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K-12 PRINCIPALS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION: A STUDY OF MISSISSIPPI

PRINCIPALS' KNOWLEDGE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICIES AND

PROCEDURES

by

Jodi Cameron-Polk

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of Education and Human Sciences
and the School of Education
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to assess the knowledge of Mississippi K-12 public school principals and assistant principals in special education law, policies, and procedures concerning the six principles (i.e., zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, free appropriate public education, due process, and parent participation) of IDEA 2004. This study also sought to establish by which method (i.e., university coursework, administrative trainings, on-the-job experiences, self-taught research, or did not learn this) they acquired their knowledge of special education law, policies, and procedures. The researcher adapted Jesteadt's survey tool to ascertain participants' special education teaching experience and university training and coursework, including professional development opportunities. Additionally, the survey tool sought to assess participants' ability to identify the meaning of 20 acronyms associated with special education; respond to 12 hypothetical scenarios based on the six major principles of IDEA 2004; and establish by which method school leaders contended to have learned about special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles assessed in this study. Despite repeated efforts to obtain a good sample, only 32 participants returned the completed survey. The data showed that participating Mississippi principals' knowledge of special education was weakest regarding the policies of procedural due process, zero reject, and least restrictive environment. Additionally, findings revealed that less than half of the responses for the 20 acronyms received a 75% or more response that was correct. The results demonstrate that changes are needed in the preparation of school leaders for their responsibilities in special education policies and procedures.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving husband, Chris, our two amazing children, Elijah and Adrienne, and my encouraging mother, Michelle. I am so thankful for your understanding and support throughout this entire process. I could not have done this without you! I love you all!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

School administrators are in a position to change the lives of many individuals – students, educators, staff members, and parents – throughout the course of their careers. These school leaders have the opportunity to influence positively those within their schools by creating a collaborative and inclusive environment despite the growing demands for school principals. Over the decades, the growing responsibilities of the school principal have developed because of historical, political, societal, and cultural events. Whitehead et al. (2013) divided the history of the principalship into decades, beginning before the 1920s and progressing throughout the 2000s, and discussed metaphorical themes, roles and perceptions of principals' responsibilities, and management theories/theorists used by the administrators as well as during the training of these school leaders. In today's society, K-12 principals are responsible for ensuring the educational development of *all* students in their schools.

Students receiving special education services are required by federal and state laws to receive an education in an environment conducive to learning for their own special needs. According to Milligan et al. (2012), children with special needs can receive an education in the public-school setting because of parents who advocated for the inclusion of their children with special needs within public schools. Due to the diligent advocacy of the parents in four major court cases as well as additional cases, the first federal law regarding the education of students with special needs known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, or Public Law No. 94-142, was passed in 1975. Although this law has been reauthorized, amended, and renamed throughout history, the overarching purpose of this law is to ensure that students with disabilities

receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) complete with the provision of appropriate individualized education programs (IEP) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for all students receiving special education services in ways that protect the learners' procedural and substantive due process rights (Nevin, 1979; Milligan et al., 2012).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) outlines thirteen qualifying conditions for special education. Students with the following disabilities or conditions are afforded special education and related services specific to their unique needs: "intellectual disability, hearing impairments, deafness, speech/language impairments, visual impairments, emotional disturbance disorders, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, specific learning disabilities, deaf-blindness, and multiple disabilities" (34 CFR § 300.8). Students qualifying for special education services under these specific conditions are able to receive accommodations outlined in a legally binding IEP that must be adhered to and followed to safeguard their educational needs are met.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(B), dictates that the IEP is written by an IEP team which consists of parents, a special education teacher, a general education teacher, a local educational agency representative (often a school administrator), a psychometrist (or school psychologist), related service providers (i.e., speech therapist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, behavior specialist, etc.), and, when appropriate, the student. As this document is legally binding, school administrators need to be knowledgeable about the components of the IEP and able to ensure that students are receiving their accommodations and

modifications as determined in their IEP within the confines of the law and the requirements set forth by the federal and state governments.

Although there are more nondisabled students in a public-school setting with the exception of special schools, Roberts and Guerra, Jr. (2017) asserted: "Principals, nevertheless, are not prepared to supervise special education programs because they are inadequately prepared in their knowledge of special education policy, and more importantly, the characteristics of how these disorders or disabilities affect the student" (p. 2). While the preparation of school administrators regarding special education is a national concern, after reviewing the coursework requirements for the major university principal preparation programs in Mississippi, it is apparent that future school leaders receive limited training specific to special education within the state's educational administration programs.

Upon a closer look into the requirements of five public and two private universities in Mississippi, there is a lack of special education specific coursework to instruct and prepare future school leaders for leading and working with some of the most vulnerable students. Apart from acknowledging special education in courses such as School Law, Legal Considerations for School Leadership, or Diverse Populations, the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) does not require any specifically centered special education coursework for educators working toward their administrative degrees. According to The University of Mississippi's program requirements, educators seeking a degree in educational leadership are required to take two courses – (1) School Law and Leadership and (2) Equity and Cultural Leadership – which include some instruction concerning special education. Mississippi State University (MSU) requires educators

pursuing their degrees in school administration to take school legal and ethical perspectives and educating diverse learners. Although Jackson State University (JSU) requires students completing coursework toward a master's degree in Educational Leadership to take a course on legal issues, specific special education coursework is not required. However, in the Specialist program, Jackson State University students must complete one special education class: Psychoeducational Aspects of Exceptional Children. The program requirements for Delta State University's principal preparation program do not require concentrated coursework in special education. Delta State University divides its coursework into three levels of foundations and practices.

An inspection of the coursework requirements at the two private higher education institutions in Mississippi revealed that some special education coursework is required in one school's principal preparation programs but not in the other. Mississippi College requires future principals to take school law in their M.Ed. program. In both the specialist and doctoral programs, future administrators take Legal Structures and Legal Issues as well as a course entitled Engaged Learning, which may discuss special education during the coursework. Additionally, students enrolled in the Ed.S. in Elementary K-6 program take an education course named Legal Structures and Special Services Laws that does cover special education laws. In the principal preparation programs at William Carey University, students working toward an administrator degree (i.e., M.Ed., Ed.S., Ed.D., and Ed.D. - Pathway to P-12) are required to take two courses, (1) Human and Student Diversity and (2) Judicial and Ethics Consideration, in which special education is discussed briefly.

While other coursework required by these seven universities/colleges may refer to special education briefly, there are limited programs requiring specific special education courses for educators seeking degrees in educational leadership in Mississippi.

According to Rinehart (2017), "principals often feel unprepared for their roles in the administration of special education programs" (p. 57). Although programs have been developed in universities to help prepare principals for school leadership positions, the lack of coursework specific to special education as seen in the program requirements for universities in Mississippi result in limited knowledge of special education among building leaders in K-12 schools. While school law and/or diversity coursework is important and beneficial for administrators, the inclusion of special education classes regarding disabilities, IEP, curriculum, inclusive practices, strategies, and fieldwork/internship opportunities is needed (Bakken & Smith, 2011; Boscardin, 2005; Drasgow et al., 2001; Garner & Forbes, 2013; Hines, 2008; Milligan et al., 2012; Nevin, 1979; Poetter et al., 2001).

For practicing administrators, who have completed their program requirements, special education professional development opportunities are available. However, according to M. Ellmer, former interim Executive Director of the Office of Special Education at the Mississippi Department of Education, and B. Gillespie, a former administrative assistant at the former grant-funded Autism Project of The University of Southern Mississippi, few K-12 administrators attend these sessions (M. Ellmer, personal communication, 2018; B. Gillespie, personal communication, 2018). Peterson (2002) asserted, "It is equally important for districts, associations, states, and other organizations to offer carefully designed professional development programs over the careers of these

[school] leaders" (p. 213). Furthermore, "preparation programs and professional development program curricula should be linked and coordinated to expand learning and reduce redundancy" (p. 230). Grissom and Harrington (2010) found an abundance of studies concerning the importance of teacher professional development; however, few studies had been conducted about the importance of school administrator professional development. Spillane et al. (2009) asserted that opportunities for continued learning for school leaders (not just for principals, but also for all educators in leadership positions) should consist of formal professional development and in-service or on-site training.

Preparing educators in university preparation programs for the role of school principal and providing relevant and applicable professional development opportunities are necessary to ensure that students, qualifying for special education programs, are provided with a free appropriate public education in their least restrictive environment while receiving the proper accommodations and modifications specified in their IEP, which will enable the students to learn and make adequate progress.

Background of the Problem

The law is very clear that students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education with accommodations and modifications specific to their individual needs documented in the legally binding IEP. Sun and Xin (2020) contended that "school leaders should possess adequate knowledge and skills in special education, such as their understanding of laws and regulations, evolvement of special education, and awareness of important issues related to special education" (107). DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003) affirmed, "Administrators who clearly understand the needs of students with disabilities, IDEA, and the instructional challenges that educators who work with

students with disabilities face are better prepared to provide appropriate support" (p. 10). However, past research and studies have found that school principals lack training which has led to a deficit in knowledge of special education policies and procedures, as well as effective instructional classroom strategies for students with disabilities. This lack of knowledge often results in noncompliance with special education law, which can lead to costly litigation against a school (Davidson & Gooden, 2001).

