This finding indicated that teachers in Title 1 schools believed the behavior measured by the setting direction and goals scale items was less likely to be exhibited by the principals at their schools. No other significant univariate relationships were found between the variables of interest.
Table 4

Univariate Relationships Between the Variables of Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Develop others</th>
<th>Redesign organiz/structure</th>
<th>English/languag arts</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Experience in current school</th>
<th>Total teaching experience</th>
<th>Title 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting direction and goals</td>
<td>.64*</td>
<td>.73*</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.45*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing others</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.95*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redesign organiz/structure</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English/languag arts</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.92*</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>-.81*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.74*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience in current school</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.72*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total teaching experience</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .01

Analysis of Research Questions

The data were gathered using standardized assessment results and a teacher survey designed to solicit perceptions about leadership behaviors from special education teachers at each school. School level achievement data were collected from the Georgia Department of Education public web site. A three-year analysis of individual school CRCT results in the areas of reading/language arts and math was used to determine school level effect scores. A three-year average was used to limit the variances in academic achievement that may have occurred due to differences in student populations. The data were used to answer two research questions.
Research Question 1

Is there a significant relationship between special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in reading/English language arts?

To determine if there was a relationship between teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors (IV) and the achievement of students with disabilities in reading/English language arts (DV), language arts achievement was regressed onto teachers’ perceptions of principal leadership in the three leadership domains (setting direction and goals, developing others, redesigning the organization and structure of the school). Control variables of teacher experience (total and at current school) and SES were entered as the first block in a hierarchical regression procedure. The principal leadership behaviors were entered as the second block.

Results indicated a significant proportion of variance in reading achievement was explained by the control variables ($R^2 = .66, F(3,33) = 21.76, p < .01$). SES (Title 1 school or not) was a significant unique predictor ($b = -23.69, t = -7.66, p < .01$) of reading achievement while teacher experience was not significant. There was no significant impact of the combination of leadership behaviors that were entered in Step 2 of the analysis [$\Delta R^2 = .01, \Delta F(6, 30) = .31, p = .82$]. Therefore, no significant relationship was found between special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in reading/English language arts.
Table 5

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Teachers’ Perceptions of Principal Leadership Behaviors as Contributing Factors to School Effectiveness as Measured by the CRCT Reading Score, Controlling for SES and Teacher Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: ( R^2 = .66, F(3,32) = 20.37, p &lt; .001 )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience at current school</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total teaching experience</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>-23.69</td>
<td>-7.66</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: ( \Delta R^2 = .01, \Delta F(3,29) = .481, p = .70 )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience at current school</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total teaching experience</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>-24.58</td>
<td>-6.83</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting direction and goals</td>
<td>-2.38</td>
<td>-.33</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing others</td>
<td>-3.57</td>
<td>-.54</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redesigning the school’s organization and structure</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Model: ( R^2 = .673, F(6,29) = 9.93, p &lt; .001 )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 2

Is there a significant relationship between special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in mathematics?

To determine if there was a relationship between teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors (IV) and the achievement of students with disabilities in mathematics (DV), mathematics achievement was regressed onto teachers’ perceptions of principal leadership in the three leadership domains (setting direction and goals, developing others, redesigning the organization and structure of the school). Control variables of teacher experience (total and at current school) and SES were entered first in the hierarchical regression procedure with principal leadership behaviors entered in the second step.
As expected, a significant portion of variance in math achievement was explained by the control variables ($R^2 = .55$, $F(3,33) = 13.24$, $p = <.01$) and SES was a unique predictor ($b = -.76$, $t = -6.10$, $p < .01$) of math achievement (see Table 6). Teacher experience was not uniquely related to math achievement. There was no significant increase in explained variance when leadership behaviors were entered in step 2 [$\Delta R^2 = .02$, $\Delta F(3,29) = .25$, $p = .85$). Therefore, no significant relationship was found between special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in mathematics.

Table 6

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Teachers’ Perceptions of Principal Leadership Behaviors as Contributing Factors to School Effectiveness as Measured by the CRCT Mathematics Score, Controlling for SES and Teacher Experience*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: $R^2 = .54$, $F(3,32) = 12.41$, $p &lt; .001$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience at current school</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total teaching experience</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>-25.22</td>
<td>-.74</td>
<td>-6.10</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $\Delta F(3,29) = .39$, $p = .76$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience at current school</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total teaching experience</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>-25.85</td>
<td>-.76</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting direction and goals</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing others</td>
<td>-2.47</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redesigning the school’s organization and structure</td>
<td>-.42</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Model: $R^2 = .56$, $F(6,29) = 6.05$, $p &lt; .001$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

Seventy-three special education teachers in 37 schools responded to the online survey. The teachers rated their principals’ leadership skills on the three scales as high, indicating that the behaviors were observed between 3 (fairly often) and 4 (frequently, if not often). To determine if there was a relationship between teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in reading/English language arts and mathematics, two hierarchical regression analyses were conducted. The teachers’ perceptions of principal leadership in the three leadership domains (setting direction and goals, developing others, redesigning the organization and structure of the school) were the predictors in the regression analysis. Control variables of teacher experience (total and at current school) and SES were entered as the first block and the principal leadership behaviors were entered as the second block in each analysis. Moderating variables of teacher experience (total and at current school) and SES were entered as the first block and the principal leadership behaviors were entered as the second block in each analysis. No significant relationship was found between special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in reading/English language arts or mathematics. A discussion of these results, conclusions drawn from the results, implications for practice, and recommendations for further research are presented in Chapter V.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Introduction

Throughout the literature, the aspects of instructional leadership that exert the most indirect influence on student achievement are the development and communication of the school’s mission and vision and the school leaders influence over the culture and climate of the school (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Shields, 2010). The leaders’ actions are defined by their personal beliefs and values about student achievement. The principal’s skill as an instructional leader is central to promoting student learning and achievement for all students (Bays & Crockett, 2007; Hallinger, 2005). With the reauthorization of NCLB, all students with disabilities will continue to be assessed with their peers and held to common expectations for performance.

Researchers have challenged the profession to continue the exploration of the relationship between leadership behavior and student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). This study of the impact and influence of instructional leadership behaviors on the achievement of students with disabilities illuminates a continuing void in the literature.

The field of special education is complex and many variables impact the achievement of students with disabilities. Teacher attrition, the uniqueness of student disabilities, available resources, professional learning and teacher experience are among the many variables influencing the effectiveness of special education programs in producing results (Crockett et al., 2009). It is challenging for educators to first identify and then meet the needs of students whose disabilities manifest uniquely within academic settings. As school leaders, principals are expected to influence the instructional program
in ways that close achievement gaps and insure that annual measurable objectives are met. Principals must provide instructional and transformational leadership to the school that is inclusive of and specific to the educational needs of a diverse student population. Although NCLB is likely to be revised to reflect a growth model of accountability, it is highly unlikely that the focus on subgroup performance will be diminished. The academic progress of students with disabilities will continue to be compared with that of their non-disabled peers and schools will be held accountable for the results. Schools have become transparent in the reporting of achievement of all subgroup populations and this level of accountability remains a challenge for school leaders and teachers alike.

With increasing demands for principals to be all things to all people, there is a need for proven practices that narrow the focus and generate positive outcomes. Researchers have identified key aspects of instructional leadership that, when mastered and implemented to the fullest, may influence up to 25% of the variance between schools overall achievement scores (Waters et al., 2003). This research study was conducted to similarly identify specific leadership behaviors that, when fully implemented, have a significant indirect effect on the achievement of students with disabilities. Specifically, this study was designed to determine if a relationship exists between special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals exhibit instructional leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities on the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Test in the areas of English/Language Arts and Mathematics. This chapter provides a summary of the research study and an analysis of the results related to the research questions with guidance for past and future research in educational leadership practices. The discussion will provide recommendations for educational practitioners in
the development, implementation and evaluation of specific leadership behaviors that influence the achievement of students with disabilities.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to determine the degree to which teachers’ perceptions of leadership behaviors are related to indicators of achievement for students with disabilities. Research questions and hypotheses were tested as follows:

*Research Question 1*

Is there a significant relationship between special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in reading/English language arts?

The research in this study provided no significant correlations between leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities. Reading/Language arts achievement was regressed onto special education teachers’ perceptions of principal leadership in each of the three domains (setting direction and goals, developing others, and redesigning the organization and structure of the school) to determine if there was a relationship between teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors (IV) and the achievement of students with disabilities (DV). Moderating variables of teacher experience (total and at current school) and SES were entered as the first block in a hierarchical regression procedure. The principal leadership behaviors were entered as the second block.

The first block in the hierarchical regression analysis was of statistical significance for predicting language arts achievement. As expected, the moderating variable of SES (Title 1 school or not) was a significant predictor. Setting the direction
for reading instruction alone is insufficient to improving instruction. Principals must also be able to recognize quality instruction and learning if they are to influence change in the classroom. An overall increase in achievement scores in reading/Language arts does not necessarily confirm progress for all students, specifically those in subgroup populations. More important than setting a generalized direction for the school is the employment of school-wide research-based programs and assessment practices with proven results in reading gains for all students, including those with disabilities (Nettles & Harrington, 2007). By increasing their knowledge in the area of specialized programs designed to scaffold learning for students with specific learning disabilities, principals effectively influence classroom instruction that leads to higher achievement.

**Research Question 2**

Is there a significant relationship between special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in Math?