Cornelius and Gustafson (2021) found that "a majority of school principals report never learning special education laws and regulations from their preparation program" (p. 211). Sirotnik and Kimball (1994) asserted, "The conclusion we arrive at is this: Special education [and its relationship to general education] is treated wholly inadequately, if at all, in programs designed to prepare school administrators" (p. 599). Furthermore, Aspedon (1992) discovered in a comprehensive study regarding principals' attitudes toward special education that 72% of school leaders had limited exposure to students with disabilities and that more than 85% of the respondents indicated that formal training in special education was necessary. DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003) confirmed, "Most principals lack the course work and field experience needed to lead local efforts to create learning environments that emphasize academic success for students with disabilities" (p. 11). With the number of students eligible to receive special education services, it is imperative that K-12 principals obtain the necessary instruction and training regarding special education federal and state mandates and best teaching practices to ensure that this vulnerable population within schools receives a free appropriate public education based on their specific needs as documented in their IEP.

Jesteadt (2012) conducted a study of principals in Florida to determine their level of special education knowledge principals pertaining to the six provisions of IDEA (i.e., zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, free appropriate public education, due process, and parent participation) and by which method (i.e., academic coursework, in-service professional development trainings, on-the-job experiences, self-taught research, or did not learn) they obtained their knowledge. In her study, the results indicated that, "school principals in Florida do not hold a sufficient amount of knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures" (Jesteadt, 2012, p. 104). Furthermore, Jesteadt's (2012) study also revealed that:

> An analysis of the methods by which principals purport to have acquired their overall knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures across all six principles suggests that the majority of participants acquired the knowledge through district in-services and on the job experiences. This finding suggests principal preparation programs are inadequate in providing the necessary knowledge of special education policies and procedures. (p. 107)

Regarding principals' level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures and their academic coursework in special education, the findings were "statistically significantly higher after taking five or more special education courses" which is consistent with other research that training in special education is important for administrators' understanding and knowledge of special education policies and procedures (Jesteadt, 2012, p. 109). Additionally, school administrators who had prior teaching experience in special education had greater overall knowledge of special

education policies and procedures which may have been influenced by a formal education in special education; however, Jesteadt (2012) asserted, "This finding still suggests that actually having personal experience with students with disabilities can increase one's knowledge of the policies and procedures in the field of special education" (p. 109).

D. M. Power (2007) conducted a study of principals in selected Virginia schools to determine their levels of knowledge concerning special education law by having participants respond to 24 hypothetical scenarios involving seven areas of special education law (i.e., Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Related Services, Due Process, Student Discipline, and Liability of Reimbursement for Parents) (p. 97). The findings "concluded that Virginia principals' knowledge of special education law was not significantly different due to the grade level compositions of the schools, sizes (ADA) of the schools or the type of communities that the principals served in" (p. 95). Additionally, Power (2007) found "that principals' knowledge of special education law are not related to gender, age, years of experience as a teacher, years of experience as a principal, level of degree, and the number of courses taken in special education law" (p. 95). Power's (2007) study "concluded that Virginia principals' knowledge of special education law was not significantly different due to involvement in special education litigation initiated due to violations of special education safeguards" (p. 95).

Other studies have been conducted to determine the level of knowledge school principals have regarding special education law, policies, and procedures and have concluded that additional instruction through academic coursework and principal preparation programs is necessary to prepare administrators for their role as leaders of the

special education programs within their schools (Aspedon, 1992; Hirth, 1988; McClard-Bertrand & Bratberg, 2007; Patterson & Marshall, 2000; Valesky & Hirth, 1992; and Wakeman et al., 2006).

Education and Leadership in Mississippi

According to the Legatum Institute's (2022) *American Dream Prosperity Index Report*, "[Although] Mississippi is the lowest ranked state in the United States, including the District of Columbia, in 2022, a position it has held since 2017 […] some improvements are notable. For example, the quality of pre-school education has increased dramatically, as has mental health care access for children" (p. 20). Despite these improvements, the state's ranking of 46 out of 51 in overall education indicated that Mississippi schools still have a significant amount of work to do to ensure that students are college and career ready once they graduate (p. 23).

According to Jetter, III and LeBlond (2021), "Mississippi has a history of education underperformance" (p. 2). Furthermore, "A number of school districts within Mississippi have underperformed for many years and with consistently poor grades; nevertheless, taxpayers have had little input and less choice in making any changes to improve the quality of education" (p. 2). According to the *2021-22 Superintendent's Annual Report* published by the Mississippi Department of Education (2022):

> Despite this national trend [of scores falling over the past decade in most states], Mississippi is a leader among the few states that have shown improvements on one or more NAEP [National Assessment of Educational Progress] assessments over the past decade. Specifically: (1) Mississippi achieved significant gains in 4th grade reading and math since 2011; (2) along with Washington D.C.,

10

Mississippi is the only state or jurisdiction that improved over a 10-year period in two of the four core NAEP subjects; (3) Mississippi is one of only two states with improved 4th grade math scores over a decade and one of only three states with gains in 4th grade reading; and (4) in 8th grade, Mississippi scores remained flat in reading and math over the past decade while the average scores nationally dropped in both subjects. (p. 7)

Jeter, III and LeBlond (2021) cautioned that, "such claims of improvement should be treated with skepticism" (p. 3). The authors further asserted:

MAAP scores are arbitrary and prone to grade inflation, as the cut scores determining a grade from A to F are set internally by MDE. Accordingly, their curve shows that the number of A/B/C schools has increased; however, if we use an external measure of student achievement in Mississippi, such as the American College Test (ACT) scores, we find no evidence of improved performance. (p. 3).

Regarding graduation rates, the *2021-22 Superintendent's Annual Report* stated, "Mississippi high school students achieved a record-breaking graduation rate of 88.4% for the 2022 accountability year and the lowest statewide dropout rate of 8.5% [… and …] among students with disabilities, the graduation rate increased to 59.9%, and the dropout rate was 18.4%" (Mississippi Department of Education, 2022, p. 15). However, Jeter, III and LeBlond (2021) alleged:

The way in which graduation rates are measured in Mississippi has changed […] Previously, graduation rates were calculated by measuring the percentage of students that entered high school at Grade 9 and then successfully graduated from Grade 12 over four years. Today, graduation rates measure how many students

entering Grade 12 complete Grade 12. It is not measuring quite the same thing as

before. (p. 4)

When looking at school data and improvement, educators have to look at multiple

components to determine what contributes to the success or the ineffectiveness of

educational programs. The *American Dream Prosperity Index Report* contended,

"Education provides the opportunity for individuals to reach their potential, and a more

fulfilled and prosperous life" (Legatum Institute, 2022, p. 98). K-12 public school

principals and assistant principals are in the position to lead educators, students, and

communities in a direction where education takes priority. Therefore, it is crucial that

principal preparation programs are providing training for future school administrators in

the area of special education law, policies, and procedures to ensure that these school

administrators are prepared to provide for the educational development of *all* students,

including those with disabilities, in their schools.

Pending Special Education Litigation Cases Currently Under Investigation at
Elementary and Secondary Schools in Mississippi

The U.S. Department of Education's (2023, May 10) Office for Civil Rights

website contained a section listing pending cases currently under investigation at

elementary-secondary and post-secondary schools as of May 8, 2023. The data was

broken down by states and by disability categories. The first section of disability

discrimination categories included academic adjustments, accessibility, accessibility -

website/online courses, admissions and recruitment, denial of benefits, disability

harassment, discipline, and effective communication. The second section of disability

discrimination categories included FAPE, GT/STEM/CCR/CTE, non-academic services,

others, procedural requirements, resource comparability, restraint and seclusion, retaliation, service animal, and treatment of post-secondary students. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2023, May 10), as of May 8, 2023, there were 31 pending disability discrimination cases under investigation at elementary and secondary schools in Mississippi. *Table 1* outlines the type of disability discrimination and the total number of pending cases:

Table 1

2023 Pending Disability Discrimination Cases in Mississippi Elementary and Secondary Schools

Type of Disability Discrimination	Total Number of Pending Cases
Academic Adjustments	--
Accessibility	--
Accessibility - Website/Online Courses	2
Admissions and Recruitment	--
Denial of Benefits	2
Disability Harassment	5
Discipline	--
Effective Communication	3
FAPE	12
GT/STEM/CCR/CTE	--
Non-academic Services	--

Table 1 Continued   --

Type of Disability Discrimination	Total Number of Pending Cases
Other	--
Procedural Requirements	2
Resource Comparability	--
Restraint and Seclusion	--
Retaliation	5
Service Animal	--
Treatment of Post-Secondary Students	--
Total Number of Open Investigations	31

Note: Adapted from the U.S. Department of Education (2023, May 10) Office for Civil Rights website:

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/open-investigations/dis1.html and

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/open-investigations/dis2.html

Compared to other states whose universities/colleges receive accreditation through The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), Mississippi has the second least amount of open investigations regarding disability discrimination cases. *Table 2* shows the 11 SACSCOC states and the total number of open investigations pertaining to disability discrimination cases in elementary and secondary schools.

Table 2

SACSCOC States' Number of Open Disability Discrimination Investigation Cases in

Elementary and Secondary Schools, in Order from Least to Most

State	Number of Open Disability Discrimination Investigation Cases
Kentucky (KY)	22
Mississippi (MS)	31
South Carolina (SC)	53
Alabama (AL)	65
Louisiana (LA)	65
Tennessee (TN)	65
North Carolina (NC)	127
Virginia (VA)	138
Georgia (GA)	162
Florida (FL)	199
Texas (TX)	381

Note: Adapted from the U.S. Department of Education (2023, May 10) Office for Civil Rights website:

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/open-investigations/dis1.html and

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/open-investigations/dis2.html

Although Mississippi has less open cases than nine states within the SACSCOC

states, 31 open and pending investigations is still too many investigations involving

individuals with disabilities in elementary and secondary schools. The data showed that,

in Mississippi, FAPE had the highest number of open investigations. The data also

showed that for each SACSCOC state, the category with the highest number of open

investigations involved FAPE. See Table 3 for the number of FAPE disability

discrimination cases by SACSCOC states.