The research in this study provided no significant correlations between leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in the area of mathematics. Mathematics achievement was regressed onto special education teachers’ perceptions of principal leadership in the three leadership domains (setting direction and goals, developing others, redesigning the organization and structure of the school) to determine if there was a relationship between teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors (IV) and the achievement of students with disabilities in mathematics (DV). Moderating variables of teacher experience (total and
at current school) and SES were entered as the first block in a hierarchical regression procedure while the principal leadership behaviors were entered as the second block.

The first block in the hierarchical regression analysis was of statistical significance for predicting mathematics achievement. The moderating variable of SES (Title 1 school or not) was a significant predictor, while teacher experience was not, indicating socioeconomic patterns and school contexts play a significant role in student achievement. Principal leadership behaviors in the analysis were not of statistical significance and each of the regression coefficients for the three principal leadership behaviors lacked statistical significance in predicting mathematics.

Therefore, no significant relationship was found between special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in mathematics. The findings support a component of Graziel’s (2007) work that show socioeconomic status, class size or the leadership variable of framing school goals to explain at least 49% of the variance in achievement scores between schools. Setting direction was found to be the only instructional leadership behavior positively correlated with increased student achievement (Graziel, 2007). Although respondents in this study rated principals high in the three domains of instructional leadership, there was no significance found to suggest setting direction is also a predictor in the achievement of students with disabilities.

The findings of this study, however, shows a moderate significant negative correlation between one aspect of instructional leadership behavior and achievement that suggests setting direction and goals was a less likely behavior in Title I schools. There may be many factors that influence these results, including higher percentages of at risk
student populations, levels of teacher and principal efficacy, demands on the principal and staff, and levels of community support. Student SES plays a significant role in student achievement in most studies (Sirin, 2005). In Sirin’s meta-analysis of achievement data collected from 100,000 students over nearly 2 decades, SES was found to have a strong negative correlation with student achievement. Student poverty plays a significant role in student achievement. As SES increases then achievement levels decrease.

Although Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) found low survey responses to be a limitation in their study of instructional leadership behaviors, the results showed that transformational leadership leading to changes in classroom practices have a strong link to achievement behind those that motivate others. Hallinger and Heck (2009) found similar results in a growth model study involving a larger population, suggesting that the efforts of school leaders to build the capacity of teachers and influence classroom practices that meet the academic needs of all students have a significant impact on student outcomes.

Teacher perceptions of school leaders impact their credibility and the support they will receive for reform efforts (Lindahl, 2007). Respondents in this study rated their principals high for the extent to which they demonstrate instructional leadership in the three domains. Although the results do not quantify the instructional practices of principals to be a predictor in the success of special education programs, they suggest that special education teachers may have positive feelings about an inclusive vision for the school, the opportunities for learning and professional growth provided by the principal, and the collaborative nature of the organization. Teachers’ favorable responses may be a
result of the principal’s delegation of leadership responsibilities and shared decision-making practices. Despite little quantifiable research, advocates of special education programs also promote the need for transformational leadership that clearly defines an inclusive vision for the school and targets research-based classroom practices that meet the needs of students with special needs (Boascardin, 2007).

During the course of this study, the ESEA and the specifics of NCLB were debated and Congress has been to this point unsuccessful in revising ESEA. Recently, President Obama announced changes to the Nation’s accountability system that will allow states to opt out of key elements of the NCLB provisions (Department of Education, 2011). State Education Agencies may seek relief from the broken accountability system through the submission of waivers. Those states that receive the waiver will be required to enter into intervention agreements with the bottom 15% of schools in the state that do not demonstrate student achievement gains, such as graduation rates, drop out rates, and subgroup performance. If it is agreed that the current system is indeed flawed, why then will states need to enter into a deal with the federal government in order to benefit from the changes? It may be that one defective system of accountability has been replaced with another and student achievement will be the real loser.

The State Flexibility Authority Program, or State-Flex as it is known, is intended to offer a respite for states and school systems from the legislation’s unrealistic goal of all students meeting or exceeding standards by 2014. While the program has some applauding, it has others wondering if lowering the standards will simply give states time to find a way around the new system. Will state and local education agencies use this reprieve to continue efforts to improve the achievement of all students or will this be
viewed as a political move that allows educators to take their eye off the ball until a new administration comes into office? Either way, school level leaders will be the constant that either moves forward in earnest to insure all students make progress because it’s the right thing to do or leaves them behind because their lack of progress will be forgiven.

The lack of a significant correlation between instructional leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities suggests that further study in this area is warranted. If the expectations for student achievement are lowered under the new plan, then it may be that Shields’ (2010) concept of transformative leadership becomes more central to the effectiveness of school leadership in schools with high populations of students with disabilities and other subgroup populations. It will matter even more that the school principal maintains a belief system and a moral compass that guides them in supporting the achievement of subgroup populations. Without the stick of NCLB, school leaders may spend more time angling the subgroup numbers rather than monitoring progress and insuring quality programming. Worse yet, some principals may see this as an opportunity to avoid a failing school label as they glide into retirement.

Ultimately, the growth model accountability system will be a positive change for schools and their students with disabilities. NCLB and IDEA can be married in a model that supports student growth and holds educators accountable for student progress. The measurement of all students and each student is measured best by multiple measures over time. However, much damage can be done in the time between the flex plan and the reauthorized system. It is assured that future research will explore the impact of these changes and the achievement of students with disabilities.
Self-reflection. Students with disabilities can and do learn at high levels. Raised by disabled parents, children learn early on that individuals with disabilities can meet expectations and lead productive lives if they expect to. Disabled in World War II at the age of 22, a young man gives up his passion for farming the land but found other ways to follow his dream in the field of agricultural business. He becomes a husband, father, and an amazing athlete. There is nothing he will not try and in nearly every case he will succeed. He always held high expectations for himself and for others. His capacity to move beyond his disability laid the foundation for his daughter’s tenacity in compensating for her own specific learning disability and fostered her interest in working with students with special needs.

Students with disabilities are successful in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities. Many years ago, the color guard instructor of a highly regarded marching band struggled to find success with a particular group of students. The band proper was excellent but the strength of the color guard did not match the musicianship of the other members. No matter what she tried, the students struggled with the flag work as it was written and were unable to learn the drill as taught. The instructor spent hours re-writing and re-teaching, experiencing frustration with her own skills at having so little success. The instructor and the students worked tirelessly through collective and individual practice to improve their performance. At the championship competition, the color guard performed exceptionally well and, along with the musicians, was awarded a state title. It was only later that the instructor learned one of the reasons for her struggle was that many of the students in the color guard were challenged learners. They required a different approach to instruction and she had learned to make accommodations and
modifications to meet their individual needs in order for the group to reach their goal. These early influences shape an individual’s view of the world and foster advocacy and ambassadorship for students with disabilities.

**Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

Research continues to show that principals’ perceptions of their ability to lead effectively in the area of special education show a low level of efficacy yet few preparation programs offer training beyond an introductory course (Boascardin, 2007; Robicheau et al., 2008). It is recommended that principals participate in study beyond a special education law and policy course, particularly specialized study and professional learning within the contexts of the school setting, disaggregation of special education data and crosswalks with IEPs, should be included to insure deep understanding of the instructional practices that provide necessary scaffolding for students with disabilities to access standards.

Principal preparation programs remain stagnant if they provide only cursory reviews of special education law and policy and lack specific attention to instructional oversight for specialized instruction. Setting direction is vital to insure that students with disabilities are part of the school’s plan for success and is inclusive in nature but do principals understand what action to take to make the vision a reality? Knowing best practices and knowing what to expect in the classrooms of students with disabilities is a must. Principal preparation internships should include hands-on experiences in program evaluation and supervision of special education programs.

Ongoing professional learning in the area of special education leadership should be provided to principals in schools with populations of students with disabilities. Most
states require one exceptional child course at the time of certification with further development left up to the school district. If school level leaders are to be held accountable for results in the areas of subgroup performance then higher education programs should be linked to high levels of accountability to insure that principal preparation program graduates are qualified to lead special education programs. Years of research shows that these programs are inadequate and have been allowed to remain largely unchanged for years despite research to the contrary (Boscardin, 2007; Robicheau et al., 2008).

Conclusions

Based on the view that principals influence student achievement through behaviors of setting direction, influencing and developing others and redesigning the organization, this study was an empirical test of this concept. This study was based on the belief that principals influence student achievement through their direction setting behaviors, and their influence on and development of school personnel, and their ability to redesign school organizations in such as way as to influence student learning in a positive manner.

The results of this study illustrate that specific practices of instructional leadership are not sufficient in providing a model for improving achievement for students with disabilities. Furthermore, this study failed to establish a significant relationship between the instructional leadership practices of elementary school principals and the achievement of students with disabilities on the Georgia Comprehensive Criterion-Referenced Tests in the areas of Reading/Language Arts and mathematics. This conclusion is contrary to the results found in the body of literature discussed in Chapter II
that links the three domains of instructional leadership with overall student achievement gains. Given the complexities of learning disabilities and the ways in which they manifest in the classroom, the instructional strategies employed by teachers in the general education setting are often inadequate in meeting individual needs. Likewise, the leadership behaviors that provide the largest effect size in improving overall student achievement may not be equally effective due to the many contextual variables that influence the achievement of students with disabilities.

Limitations

In order to fully examine the research findings, the limitations of the study must be considered. This research is subject to limitations that will influence its value in providing broad generalizations and implications for future practice. The generalizability of the findings from this study was limited by the following:

1. Only 37 of the 73 respondents completed all aspects of the survey, including the teacher experience and years at the school component of the survey.

2. Principals identified the teachers to be surveyed. The relationship between the principal and the teacher could influence responses and create range limitations.