Table 3

Number of Open FAPE Disability Discrimination Cases by SACSCOC States in

Elementary and Secondary Schools, in Order from Least to Most

State	Total Number of Open FAPE Disability Discrimination Investigation Cases
KY	6
MS	12
AL	22
TN	24
SC	26
LA	28
VA	58
GA	64
NC	65
FL	80
TX	154

Note: Adapted from the U.S. Department of Education (2023, May 10) Office for Civil Rights website:

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/open-investigations/dis1.html and

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/open-investigations/dis2.html

While Mississippi ranks second to least in open investigation disability

discrimination cases, there is room for improvement, especially in the area of FAPE.

Multiple districts across the state may or may not have provided FAPE for *all* students.

The verdict is still out as these cases are still under investigation. School leaders should receive explicit instruction in academic coursework regarding FAPE, as well as the other five provisions of IDEA 2004 (i.e., zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, procedural due process, and parent participation).

Conceptual Framework

Legal theory, social justice, and ethical reasoning in educational leadership were utilized as the conceptual frameworks with which to guide the design of this study. Students eligible to receive special education services are among the most vulnerable populations within the school setting. In regard to principal preparation programs, knowledge of special education laws, policies, and procedures is vital for future school administrators to ensure the implementation of programs necessary to provide the most vulnerable students with a free, appropriate public education consistent with the law.

Garner (2009) asserted that the term "law" is defined as "the regime that orders human activities and relations through systematic application of the force of politically organized society or through social pressure, backed by force, in such a society" (p. 962). McCarthy (2013) acknowledged that "all institutions and organizations reach some type of consensus regarding how they will function in terms of rules and principles in order to operate efficiently" (p. 829). This is especially true for schools and education. There are federal, state, and local laws, policies, and/or guidelines involved in education, which must be implemented with fidelity to ensure students are receiving a free, appropriate public education in their least restrictive environment.

Principal preparation programs require educators to complete coursework involving school law. Within this course, educators receive instruction regarding the legal

aspects of education, including special education. According to Wagner and Katsiyannis (2010), "due to the prescriptive nature of the law and related regulations, as well as the right of parents to challenge school districts on issues related to the provision of FAPE, special education has been a fertile area for litigation" (p. 41). However, McCarthy (2013) asserted:

> A legal perspective can have an impact on how educators perform their job so that their daily decisions are more equitable and fair, particularly in areas where the status of the law is ambiguous. [Furthermore] if educators internalize the concept of fundamental fairness, for example, this can guide their daily actions as well as enhance their understanding of procedural requirements that may be legally required. (p. 837)

Social Justice Theory

Adams et al. (1997) defined social justice as:

> Both a process and a goal. It means full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. We envision a society in which individuals are both self-determining (able to develop their full capacities), and interdependent (capable of interacting democratically with others). (p. 240)

There are various groups within the educational setting, and all have the right to learn and to be educated. C. M. Shields (2013) identified and discussed seven key principles

18

associated with democratic and social justice theory, which guide the design of this study. Shields' (2013) seven key principles include:

1. All persons will be treated with dignity, respect, and absolute regard and "ensure that difference is not interpreted as deficiency." (p. 1038)

2. There will be equitable access for all persons in which education "provides opportunities for all students." (p. 1039)

3. Schools will promote and focus on equitable outcomes in which education is "a catalyst for social mobility, for opening life's chances and choices for all children [regardless of social or situational inequities]." (p. 1039)

4. There will be an emphasis of mutual benefit in which it is recognized that "all children enter school with abilities, capabilities, and knowledge – some of which are congruent with that expected by schools and on which the curriculum is based and some of which relate to life in the *outside world.*" (p. 1040)

5. Schools/Educational institutions will be equally inclusive of each group's norms and ensures "that no group is advantaged within the institution to the exclusion of others." (p. 1041)

6. Citizenship rights will be "extended equally and equitably to all members of an educational institution (society, community, or school)" (p. 1041). Shields (2013) asserted that, "the inclusion of various and often marginalized groups permits a more inclusive conceptualization of citizenship rights." (p. 1042)

7. Resources will be equally distributed "on the basis of need and not based on successful competition for scarce resources" (p. 1042). Redistribution of

inequitably distributed resources has been and "will be fundamental to providing

equitable access and educational outcomes." (p. 1042)

These principles can help guide school leaders in the implementation of programs and

limit legalities that may accrue. Education is changing, and school administrators are at

the helm. They are catalysts for changes pertaining to the education of all students and

future students.

Ethical Reasoning

Ethical reasoning is another framework employed to guide this study. According

to Stone and Job (2013), "the basic conception [of ethics] concerns how individual

persons live their lives and by extension their interactions with others" (p. 31). Shapiro

and Stefkovich's (2021) ethical reasoning framework identifies four approaches to ethical

analysis: an ethic of justice, an ethic of critique, an ethic of care, and an ethic of the

profession.

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2021) asserted, "The ethic of justice focuses on rights

and law" and "frequently serves as a foundation for legal principles and ideals" (pp. 11,

13). School leaders who approach a situation from an ethic of justice focus "may ask

questions related to issues of equity and equality; the fairness of rules, laws, and policies;

the absolutism versus the exceptions of laws; and the rights of individuals versus the

greater good of the community" (p. 13). Shapiro and Stefkovich (2021) specified

questions considered using an ethic of justice lens such as: "Is there a law, right, or policy

that relates to a particular case? If there is a law, right, or policy, should it be enforced?

And if there is not a law, right, or policy, should there be one?" (p. 14). Concerning

special education, school administrators:

Must understand the rights inherent in IDEA, and why they are in place. He or she

must also know the legal and policy requirements of the law, as well as

understand the historical and educational contexts that have led to these

requirements." (Lashley, 2007, p. 184)

Regarding the ethic of critique, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2021) expressed it is

"inherent in critical theory [and] is aimed at awakening educators to inequities in society

and, in particular, in schools" (p. 16). The ethic of critique focuses on the hard questions

associated with the law and policy "regarding social class, race, gender, and other areas

of difference, such as: Who makes the laws? Who benefits from the law, rule, or policy?

Who has the power? Who are the silenced voices?" (p. 16). When asking and answering

these questions, school leaders should concentrate on options which would "enable all

children … to grow, learn and achieve" (p. 16). Apart from federal and state laws, rules,

and policies, school administrators must look at district and self-imposed rules/policies

within their schools to determine who benefits and who is silenced.

The ethic of care paradigm "requires leaders to consider multiple voices in the

decision-making process" (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021, p. 18). When applying the ethic

of care lens, school leaders must "focus on the knowledge of cultures and of diversity,

with a special emphasis on learning how to listen, observe, and respond to others" (pp.

19-20). Questions to consider include, "What are the consequences of my decisions and

actions? Who will benefit from what I decide? Who will be hurt by my actions? What are

the long-term effects of a decision I make today?" (p. 19). One major concern involving

the ethics of care that universities could address is how the lack of instruction in special

education for school building administrators during principal preparation programs is affecting students with disabilities within their schools.

The final ethical reasoning approach is the ethic of the profession. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2021) contended that when making ethical decisions within the educational setting, leaders must consider the "moral aspects unique to the profession and the questions that arise as educational leaders become more aware of their own personal and professional codes of ethics" (p. 20). Jesteadt (2012) acknowledged, "The ethic of the profession looks at providing training in ethics for school leaders" (p. 29). Shapiro and Stefkovich (2021) concurred with Greenfield's (1993) assertion that:

> A failure to provide opportunity for school administrators to develop such competence constitutes a failure to serve the children we are obligated to serve as public educators. As a profession, educational administration thus has a moral obligation to train prospective administrators to be able to apply the principles, rules, ideals, and virtues associated with the development of ethical schools. (as cited in Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021, p. 21)

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2021) disclosed that the "three Rs – rights, responsibility, and respect – are key to making ethical decisions that are in a student's best interests and, in turn, to fulfilling one's professional obligations as educational leaders" (p. 27). Questions that would need to be asked and answered regarding the ethic of profession include: "What would the profession expect me to do? What does the community expect me to do? And what should I do based on the best interests of the students, who may be diverse in their composition and their needs?" (p. 28). School administrators are responsible for

the education of all students, including those with disabilities. What is being done to ensure that students are being educated based on their individual needs?

The conceptual frameworks of legal theory but more importantly social justice and ethical reasoning will be applied to this research in order to evaluate whether current Mississippi K-12 public school leaders' knowledge of special education policies and procedures are safeguarding the educational opportunities for students with disabilities in an equitable and socially just manner within the school setting.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the knowledge current Mississippi K-12 public school principals and assistant principals have in special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles (i.e., zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, free appropriate public education, due process, and parent participation) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, and by which method (i.e., university coursework, administrative trainings, on-the-job experiences, or self-taught research) they acquired the knowledge.

Research Hypotheses

The guiding research question of this quantitative study was: What knowledge of special education laws and policies, especially those pertaining to the six principles of IDEA 2004, do practicing Mississippi K-12 school administrators possess, and by which method (i.e., academic coursework, administrative trainings, on the job experiences, or self-taught research) did they obtain most of their knowledge? In order to determine this information, the following research hypotheses were addressed:

23

H_1: There will be a significant difference in the level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures between school administrators who received formal special education training in their administrator coursework and school administrators, who did not receive formal special education training in their administrator coursework.

H_2: There will be a significant difference in school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures of the six principles of IDEA 2004 based on the method (i.e., academic coursework, professional development trainings, on the job experiences, or self-taught research) by which they were trained.

H_3: There will be a significant difference in principals' level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures between school demographics (i.e., school level, type of community, school size/average daily attendance, and population of students receiving special education services).

H_4: There will be a significant difference in the level of knowledge pertaining to special education policies and procedures between principals with special education teaching experience and those with no special education teaching experience.

A two-part survey instrument was employed via the Mississippi Association of School Administrators (MS ASA), a social media post on the researcher's personal Facebook page, and school email to all Mississippi public school district superintendents to forward to practicing principals across the state of Mississippi. Once collected, the data was analyzed using SPSS version 29.0 to determine principals' knowledge of special

education policies and procedures. The data was then compared the level of knowledge by the amount of special education coursework taken in university programs, the method in which principals learned their knowledge of special education policies and procedures, school demographics (i.e., school level, type of community, school size/average daily attendance, and percentage of student receiving special education services), and prior teaching experience in special education.

Justification for the Study

This study is significant to the field of education as the findings may facilitate a closer look into the need for the requirement of special education coursework in Mississippi universities' principal preparation programs, mandatory in-service administrative trainings specific to special education policies and procedures, and/or the creation of online training modules for administrators to complete as part of their own professional development each year. Furthermore, this study could add to the gap in the literature concerning the need for special education coursework in principal preparation programs and for mandatory in-service special education trainings for practicing administrators to ensure that these school leaders are prepared to lead their schools and support all students and educators under their leadership.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to practicing K-12 principals and assistant principals in Mississippi public schools. The survey was delimited to questions regarding special education instruction in principal preparation programs and IDEA 2004's six major principles of special education: (1) zero reject, (2) nondiscriminatory evaluation, (3) least

restrictive environment, (4) individualized free appropriate public education, (5) due process procedures, and (6) parent participation.

Limitations

Limitations, or elements to which the researcher has no control, of this study were typical of those associated with survey research. Coughlan et al. (2009) defined survey research as "a non-experimental research approach used to gather information about the incidence and distribution of, and the relationships that exist between, variables in a pre-determined population" (p. 9). As survey research is voluntary, response sizes vary, which potentially influenced the data results. Another limitation was the possibility that the respondent had assistance in completing the survey. Coughlan et al. (2009) contended, "This may interfere with the representativeness of the sample particularly if it happened frequently within a study" (p. 10). Another possible restriction of survey research was item non-response errors, which occur when participants do not answer one or more questions (Umbach, 2005). The conclusions from this research study was limited to the responses of K-12 public school principals in Mississippi, which may or may not be indicative to the knowledge of practicing principals in other states.

Definitions

In this study, the following definitions were used:

- *Annual Goals*: According to the MDE Office of Special Education IEP Development Guidance document (2020a), "measurable annual goals are expectations of behaviors and skills the student must develop to be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum (or developmentally appropriate activities) and grade-level content, as appropriate" (p. 23). Annual goals must: (1)

26

be written in user-friendly language, (2) be achievable in one year, (3) enable the student to be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum, (4) show a direct relationship between the needs addressed in the PLAAFP and the baseline data, (5) tie directly to the Performance Summary Statement found on the annual goal page, (6) align to grade level standards, (7) focus on the skills the student needs to access the grade level standard, and (8) address functional and/or behavioral needs if these were addressed in the PLAAFP. (MDE, 2017, pp. 2-3 workshop handout)

- *Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation* (CAEP): a professional accreditor that reviews departments, schools, and colleges, which prepare teachers and other educators for their careers

- *Children with disabilities* (also referred to as students with disabilities or individuals with disabilities): "a child with intellectual disability, hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, visual impairments, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities; and who by reason thereof needs special education and related services" (20 U.S.C. §1401(3)(A)(i-ii)).

- *Due process procedures*: Known as safeguards, this provision creates checks and balances, helps to guarantee that the student benefits from being in school and the school is providing the services and placements required by the other principles, and assures shared decision-making concerning the student's education (Turnbull et al., 2001, p. 449).

- *Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975* (EHA): the first federal law passed in the United States to ensure that individuals with special needs received an education. More specifically, EHA served four main purposes: (1) to assure that all children with disabilities have available to them … a free appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs; (2) to assure that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents … are protected; (3) to assist States and localities to provide for the education of all children with disabilities; and (4) to assess and assure the effectiveness of efforts to educate all children with disabilities (Education for All Handicapped Children Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (1975)).

- *Free appropriate public education* (FAPE): "special education and related services that (a) have been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; (b) meet standards of the State educational agency; (c) include an appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the State involved; and (d) are provided in conformity with the individualized education program required" (20 U.S.C. § 1401 (602)(9)(A-D)).

- *Individualized education program* (IEP): "a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with section 614(d) and includes (1) a statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance; (2) a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals; (3) a description of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals will be measured and when

periodic reports on the progress the child is making toward meeting the annual

goals will be provided; (4) a statement of the special education and related

services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer-reviewed research to

the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a

statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will

be provided for the child; (5) an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the

child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class and in

activities; (6) a statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are

necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of

the child on State and districtwide assessments consistent with section

612(a)(16)(A); if the IEP Team determines that the child shall take an alternate

assessment on a particular State or districtwide assessment of student

achievement, a statement of why; (7) the projected date for the beginning of the

services and modifications, and the anticipated frequency, location, and duration

of those services and modifications; (8) appropriate measurable postsecondary

goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training,

education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills; and the

transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in

reaching those goals" (20 U.S.C. § 1401(602)(14)).

- *Individual Education Program team*: a team of people involved in the creation

  and execution of a student's IEP, including the parents of a child with a disability;

  not less than 1 regular education teacher of such child (if the child is, or may be,

  participating in the regular education environment); not less than 1 special

education teacher, or where appropriate, not less than 1 special education provider of such child; a representative of the local educational agency; an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results [this can be the special education teacher, the SPED director, the psychometrist, etc.]; at the discretion of the parent or the agency, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel as appropriate; and whenever appropriate, the child with a disability (20 U.S.C. § 614 (d)(1)(B)).

- *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA): "a federal law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children" (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). Additionally, Couvillon et al. (2018) asserted, "The basic rights the IDEA provides students with disabilities were as follows: (a) the right to receive a FAPE, which was publicly supervised and publicly funded; (b) the right to be educated in the LRE, a setting in which a student with disabilities would be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with students who do not have disabilities; and (c) the right to have an IEP, consisting of special education services, related services, and supplementary services developed in collaboration with a students' parents that would serve as a blueprint of a student's FAPE" (p. 290)

- *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium* (ISLLC): sought "to provide a framework for policy creation, training program performance, life-long career development and system support" (Murphy & Shipman, 1998, p. 11). The set of

standards for school administrators provided universities and principal preparation programs with a blueprint of skills and requisites necessary for school leadership. These also guided the standards scored on the administrator growth rubric.

- *Least restrictive environment* (LRE): "to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (20 U.S.C. § 1412 (612)(a)(5)(A)).

- *Nondiscriminatory evaluation*: "a multidisciplinary, multifaceted, nonbiased evaluation of a child before classifying and providing special education for that child" (Turnbull et al., 2007, p. 120). Turnbull et al. (2001) further defined nondiscriminatory evaluation as "a rule of fair evaluation of the student in order to determine whether the student has a disability and, if so, what special education and related services are required for the student. To carry out a fair evaluation, the school must assess the student inter-disciplinarily, across a variety of domains (cognitive, behavioral, developmental, and physical) and in those specific areas in which the student may have (or is already known to have) a disability. Among other things, this principle also provides that the student's parents are members of the team that evaluates the student and that they have the right to secure (sometimes at the cost of the school) and to have the school consider any

evaluations conducted by qualified individuals who are not employees or contractors of the school" (Turnbull et al., 2001, p. 447).

- *Parent participation*: The IDEA 2004 amendment states that "the education of children with disabilities will be made more effective by strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of the children at school and at home" (Turnbull et al., 2007, p. 291).

- *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders* (PSEL): replaced the ISLLC standards and currently guide states and school districts on the requirements and skills in the form of 10 standards necessary for school administrators and their leadership positions

- *Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance* (PLAAFP): provides "data about the student's strengths, preferences, interests, deficits, and disabilities as well as other parent input" (MDE, 2020a, p. 15).

- *Related services*: According to MDE's (2013) Part 34, Rule 74.19 State Policies Regarding Children with Disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 2004, related services "means transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, and includes speech-language pathology and audiology services, interpreting services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation, early identification and assessment of disabilities in children, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling, orientation and

mobility services, and medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes. Related services also include school health services and school nurse services, social work services in schools, and parent counseling and training" (p. 45).

- *Special education*: "specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including (A) instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and (B) instruction in physical education" (20 U.S.C. § 1401 (602)(29)(A-B)).

- *Zero reject*: "the rule of providing a free appropriate public education to all students with disabilities and of prohibiting cessation of any such student's right to education" regardless of disability or discipline as is the requirement of IDEA (Turnbull et al., 2001, p. 447).