3. Special education is complex in nature and the ability range within student populations is extreme.

4. Since principals were not surveyed, it was not possible to collect data regarding their preparation, years of experience at the school beyond 3 or their total years of experience.

5. This study is limited to the perceptions of special education teachers that make up a small group of stakeholders at each school.
6. The survey was conducted in a single school district and generalizations of the results should be approached with caution.

7. Significant variables within school contexts, such as the percentage of disabled students at each school, school location, school size, special education programs and variances within categories of special education disabilities is absent in this study.

8. The study was conducted in a school district that benefits from strong support and training in the areas of special education and Title I.

Recommendations for Future Research

Empirical research leading to the identification of specific leadership practices with the potential to positively impact the achievement of students with disabilities will continue to be vital to educators at the school, district and university levels. The theme of this research was to determine if the specific instructional leadership behaviors identified throughout the literature as having the greatest impact on student achievement is equally relevant when comparing these practices to achievement scores for students with disabilities. Future research that seeks to identify instructional and transformational leadership behaviors and practices that significantly impact subgroup achievement is recommended as a means of informing both the daily disciplines of principals and central office leaders. Further identification of specific instructional leadership practices aimed at specific collaborative practices within special education, such as scheduling, curricular planning and professional development may provide guidance for principals with limited exposure to special education practices.
It is recommended that the examination of the three domains of instructional leadership be conducted through the eyes of the principal in the areas of setting direction, influencing others and redesigning the organization, and that specific behaviors be narrowed to provide a rich body of knowledge within the complexities of special education programs. Since principal perceptions of their efficacy have been positively correlated with student achievement, then studies involving principal perceptions of the extent to which they demonstrate instructional leadership behaviors are recommended to determine their relationships to the achievement of students with disabilities. The inclusion of stakeholder perceptions of leadership behaviors could add depth to the study of the impact of leadership on achievement. Additional research that includes school context variables such as percentages of students with disabilities, the percentages of the types and categories of disabilities, professional development activities and program implementation may direct school leaders in the allocation of resources, including personnel.

A recommendation is made for further research in the area of principal effectiveness in leading schools with populations of students with disabilities, particularly those with longitudinal data that supports achievement and considerations for the types of preparation programs completed by the principal. The exploration of the correlation between the achievement of students with disabilities and principal and special education teacher perceptions of specific instructional leadership behaviors within the three domains may inform school level practice, including a review of the consistency of data analysis, levels of principal professional learning, principals with special education certification compared to those without special education certification. Additionally,
further discussion of the differences between practices and behaviors, as explored by Robinson (2008), may offer opportunities for research that may identify those qualities of effective leadership that improves student achievement.

Further research of effective principals in turnaround schools is recommended to examine the types of preparation and ongoing professional learning that contributes to a school’s success with special education populations. An examination of district level support structures and professional development for principals in the areas of special education and the impact on those results on the achievement of students with disabilities could offer new frameworks for building the capacity of school level leaders. Through this kind of study, researchers may determine the most effective kinds of professional learning that develops instructional leadership in conjunction with the compliance components of special education. Finally, the addition of overall student achievement to this study may provide a basis for comparison with the achievement of students with disabilities.

Summary

This study produced no significant findings to link the perceptions of special education teachers regarding the extent to which principals demonstrate leadership behaviors to the achievement of students with disabilities. Principal leadership clearly requires a breadth of skill and knowledge beyond what can be completed in leadership preparation programs. Although the literature supports a significant relationship between a principal’s ability to set the direction for the school, influence and inspire others to act on behalf of the vision and orchestrate the learning organization with overall student achievement, these practices are not sufficient in influencing the results of students with
disabilities.

The findings of a moderate significant negative correlation between one aspect of instructional leadership behaviors and achievement that suggests setting direction and goals was a less likely behavior in Title I schools was not surprising. The practices and behaviors of school leaders are influenced by the impact of poverty on their student populations. Research confirms that the effects of SES can be seen in all aspects of the school environment and student outcomes.

Since research influences policy and practice, it was the goal of this study to provide guidance to leaders in determining which behaviors yield the highest returns in student achievement. If principals are to be held accountable for their students meeting or exceeding state and federal standards in the areas of reading and math, then it will be essential that they have skill sets that include those practices that provide maximum benefit to student achievement. Although this study does not establish a relationship between the most highly effective leader practices found in the research and the achievement of students with disabilities, it does illuminate those principal behaviors that have been shown to enhance the achievement of all students, which ultimately includes subgroup students.
APPENDIX A

PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey is designed to gain an understanding of instructional leadership behaviors that improve the achievement of students with disabilities.