Chapter Summary

With the growing number of students qualifying for special education services in K-12 public schools, an in-depth look into principal preparation program requirements and in-service professional development trainings with an emphasis on special education is necessary. Research has indicated that many school leaders do not feel prepared for the policies, procedures, and various aspects of special education within their schools in various states (Aspedon, 1992; Bakken & Smith, 2011; Cornelius & Gustafson, 2021; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Drasgow et al., 2001; Garner & Forbes, 2013; Hines, 2008; Milligan et al., 2012; Nevin, 1979; Poetter et al., 2001; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994). This research study seeks to bring awareness to the amount of special education training in principal preparation programs and the requirement for in-service special education professional development administrator trainings in the state of Mississippi. Deficits in

knowledge of special education policies and procedures affect the leadership of the

school, relationships with special education teachers and parents, and the educational

success of students with disabilities. Chapter Two will include a review of the literature

pertaining to the history and responsibilities of school principals, the historical legal

context of special education, the components and requirements of the Individualized

Education Program (IEP), and Mississippi universities' principal preparation programs

and professional development opportunities in special education.

CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Finding a way to adequately prepare school leaders for their leadership role in special education to ensure that students with special needs receive a free appropriate public education held to high expectations based on each students' academic, behavioral, and cognitive levels and abilities is vital. This second chapter will focus on the literature of previous studies and text specific to the historical background of school administrators, historical and legal context of special education, the eligible disabilities for special education services, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Acts (IDEA), the major components of the IEP, and administrative training and professional development specific to special education.

Historical Background of Administration in Schools

Education constantly evolves. The role of the principal has changed throughout the decades. K. M. Brown's (2005) declared that regarding the terminology used for school administrators today:

> Historically, the actual term *principal* appeared as early as 1838 in the Common School Report of Cincinnati and then again in 1841 in Horace Mann's … report to the Massachusetts School Board, but the title did not become formally recognized and widely accepted until the latter part of the 19th century. (as cited in Whitehead et al., 2013, p. 29)

According to Whitehead et al. (2013), "Prior to 1920, the recorded history of education dealt mostly with the roles of teachers, superintendents, parent and community leaders, and government officials, with virtually no mention of the school building principal" (p.

28). Before the 1920s, a head teacher was the leader of the school; however, as the student population increased, the title and role of principal teacher was developed to undertake the responsibility of managing and maintaining schools. Whitehead et al. (2013) asserted that the appointed head teacher/principal teacher's "responsibilities were to monitor students, teachers, and classroom procedures [and] teach the highest class in the school, implement specific board policies, and perform certain clerical and janitorial tasks" (p. 29). Today, the idea of the school principal teaching the highest class in the school is incomprehensible, especially with the responsibilities and demands currently held by school administrators.

The progression of the responsibilities of the school principal developed due to historical, political, societal, and/or cultural events of each decade. The time prior to the 1920s was the formative period in which the role of the principal was perceived as nonexistent, evolving, needing training, disconnected from teaching, and as a scientific leader (Whitehead et al., 2013). Frederick Taylor's scientific management theory contributed to the early developmental phase of the school principal. In a study on Taylorism and learning outcomes, Stoller (2015) asserted, "Taylor's main idea was the reorganization of industrial systems around quantifiable and measurable goals" (p. 318). Although his theory was developed to manage a system of production involving products, this same principle was applied to school administrators for the purpose of the 'production' of people's efficiency in teaching and in learning. Furthermore, Stoller (2015) stated:

> Taylor believed that 'the task' is that thing a worker must know and be able to do
> in order to perform their role productively and correctly. Taken collectively, a

system of tasks worked in synchronization to support a process of production and reach a definable goal. (p. 318)

While education requires teachers, as well as students, to have background knowledge and understanding of the material in order to perform the task correctly, Taylor's learning outcomes movement model was intended to "control the very processes, behaviors and actions of employees" in which management would create goals, define methods and generate rubrics against which labor was evaluated and rewarded for conformity" (Stoller, 2015, p. 323). During this formative period of educational leadership, Taylor's scientific management method was employed.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Taylor's scientific management theory continued to guide school leaders. However, in the 1920s, educational leaders were regarded as values brokers who served as spiritual leaders, scientific managers, social leaders, and dignified leaders (Whitehead et al., 2013). An emphasis was placed on education and religion in which school principals were expected to lead their schools, teachers, and students in a way that also upheld the religious beliefs of the time period. While the 1930s were guided by Taylor's scientific management method and learning outcomes model, principals were the scientific managers of their schools. Their roles were perceived as executive, supervisory/organizational, and professional (Whitehead et al., 2013).

There was a shift in educational leadership and the progression of principals and their roles in the 1940s. During this time, principals were deemed the democratic leaders of the school. They were the all-encompassing, person in charge, public relations representatives for the schools (Whitehead et al., 2013). Chester Barnard's Theory of

Authority and Abraham Maslow's Theory of Motivation heavily influenced education during the 1940s.

Henri Fayol's Management Theory played a significant position on school administration during the 1950s. During this time, educational leaders were perceived to be theory-guided and responsible for being skilled defenders of educational practice while effectively and efficiently managing time and minute details of the school environment (Whitehead et al., 2013). Spatig (2009) asserted that Fayol's management theory has influenced both behavioralist management and transformational leadership.

School leaders during the 1960s were bureaucratic executives who were expected to be protectors of bureaucracy, users of scientific strategies, and accountable leaders (Whitehead et al., 2013). However, beginning in the 1970s, Mary Parker Follett's leadership skills management theory and Chris Argyris' theory regarding human personality and maturity influenced the roles and perceptions of school leaders. In the 1970s, principals shifted to humanistic facilitators including being a community leader and promoter of positive relationships, while also juggling multiple roles within the school and community environment. The 1980s led to the perception that school administrators were instructional leaders perceived to be change agents, visionary leaders, problem solvers, and resource providers. Continuing with the theory of leadership skills and maturity, principals in educational settings were called to be reform leaders in the 1990s. Additionally, during this decade, school leaders were perceived to be servants, educators, moral agents, managerial architects, and social architects with the expectation that they were to be compassionate (Whitehead et al., 2013). Finally, the 2000s designated educational administrators to be the guiding force behind schools. The

expectations of school leaders increased drastically with near impossible expectations for what they are responsible. According to Whitehead et al. (2013), principals are responsible for accountability and should be instructional leaders, data accumulators, technology leaders, parent engagers, sociological leaders, collaborative leaders, multicultural leaders, wellness leaders, global learning leaders, and guardians for safe schools. There are multiple leadership theories which educational administrators are expected to know, employ, and utilize in their daily roles as school leaders.

Table 4 shows the progression of the responsibilities of the school principal over the decades.

Table 4

The Progression of Principals and Their Roles in Schools

Decade	Metaphorical Themes	Perceptions of Principals' Roles	Management Theories/Theorists
Prior to the 1920s	Formative Period	- nonexistent - evolving - needing training - disconnected from teaching - scientific leader	Scientific Management / Frederick Taylor
1920s	Values Broker	- spiritual leader - scientific manager - social leader - dignified leader	Scientific Management / Frederick Taylor
1930s	Scientific Manager	- executive - supervisor and organizer - a professional	Scientific Management / Frederick Taylor

Table 4 Continued

Decade	Metaphorical Themes	Perceptions of Principals' Roles	Management Theories/Theorists
1940s	Democratic Leader	• the person in charge • a democratic leader • all-encompassing • a public relations representative	• The *Hawthorne studies* / Elton Mayo • *Theory of Authority* / Charles Barnard • *Theory of Motivation* / Abraham Maslow
1950s	Theory-Guided Administrator	• skilled administrator • defender of educational practice • effective and efficient manager of time • manager of minute details	• Management Theory / Henri Fayol ○ "First compre-hensive theory that viewed manage-ment problems" (p. 38).
1960s	Bureaucratic Executive	• bureaucrat • protector of bureaucracy • user of scientific strategies • accountable leader • inhabitant of a role conflict	• *Legitimate Authority and Bureaucracy* / Max Weber
1970s	Humanistic Facilitator	• community leader • facilitator of positive relationships • juggler of multiple roles	• Leadership Skills / Mary Parker Follett • Human Personality / Chris Argyris

Table 4 Continued

Decade	Metaphorical Themes	Perceptions of Principals' Roles	Management Theories/Theorists
1980s	Instructional Leader	• instructional leader • problem solver and resource provider • a visionary leader • a change agent	• Leadership Skills / Mary Parker Follett • Human Personality / Chris Argyris
1990s	School Reform Leader	• leader • servant • managerial architect • social architect • educator • moral agent • compassionate	• Leadership Skills / Mary Parker Follett • Human Personality / Chris Argyris
2000 – present	Guiding Force	• responsible for accountability • instructional leader • data accumulator • technology leader • parent engager • sociological leader • collaborative leader • multicultural leader • wellness leader • global learning leader • guardian for a safe school	• Leadership Skills - Participatory / Mary Parker Follett • Human Personality / Chris Argyris

Note: The first two columns were found in Exhibit 2.1 on p. 27; however, the last two columns were added to provide additional information pertaining to the decades and themes (Whitehead et al., 2013, p. 27 – 46).

School principals must wear multiple hats and ensure that their schools are successful; however, it is questionable that these overextended leaders are well prepared for the demands of special education program policies and requirements.

Historical and Legal Context of Special Education

Students with disabilities in the United States were not always afforded an education in the public-school setting. According to an article entitled "A History of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" published on the U.S. Department of Education website (2022), "In 1970, U.S. schools educated only one in five children with disabilities, and many states had laws excluding certain students, including children who were deaf, blind, emotionally disturbed, or had an intellectual disability" (p. 1). Furthermore, prior to the passing of special education laws, many individuals with disabilities lived in restrictive state institutions which "provided only minimal food, clothing, and shelter, and persons with disabilities were often merely accommodated rather than assessed, educated, and rehabilitated" (U.S. Department of Education, 2022, p. 2). In 1954, the Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* resulted in the unanimous ruling that racial segregation of students in public schools was unconstitutional and deprived students of the equal protection laws guaranteed by the 14th Amendment (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 1954). The decision of this landmark case led parents and advocates of children with disabilities to fight for the educational rights of children with disabilities.

Milligan et al. (2012) asserted:

> Special education was founded upon and supported by various law-
> making entities that were challenged by parents of children with

significant disabilities. Parents demanded to know why their children

could not be educated in the public-school system – that is, why they were

told to keep their children at home, put them in institutions, or send them

to private agencies for their sons' and daughters' education. These parents

began to win landmark court cases on their children's behalf. (p. 173)

Due to the advocacy of these parents who sought acceptance for their children with

special needs within the educational setting, thousands of children today receive an

education with special education services in the public-school setting.

The U.S. Department of Education (2022) found that "the U.S. has progressed

from excluding nearly 1.8 million children with disabilities from public schools prior to

EHA (the Education for All Handicapped Children Act) implementation to providing

more than 7.5 million children with disabilities with special education and related

services designed to meet their individual needs in the 2018-19 school year" (p. 1).

On the Mississippi Department of Education website, the enrollment of students

receiving special education services in the state of Mississippi is recorded and available

for public record. *Table 5* shows the breakdown of the enrollment of Mississippi students

receiving special education services from the past six school years as documented by the

Mississippi Department of Education's Annual Reports for Special Education Enrollment

for the 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 school

years.

Table 5

Special Education Enrollment in Mississippi per Annual MDE Reports

Grade	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
pre-K	1,180	1,170	1,178	1,001	1,006	1,043
Kindergarten	368	373	409	298	329	298
Elementary	3,467	3,375	3,307	3,007	3,027	3,121
Secondary	2,462	2,495	2,648	2,516	2,500	2,676
Total	7,477	7,413	7,477	6,822	6,862	7,138

The data showed that there is a significant number of students eligible to receive special education services in Mississippi. Students receiving special education services are also required to take state assessments for graduation and certificate requirements. The Mississippi Department of Education has *Special Education Performance Determination Reports* available to "inform stakeholders on how well the district is supporting students in special education" (Mississippi Department of Education, 2020b, p. 1). This specific report contains data that determines the percentage of students in each eligibility category for each district. The two highest eligibility categories for which students receive special education services are specific learning disability and language/speech impairment.

To ensure that students with disabilities are being supported, it is important for school principals know and understand the laws and policies in place for the education of students with disabilities to ensure that the students are receiving a free, appropriate public education in their least restrictive environments with the services, accommodations, and modifications specific to their individual educational needs

(Bateman & Bateman, 2001; Garner & Forbes, 2013; Lashley, 2007; Wakeman et al., 2006).

Court Cases Leading to Public Law No. 94-142

In 1975, the first federal law was passed in the United States to ensure that individuals with special needs received an education. Public Law No. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, was enacted after several court cases brought to light the unjustifiable exclusion of children who were handicapped. Milligan et al. (2012) highlighted the following four court cases as integral to the development and enactment of Public Law No. 94-142 (see *Table 6*):

Table 6

Landmark Court Cases Prior to the Enactment of Public Law 94-142

Year	Court Case	Verdict for Special Education
1970	*Diana v. State Board of Education of California*	Students were to be assessed and evaluated for special education in their primary or native language or using a nonverbal assessment.
1972	*Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*	Children with intellectual disabilities could not be denied access to a free public-school education and provided with instruction customized for their learning needs.
1972	*Mills v. Board of Education of Columbia*	The district of Washington D.C. was ordered to (1) provide a free and equal opportunity education for all students, including those who had disabilities and (2) provide adequate alternative educational services appropriate for students' needs at no additional cost to the parents. Additionally, the right to procedural safeguards for parents of and children with special needs were addressed.

Table 6 Continued

Year	Court Case	Verdict for Special Education
1972	*Larry P. v. Riles*	Schools were required by law to ensure tests administered to students were not race discriminatory.

Congressional Investigation of 1972

After the cases of *PARC* and *Mills* exposed the discriminating lack of education

provided for children with disabilities, Congress initiated an investigation into the status

of children with disabilities and their educational provisions. The inquiry revealed that, at

the time, out of an estimated 8 million students requiring special education and related

services, "only 3.9 million such children are receiving an appropriate education. 1.75

million handicapped children are receiving no educational services at all, and 2.5 million

handicapped children are receiving an inappropriate education" (Wright & Wright, n.d.).

Members of this congressional investigation committee asserted:

> The long-range implications of these statistics are that public agencies and
>
> taxpayers will spend billions of dollars over the lifetimes of these individuals to
>
> maintain such persons as dependents and in a minimally acceptable lifestyle. With
>
> proper education services, many would be able to become productive citizens,
>
> contributing to society instead of being forced to remain burdens. Others, through
>
> such services, would increase their independence, thus reducing their dependence
>
> on society. (Wright & Wright, n.d., "Congressional Investigation" section)

Furthermore, members of the committee agreed that, "It should not […] be necessary for

parents [of children with disabilities] throughout the country to continue utilizing the

courts to assure themselves a remedy" (Wright & Wright, n.d., "Congressional

Investigation" section). Rothstein and Johnson (2010) stated, "In 1974, Congress passed

an interim funding bill that required states, as a condition of receiving federal funds, to

adopt goals of providing full educational opportunities to all children" (p. 19). Jesteadt

(2012) specified, "This interim bill was adopted to allow Congress a year to study the

issue of students with disabilities and determine the educational opportunities they should

be afforded" (p. 32). During this year, Congress looked more closely at the substantially

varied laws passed by the majority of states regarding the education of students with

disabilities and at the "decisions in which courts held that the constitutional rights of

students with disabilities were being violated by their exclusion from schools or by

receiving an inferior education in segregated classrooms" (Yell, 2006, pp. 42-43). Their

findings affirmed that "some degree of federal involvement was necessary" (p. 43).

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975

The four landmark cases found in Table 3 and similar court cases advocating for

the rights of students with special needs in the educational setting of public schools

brought to the limelight the need for the first special education law to ensure that all

students, regardless of intellectual, physical, or emotional disabilities, would be provided

with the opportunity to attend a public-school setting and receive an appropriate

education. Milligan et al. (2012) declared, "In 1975, Public Law 94-142 changed the face

of education in this country" (p. 173). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act

of 1975 served four main purposes:

> (1) to assure that all children with disabilities have available to them … a free
>
> appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services
>
> designed to meet their unique needs; (2) to assure that the rights of children with

disabilities and their parents … are protected; (3) to assist States and localities to

provide for the education of all children with disabilities; and (4) to assess and assure

the effectiveness of efforts to educate all children with disabilities.

Public Law No. 94-142 has been reauthorized, amended, and renamed throughout the

history of special education law to ensure that the rights of students with disabilities were

being met within the changing political, cultural, and societal norms throughout the years.

Amendments to Public Law 94-142

Amendment 1: Public Law 99-457

In 1986, there was a focus on early intervention for children with disabilities.

Public Law No. 99-457 sought to expand and improve discretionary programs for

children with disabilities, established the Early Intervention State Grant Program for

children from birth to two-years-old, and provided preschool services to children with

disabilities from the age of three to five in an attempt to better prepare students for

school. Project IDEAL in Action of the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities

(2013) asserted that Public Law No. 99-457 "assists states in implementing a statewide,

comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, interagency program of services for

young children and their families" (Major Components of the Amendments to PL 94-142,

para. 1). These early intervention programs can provide children and parents with

resources to assist with the development of critical skills, including educational, self-help,

and therapy-based interventions.

Amendment 2: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

In 1990, Public Law No. 101-476 renamed the Education for All Handicapped

Children Act the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The major

components of this amendment included the provision of special education services for individuals from ages three to twenty-one; the use of people-first language which avoids defining someone by his/her disability (i.e., student with Autism rather than autistic student); the requirement that by the age of sixteen, students have an individual transition plan written as part of their IEP to assist with post-secondary goals, including vocational training, additional educational experiences, and independent living; the addition of rehabilitation counseling and social work as related services; and the addition of Autism and traumatic brain injury to the list of disabilities eligible to receive special education services (Public Law No. 101-476).

Amendment 3: Public Law No. 105-17

Public Law No. 105-17 amended IDEA in 1997. The components of this amendment focused on discipline, inclusion, testing, data collection, and mediation. Students with disabilities may receive disciplinary consequences similar to non-disabled peers provided that the misbehavior was not due to a manifestation of their disability. Additionally, behavior intervention plans were developed for students with behavioral challenges. Another component of PL 105-17 provided the inclusion of students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers, as well as the inclusion of their progress in the general education curriculum and on statewide/districtwide or alternative assessments. Public Law No. 105-17 emphasized benchmarks and measureable annual goals as well as the requirement for a variety of assessments and strategies to be used to collect data concerning the functional and developmental strengths and weaknesses of students with disabilities which lead to the development of the annual goals. Additionally, the amendment moved the transition planning of post-secondary goals requirement to the age

of fourteen, added related services for children with visual impairments, required the consideration and implementation of assistive technology needs, and required the inclusion of general education teachers on the IEP committee. Finally, Public Law No. 105-17 added the requirement of mediation services to settle disputes.