Directions: Indicate your opinion about each statement by marking one of the five responses in the columns to the right. Each response represents a degree on the continuum. Please respond to each statement by considering your principal’s current resources, opportunities, and ability to exhibit each of the behaviors. In your current role as a special education teacher, to what extent has your principal established the following behaviors and practices in your school:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>0 (Not at all)</th>
<th>1 (Once in a while)</th>
<th>2 (Sometimes)</th>
<th>3 (Fairly often)</th>
<th>4 (Frequently, if not often)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Principal communicates to all stakeholders that the business of the school is teaching and learning.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Principal’s vision and mission of the school reflect the learning needs of all students, including students with disabilities.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Principal’s direction for the school reflects the values and beliefs of the school community.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The vision and mission of the school are regularly communicated to all stakeholders.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The school develops long-term attainable goals for student learning.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The school has a system for monitoring goals related to student achievement.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The school has a system for monitoring goals related to the achievement of students with disabilities.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The Principal regularly communicates the school goals to all stakeholders.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Teachers’ professional goals are tied to a school-wide strategic plan.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The Principal has high expectations for teachers and staff.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The Principal has high expectations for students.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The Principal has high expectations for students with disabilities.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The Principal encourages the participation of students with disabilities in all aspects of the school.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The Principal is proficient in providing meaningful feedback to teachers regarding curriculum and instruction.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. The Principal regularly provides models of effective teaching.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. The Principal provides direct instructional support to special education teachers.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17. The school has a plan of professional learning that addresses the attrition rate of special educators. 0 1 2 3 4
18. The Principal pays personal attention to struggling teachers. 0 1 2 3 4
19. Teachers view the Principal as an instructional leader. 0 1 2 3 4
20. Teachers perceive a high level of administrative support. 0 1 2 3 4
21. Teachers receive rewards and incentives for the attainment of goals. 0 1 2 3 4
22. Teachers perceive a high level of autonomy for classroom instruction. 0 1 2 3 4
23. The Principal provides opportunities for teacher leadership. 0 1 2 3 4
24. Teachers collaborate with others in rich dialogues about instruction. 0 1 2 3 4
25. Teachers participate in professional learning activities along side the principal. 0 1 2 3 4
26. The Principal is open to teachers’ ideas regarding curriculum and instruction. 0 1 2 3 4
27. The Principal encourages teachers in risk taking initiatives. 0 1 2 3 4
28. Teachers receive compelling and salient feedback from the Principal regarding instructional practices. 0 1 2 3 4
29. The school governance model reflects shared decision-making. 0 1 2 3 4
30. Teachers are involved in decisions related to curriculum and instruction. 0 1 2 3 4
31. The school culture promotes collaboration between teachers and school leaders. 0 1 2 3 4
32. The use of time at the school ensures opportunities for teachers to collaborate with each other. 0 1 2 3 4
33. The Principal shares the achievement of students with disabilities with the school community. 0 1 2 3 4
34. The families of students with disabilities have a forum for sharing ideas and concerns. 0 1 2 3 4
35. School policies and practices are designed to protect instructional time. 0 1 2 3 4
36. Students are heterogeneously grouped for at least 80% of the school day. 0 1 2 3 4
37. Families of students with disabilities are represented within the school governance model. 0 1 2 3 4
38. Classroom instruction includes time for practice, feedback, and coaching. 0 1 2 3 4
39. At-risk and disadvantaged learners are provided with opportunities to engage in rigorous and meaningful instruction. 0 1 2 3 4
40. Classrooms experience low levels of student misbehavior and distractions. 0 1 2 3 4
41. The Principal directs materials and resources to meet the needs of all students. 0 1 2 3 4
42. The Principal demonstrates knowledge and skills in the field of special education. 0 1 2 3 4
42. How long have you been a teacher?  

____________________ Years.
43. How long have you been a teacher at this school? ____________________ Years.
TO:  Margaret E. Constantino  
     5576 Cathers Creek Drive  
     Hiram, GA 30141  

FROM:  Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.  
       HSPRC Chair  

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 11051902  
PROJECT TITLE: The Relationship Between Special Education Teachers’  
Perceptions of Principal Leadership Behaviors and the Achievement of  
Students with Disabilities  

Enclosed is The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection  
Review Committee Notice of Committee Action taken on the above referenced  
project proposal. If I can be of further assistance, contact me at (601) 266-4279,  
FAX at (601) 266-4275, or you can e-mail me at Lawrence.Hosman@usm.edu.  
Good luck with your research.
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Institutional Review Board

118 College Drive #5147
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Tel: 601.266.6820
Fax: 601.266.5509
www.usm.edu/irb

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26.111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 11051902
PROJECT TITLE: The Relationship Between Special Education Teachers' Perceptions of Principal Leadership Behaviors and the Achievement of Students with Disabilities
PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: 05/01/2011 to 08/30/2011
PROJECT TYPE: Dissertation
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: Margaret E. Constantino
COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education & Psychology
DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership & School Counseling
FUNDING AGENCY: N/A
HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: Expedited Review Approval
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 06/02/2011 to 06/01/2012

[Signature]
Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

[Signature] (6-6-2011)
Date
APPENDIX C

PERMISSION LETTER

March 30, 2011

Ms. Margaret Elizabeth Constantino
5070 Cushers Creek Drive
Hiram, GA 30141

Dear Ms. Constantino:

Your application to conduct research in Cobb County School District has been administratively approved. You may now contact the individual school/departments about their participation in the study. Listed below are the schools identified in your application, along with the name and phone number of the principal. A copy of the Principal’s Agreement To Participate form is included. After gaining approval from school principals, submit the original form to the Office of Accountability. Once the form has been received in the Office of Accountability and Research, a final letter of approval will be sent to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adairson (2-5)</td>
<td>Kathlene Coats</td>
<td>770.973.5600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addisson</td>
<td>Karen Creasey</td>
<td>770.516.2700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angeles</td>
<td>Robert Delany</td>
<td>770.819.2397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austell Intermediate (2-5)</td>
<td>Eliza Fraser</td>
<td>770.975.5629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker</td>
<td>Melissa Warren</td>
<td>770.974.8955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bells Ferry</td>
<td>Leticia Warren</td>
<td>770.819.6515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellwood Hills</td>
<td>Terry Lloyd</td>
<td>770.887.6810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Shanty</td>
<td>Lynne Hanik</td>
<td>770.591.0023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherokee</td>
<td>Tanja Hinchliffe</td>
<td>770.887.6824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dektow</td>
<td>Marilyn Kendzi</td>
<td>770.514.7600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Floyd</td>
<td>Becky West</td>
<td>770.887.6838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest</td>
<td>Amanda Battiste</td>
<td>770.976.7970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royalton Intermediate (2-5)</td>
<td>Allinda Williams</td>
<td>770.819.2402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royalton</td>
<td>SharonHardin</td>
<td>770.591.0720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shallowford Park Hill</td>
<td>Nellie Weare-Treolla</td>
<td>770.594.8844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarkdale</td>
<td>Margaret Hickstaff</td>
<td>770.819.2422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Contact Name</td>
<td>Phone Number</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Clay</td>
<td>Florence Williams</td>
<td>770.281.2430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compton</td>
<td>Jim Hirsch</td>
<td>770.282.2760</td>
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<tr>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>Dee Nobley</td>
<td>678.594.7676</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donnell</td>
<td>Arni Komnara</td>
<td>678.591.8869</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doc West</td>
<td>Peggy Floering</td>
<td>678.594.8877</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Side</td>
<td>Elizabeth Mansley</td>
<td>770.284.7200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Valley</td>
<td>Karen Wacker</td>
<td>770.287.7214</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fair Oaks</td>
<td>Cindy Swain</td>
<td>678.594.2900</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ferr</td>
<td>Sam Pena</td>
<td>678.594.2992</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ferry</td>
<td>Jerry Flair</td>
<td>770.281.6659</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garrison Mill</td>
<td>Paula Huffman</td>
<td>770.842.2600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green Acres</td>
<td>Mittel River</td>
<td>678.812.6905</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harmony Island</td>
<td>Henrietta Simmons</td>
<td>770.819.2483</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hayes Intermediate</td>
<td>Teresa Watson</td>
<td>678.394.8127</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hollydale</td>
<td>Lynn McCloskey</td>
<td>678.594.5165</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kelsey</td>
<td>1st Jackson</td>
<td>678.594.7836</td>
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<td>Koremose</td>
<td>Wanda Floyd</td>
<td>678.594.8712</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kisco</td>
<td>Cheryl Mauzalin</td>
<td>770.838.7328</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lake Charles</td>
<td>Linda Kersey</td>
<td>678.812.6730</td>
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<tr>
<td>LaRiva</td>
<td>Lisa Hogan</td>
<td>678.394.2555</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lewis</td>
<td>Kristie Kce</td>
<td>770.962.6673</td>
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<td>Mahletsen</td>
<td>Kym Eganman</td>
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<td>Mableet</td>
<td>Michelle Perone</td>
<td>678.847.0696</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mount Bethel</td>
<td>Joan Johnson</td>
<td>770.576.2340</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicholas</td>
<td>Wanda Short</td>
<td>770.928.3373</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nickjack</td>
<td>Beverly Parks</td>
<td>678.842.5814</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norton Park</td>
<td>Douglas Taughtery</td>
<td>678.812.5833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickens Mill</td>
<td>Shelia Cheever</td>
<td>Opening 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pines</td>
<td>Sherry Hill</td>
<td>678.394.3320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powder Springs</td>
<td>Patricia Huttelli</td>
<td>770.222.3742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powells Ferry</td>
<td>Joan Mills</td>
<td>770.287.7958</td>
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<tr>
<td>Riverside Intermediate</td>
<td>Alana Singleton</td>
<td>770.819.2533</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rocky Mount</td>
<td>Gulf May</td>
<td>770.591.9850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosewell</td>
<td>Nancy Upardillo</td>
<td>770.837.3591</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandstone Intermediate</td>
<td>Pamela Dingle</td>
<td>770.819.2560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searcy Park</td>
<td>Patricia Thomas</td>
<td>770.569.3162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shallows End Hills</td>
<td>Doreen Griffith</td>
<td>770.642.5630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky View</td>
<td>Cynthia Catlin</td>
<td>770.819.2584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sope Creek</td>
<td>Martha Whalen</td>
<td>770.916.7965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spell</td>
<td>Grace Marquart</td>
<td>678.591.8787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texasky</td>
<td>Jocie Robertson</td>
<td>770.137.3915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber Ridge</td>
<td>Trudy Doc</td>
<td>770.642.3621</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tevi</td>
<td>Karen Frost</td>
<td>770.642.5620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanier</td>
<td>Pamela Assadi</td>
<td>770.323.2775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaughan</td>
<td>Barbara Swainey</td>
<td>678.541.8298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Should modifications or changes in research procedures become necessary during the research project, submit changes in writing to the Office of Accountability and Research. If you have any questions regarding the final approval process, contact our office at 770-428-3427.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr. Judith A. Jones
Chief Accountability and Research Officer
APPENDIX D