Amendment 4: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004

In 2004, the law was amended and reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA), IDEA 2004, and/or Public Law No. 108-146. Public Law No. 108-146 incorporated the terminology and provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Smith (2005) emphasized that this reauthorization was the first "that includes any specific requirements related to teacher qualifications" (p. 315). Previously, the individual states determined teacher qualifications; however, "IDEA 2004 now requires teachers to be 'highly qualified'" (Smith, 2005, p. 315). Smith (2005) contended that as part of this requirement, special education teachers must hold a bachelor's degree, have a state certification in special education, and be licensed in the content courses they teach (p. 316).

IDEA 2004 added the requirement of progress monitoring to ensure continued growth on students' IEP measureable goals, required that short-term objectives be used only for students taking alternative assessments, changed the eligibility and evaluation process which included the use of a response to intervention model to determine learning disabilities in students and no longer required an IQ achievement discrepancy, introduced the development and implementation of three-year IEPs in fifteen states, ensured that peer-reviewed literature was the basis for services for eligible students, provided transition services for students at the age of sixteen, clarified the dispute-resolution

system model, and allowed for the removal of students to alternative settings for up to 45 school days without the determination of manifestation of disability if the behavior involves drugs, physical harm, or weapons.

This 2004 reauthorization also alleged that "Congress would fully fund special education programs under the law at a rate up to 40% of excess costs for educating children with disabilities" (Smith, 2005, p. 316). However, as of the 2021-2022 school year, the federal government has yet to fully fund education or special education, typically allotting between the rates of 10% to 20% for special education programs.

Amendment 5: The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015

On December 10, 2015, Public Law No. 94-142 was reauthorized once again as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). According to ESSA, "the purpose of Title 1 is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps" (§1001). Components of the amendments to the law included narrowing the federal government's role in state testing and reducing the number of students with disabilities who qualify to take the alternate standards assessment to 1% of those with the most severe cognitive disabilities. All other students, not in the 1%, are tested using grade level state assessments. Another focus of the ESSA reauthorization was to remove and revise the terminology so that the IDEA definitions were consistent with ESSA, especially those specific to students with disabilities.

The evolution of the laws governing special education services have allowed students of all disabilities to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) which has allotted a variety of opportunities for numerous individuals with multiple types of

51

disabilities, including job training, life skills, academic knowledge, and success in developmental, social, and behavioral milestones.

Revised Regulations to IDEA 2004

According to the U.S. Department of Education's website, there have been several revisions to the law. These revisions addressed both the implementation and interpretation of specific aspects of IDEA. A more detailed review of the revised regulations to IDEA are available on the U.S. Department of Education's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act website.

The August 2006 regulations "required schools to use research-based interventions in the process of assisting students with learning difficulties or determining eligibility for special education" and addressed "the resolution process required when a parent files a due process complaint, and shifting the responsibility to provide equitable services for parentally-placed private school children with disabilities to the local educational agency (LEA) in which the private school is located" (*A history of the individuals with disabilities education act,* 2023). The 2008 regulations clarified and strengthened the effective implantation and administration of "parental consent for continued special education and related services; non-attorney representation in due process hearings; state monitoring, technical assistance, and enforcement; allocation of funds; and positive efforts to employ and advance in employment individuals with disabilities" (*A history of the individuals with disabilities education act,* 2023).

In 2011 and 2013, the department clarified regulations pertaining to disability programs for infants and toddlers. In 2013, the regulations "revised the parental consent requirements related to a child's or parent's public benefits and ensured parent of

children with disabilities are specifically informed of all their legal protections when public agencies seek access to public benefits or insurance to pay for services required under the IDEA" (*A history of the individuals with disabilities education act,* 2023).

In 2015, the U.S. Department of Education "revised regulations governing the requirement that LEAs maintain fiscal effort; removed the authority for states to define modified academic achievement standards and develop alternate assessments based in those modified academic achievement standards or eligible students with disabilities" (*A history of the individuals with disabilities education act,* 2023).

The goal of the revisions to IDEA in 2016 was to promote equity. Furthermore, these revisions helped to "ensure that states meaningfully identify LEAs with significant disproportionality and that states assist LEAs in ensuring that children with disabilities are properly identified for services, receive necessary services in the least restrictive environment" (*A history of the individuals with disabilities education act,* 2023). Additionally, the 2016 revisions helped to "ensure children with disabilities are not disproportionately removed from their educational placements by disciplinary removals" (*A history of the individuals with disabilities education act,* 2023). Moreover, "the changes were necessary to address the well-documented and detrimental over-identification of certain students for special education services, with particular concern that over-identification results in children being placed in more restrictive environments and not taught to challenging academic standards" (*A history of the individuals with disabilities education act,* 2023).

The terminology relating to children with disabilities was changed in federal and state laws thanks to the revisions of IDEA in 2017. References to "mental retardation"

were replaced with "intellectual disability or disabilities" and other IDEA definitions were removed and/or revised based on the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (*A history of the individuals with disabilities education act,* 2023).

The Six Provisions of IDEA 2004

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 emphasized six major principles governing the rights of students with disabilities and provided the fundamental framework for the provisions rendered in IDEA 2004, which are still enforced today. The six major principles include (1) zero reject, (2) nondiscriminatory evaluation, (3) least restrictive environment, (4) free, appropriate public education, (5) due process procedures, and (6) parent participation.

Provision 1: Zero Reject

20 U.S.C. § 1412 (a)(2) requires state education agencies to "provide full educational opportunities to all children with disabilities." According to Turnbull et al. (2001), "Zero reject is a rule of providing a free appropriate public education to all students with disabilities and of prohibiting cessation of any such student's right to education" regardless of disability or discipline (p. 447). Students are not to be excluded from receiving an education.

Jesteadt (2012) asserted that "Child Find requires a child identification program so planning, program development, and allocation of money for special education can be conducted" (p. 49). Early intervention (birth to age 3) and educational opportunities in preschool, elementary school, middle school, and high school settings are required for students with disabilities (ages 3 – 21) as a means to prevent a gap in their learning opportunities. Education has yet to be fully funded by federal or state governments;

however, another provision of zero reject is that states can allocate funds through various programs such as Medicaid to assist districts in providing monetary, instructional, and personnel resources for students with disabilities.

Court Cases Pertaining to Zero Reject

Two cases previously mentioned in *Table 3* that had a significant impact on the zero reject principle of IDEA were *PARC v. Pennsylvania* (1971) and *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972). These two cases paved the way for *PL 94-142* as they asserted that all children with disabilities had the right to a free, appropriate public education regardless of the severity of their disabilities.

In the case of *Timothy W. v. Rochester* (1989), the school district refused to provide Timothy with an education arguing that his disability being so severe that he was not "capable of benefitting" from an education and needed medical care (*Timothy W. v. Rochester*, 1989). Despite the ruling of the District Court that Timothy was not capable of benefitting from an education and was not entitled to an education, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit reversed the ruling stating:

> Public education is to be provided to all handicapped children, unconditionally and without exception. It encompasses a universal right, and is not predicated upon any type of guarantees that the child will benefit from the special education and services before he or she is considered eligible to receive such education. Congress explicitly recognized the particular plight and special needs of the severely handicapped, and rather than excluding them from the Act's coverage, gave them priority status. The district court's holding is directly contradicted by

the Act's legislative history, as well as the statutory language. (*Timothy W. v. Rochester*, 1989).

In *Honig v. Doe* (1988), the Supreme Court "held that the 'stay-put' provision of the Education of the Handicapped Act prohibited state or local school authorities from excluding disabled children from the classroom even for dangerous or disruptive conduct resulting from their disabilities" (*Honig v. Doe*, 1988). This case also led to the requirement of the "ten-day rule" in which students with disabilities can only be suspended from school for ten days before a manifestation determination review must be conducted to determine if the child's behavior is a manifestation of his/her disability. Yell (2006) contended that, "if a determination was made that no relationship existed between the misconduct and disability, the same disciplinary procedures as would be used with the students without disabilities could be used on a student with disabilities" (p. 71). Furthermore, "educational services had to be continued" (p. 71). Knudsen and Bethune (2018) emphasized:

> If the committee decides the behavior was a manifestation of a disability or has a significant relation to the disability, the IEP team must conduct a functional behavior assessment (FBA) and implement a behavior intervention plan (BIP) or review and revise an existing BIP. In this scenario, the student returns to the original educational placement unless the LEA representative and the parents or guardians decide that a change in placement is necessary as a result of the changes to the BIP. (p. 155)

Turnbull et al. (2007) summed it up when he emphasized that IDEA 2004 "prohibits exclusion, allows for discipline, addresses the disparate impact of exclusion on students

with disabilities, and thereby carries out the zero reject principle" (p. 86). Although considerations for least restrictive environment may be warranted, a child with a disability may not be excluded from an education.

Although these cases have had a substantial impact on the provision of zero reject, school districts and administrators must continue to be diligent in providing an education for all students, regardless of the severity of a child's disability or behavioral conduct within the school setting.

School Administrators and the Zero Reject Principle

School administrators hold a critical role in ensuring that the school, district, and state carry out the requirements and responsibilities of the zero reject principle. While the zero reject principle may also pertain to a free, appropriate public education and least restrictive environment, school administrators are responsible for ensuring that all students, regardless of their disability or challenging behaviors, are provided with an education.