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

INFORMED CONSENT

1.) **Purpose:** The purposes of this study are to determine if there is a relationship between elementary special education teachers' perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities in Grades 3, 4 and 5 as measured by the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Test (CRCT), attempt to identify leadership indicators that may improve the performance of students with disabilities. The CRCT results in grades 3, 4 and 5 are used to measure Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for elementary schools. The results of this study may be used in the future for presentations at professional conferences and/or in scholarly publications.

2.) **Description of Study:** This research is a quantitative study using archival achievement data and a web-based survey instrument to measure the relationship between elementary special education teachers’ perceptions of the extent to which principals demonstrate specific leadership behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities. The study will involve elementary special education teachers at 70 elementary schools. All respondents hold certification in the state of Georgia and are over 18 years of age. Subjects will complete quantitative surveys designed to provide responses in the areas of setting direction for the school, influencing others, and redesigning the school organization. The survey will include demographic information regarding years of experience and years at the school. The survey, which should take about 30 minutes to complete, will be available in paper copy as well as online.

3.) **Benefits:** This study presents a number of benefits to the individual educator, the school district and to the profession. The purpose of the study is to identify relationships between special education teachers’ perceptions regarding specific leader behaviors and the achievement of students with disabilities. The achievement of this subgroup population is a challenge for many schools and is a determining factor for schools in meeting Annual Yearly Progress under No Child Left Behind. Principals and school districts may benefit from a focus on those behaviors that may most influence the achievement of students with disabilities. Additionally, this study may contribute to the book of knowledge in leadership and special education in the development of principal preparation programs.

4.) **Risk:** There are no foreseeable risks for the subjects participating in this study. Subjects may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty and participation is strictly voluntary. Participation in the study will be voluntary and participants will
remain anonymous during data reporting. Surveys containing passwords and numeric identifiers will be sent to participants via web-based service and will require a minimal amount of time to complete.

5.) **Confidentiality:** The researcher will use extreme caution and care to insure that the data collected is kept secure and confidential. All survey data will be kept secure in a password-protected database available only to the researcher. Surveys containing passwords and numeric identifiers will be sent to participants via web-based service and will require a minimal amount of time to complete. Data from the study will be secure until it is destroyed after 5 years.

6.) **Alternative Procedures:** N/A

7.) **Participant’s Assurance:** Although results from investigational studies cannot be predicted, the researcher can make no assurances concerning the outcome of this study. The researcher will take every precaution to be consistent with scientific best practice. Participants in this project will do so voluntarily and may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Questions regarding the study will be directed to the researcher, Peggie Constantino at (678) 986-3994. This project and consent form has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive, #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820. A copy of this form will be given to the participant.
APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT LETTER

The University of Southern Mississippi

The Relationship Between Special Education Teachers’ Perceptions of Principal Leadership Behaviors on the Achievement of Students with Disabilities

Dear Participant,

You are being solicited to complete an online survey regarding your perception of your leadership skills related to instructional leadership. Your participation is strictly voluntary and is in no way related to your employment status. You have the right to decline or discontinue participation at any point in the process without penalty, prejudice, or consequence. The survey should take no more than 30 minutes of your time. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. All survey data will be kept secure for 5 years and will be deleted upon completion of this time period.

By completing this survey, you are giving consent as a participant for this information to be used as part of this study. The information will only be used for the purpose outlined above.

If you choose to participate, please respond to the online survey that will be sent to you via your school email address. As a means of thanking you for your efforts, a book will be donated to your school library.

Should you have any further questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me at Peggie.constantino@cobbk12.org. I appreciate your support of my research in the area of educational leadership.

Sincerely,

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39406-0001, (601) 266-682
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