Provision 2: Nondiscriminatory Evaluation

Nondiscriminatory evaluation is the second principle of IDEA 2004. This provision ensures that students receive "a multidisciplinary, multifaceted, nonbiased evaluation of a child before classifying and providing special education for that child" (Turnbull et al., 2007, p. 120). Turnbull et al. (2001) asserted that parents had the right to request an outside evaluation by a qualified individual (p. 447). According to the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, 20 U.S.C. § 303.321 (b) (2004), "In conducting an evaluation, no single procedure may be used as the sole criterion for

determining a child's eligibility." The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, 20

U.S.C. § 303.321 (b) (2004) ascertain the requirement that the procedures include:

(1) Administering an evaluation instrument;

(2) Taking the child's history (including interviewing the parent);

(3) Identifying the child's level of functioning in each of the developmental areas

in §303.21(a)(1);

(4) Gathering information from other sources such as family members, other care-

givers, medical providers, social workers, and educators, if necessary, to

understand the full scope of the child's unique strengths and needs; and

(5) Reviewing medical, educational, or other records.

MDE's (2015) The Procedures for State Board Policy 74.19, Volume 1: *Child Find*

Evaluation and Eligibility manual established that "to complete the evaluation, the MET

must gather information about the child using a variety of assessment tools and

strategies" (p. 17). These instruments may include a teacher narrative; developmental

history (provided by the parents); cumulative records and state assessment scores;

hearing/vision screening; speech/language evaluation; social/cultural and environmental

background; current academic performance; and screeners providing information about

social, emotional, behavioral, adaptive, and cognitive functioning and skills; and

comprehensive evaluations (i.e., IQ test or other standardized comprehensive tests)

conducted by the school psychologist/psychometrist (MDE, 2015, pp. 17-18). The more

documentation there is available will assist the team (i.e., parents, special education

teachers, general education teachers, school psychologist/psychometrist, Local

Educational Agency (LEA) representative – oftentimes, this is the role of the school

principal – and any other members invited by the parent or LEA) in determining if the child is eligible for special education services under one or more of the thirteen eligibility categories as determined by IDEA.

Court Cases Pertaining to Nondiscriminatory Evaluation

Cases such as *Larry P. v. Riles* (1972) and *Diana v. State Board of Education of California* (1970) proved the importance of nondiscriminatory evaluations for students. In *Larry P. v. Riles* (1979), the plaintiffs alleged:

> That the I.Q. tests in their present form are biased and that defendants have discriminated against black children by using those tests. The tests allegedly result in the misplacement of black children in special classes that doom them to stigma, inadequate education, and failure to develop the skills necessary to productive success in our society.

The findings of the Court were in favor of the plaintiffs. The ruling prohibited the state from using I.Q. tests to identify or place African-American students in "educable mentally retarded" (E.M.R.) classes.

In the case of *Diana v. State Board of Education of California* (1970), Diana, a native-Spanish speaker, scored low on an I.Q. test rendered to her in English. She was placed in an EMR class. The court ruled that students should be tested in their native language.

School Administrators and the Principle of Nondiscriminatory Evaluation

As the LEA, a school principal must knowledgeable about the evaluation process and uphold the procedural safeguards and substantive protections as mandated by IDEA 2004. IDEA 2004 requires that:

Each local educational agency shall ensure that—

(A) assessments and other evaluation materials used to assess a child under this

section—

> (i) are selected and administered so as not to be discriminatory on a racial
>
> or cultural basis;
>
> (ii) are provided and administered in the language and form most likely to
>
> yield accurate information on what the child knows and can do
>
> academically, developmentally, and functionally, unless it is not feasible
>
> to so provide or administer;
>
> (iii) are used for purposes for which the assessments or measures are valid
>
> and reliable;
>
> (iv) are administered by trained and knowledgeable personnel; and
>
> (v) are administered in accordance with any instructions provided by the
>
> producer of such assessments. (§1414(b)(3)(a))

It is important for school leaders to be present in the meetings and aware of all policies

and procedures related to the evaluation of students to determine eligibility for special

education and related services.

Provision 3: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Least restrictive environment with access to the general education curriculum is

the third provision of IDEA 2004. IDEA 2004 defined least restrictive environment as:

> To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children
>
> in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children
>
> who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of

children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only

when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in

regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be

achieved satisfactorily. (20 U.S.C. § 1412 (612) (a) (5) (A))

The goal is to educate students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers to the

maximum extent appropriate for the children based on their individual needs. Turnbull et

al. (2006) alleged that the majority of students with disabilities are capable of

participating in the general education curriculum to varying degrees and with some

accommodations and modifications. Special education is a service, not a place to send

students with disabilities (20 U.S.C. § 1400 (c)(5)(C)). When determining a student's

least restrictive environment, the IEP team must consider other factors including

supplementary aids and services appropriate for their education in the environment, the

continuum of placements and services, placement in relation to neighborhood schools,

and age-appropriate placement.

Court Cases Pertaining to LRE

In the case of *Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education* (1989)*, Daniel was a six-

year old boy with Down's syndrome and a speech impairment. As Daniel was not

progressing in his classroom setting and his behaviors were becoming more disruptive,

the school district recommended a change of placement, but the parents disagreed with

this recommendation and instigated a due process complaint. The court used a two-part

test to determine least restrictive environment. The two-part test consisted of the

following: (a) "whether education in the regular classroom, with the use of supplemental

aids and services, can be achieved satisfactorily for a given child, If it cannot and the

school intends to provide special education or to remove the child from regular education" (b) "whether the school has mainstreamed the child to the maximum extent appropriate" (p. 1048). This test set the precedent for future cases involving LRE.

Greer v. Rome City School District (1991) concerned the education of Christy Greer, another young child with a diagnosis of Down's syndrome. The parents refused to consent to an evaluation and demanded that Christy be placed in a general education classroom. The district agreed that Christy would be in the Kindergarten classroom until the completion of her evaluation. The parents refused consent again. However, the school district appealed to the court, which ruled in favor of the school district, and Christy was recommended to be placed in the special education class after an evaluation was conducted. The parents disagreed with the placement options and the school district asked for hearing to determine placement for Christy. While proceedings were taking place, Christy remained in the Kindergarten general education classroom setting per the stay-put provision of IDEA. The court formulated its own two-part test concerning LRE. In the case of *Greer v. Rome City School District* (1991), the court determined three considerations to utilize when determining least restrictive environment. These factors encouraged schools to:

 (a) compare the educational benefits that the handicapped child will receive in a regular classroom, supplemented by appropriate aids and services, with the benefits he or she will receive in a self-contained special education environment;

(b) consider what effect the presence of the handicapped child in a regular classroom would have on the education of other children in the classroom; and

(c) consider the cost of the supplemental aids and services that will be necessary to achieve a satisfactory education for the handicapped child in a regular classroom. (*Greer v. Rome City School District* (1991))

Another case that provided more understanding of least restrictive environment (LRE) was *Oberti v. Board of Educ.* (1993) [995 F.2d 1204 (3rd Cir. 1993)]. Rafael Obeti was another five-year old student who had been ruled eligible for special education services by his school district. The school recommended placement in a special education class in another school district, but the parents refused. Rafael was then placed in a general education class in the morning and in a special education class in a different district in the afternoon. For the following year, the school recommended placement in a special education class in another school district, but the parents refused and requested a due process hearing.

The ruling of the court found:

> In determining whether a child with disabilities can be educated satisfactorily in a regular class with supplemental aids and services (the first prong of the two-part mainstreaming test we adopt today), the court should consider several factors, including: (1) whether the school district has made reasonable efforts to accommodate the child in a regular classroom; (2) the educational benefits available to the child in a regular class, with appropriate supplementary aids and services, as compared to the benefits provided in a special education class; and (3) the possible negative effects of the inclusion of the child on the education of the other students in the class. (*Oberti v. Board of Educ*, 1993)

These and similar cases have helped to define and determine least restrictive environment for students and provide the courts with a guide in deciding cases involving LRE.

School Administrators and the Principle of LRE

LRE and FAPE are closely related concepts of IDEA. Sumbera et al. (2014) asserted, "The administrative representative of the local educational agency (LEA), who is often the principal, must be able and willing to allocate the resources necessary for the provision of FAPE and LRE" (p. 299). Drasgow et al. (2001) alleged that, "one of the most frequent violations regarding placement occurs when an IEP team makes a placement decision before it determines the student's goals and objectives. It is critical that the IEP be developed before the team decides where a student will be placed" (p. 372). Furthermore, "students with and without disabilities should be educated together to the greatest extent possible … [however,] when such an education is not appropriate, … the IEP may move the student to a more restrictive setting that is appropriate" (Drasgow et al., 2001, p. 372). Students should be placed in their least restrictive environment (LRE) – general education, inclusion, self-contained, resource, homebound, specialized program, etc. – so that they are able to learn in the environment that is most conducive to their learning needs and the supports needed to help them be successful.

Providing students with disabilities in their LRE is important for their education as well as the education of other students. Although it would be ideal for all students to be educated in a general education classroom setting, that ideal is not feasible for some students. For some students with severe specific learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, autism, or emotional disabilities, a general education classroom setting may not be conducive for their learning. School leaders should know what placement options

they have within their schools and districts to ensure that students of all abilities may be educated in a manner that is best for their individual needs. Placement options may include but are not limited to the general education classroom, the general education classroom with support and resource pullout, a self-contained classroom, a behavior support class, 1:1 instruction, homebound, outside placement options, or a combination of these options.

Provision 4: Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

A free appropriate public education (FAPE) is the fourth provision emphasized in IDEA 2004. FAPE is defined as "special education and related services that (a) have been provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; (b) meet standards of the State educational agency; (c) include an appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the State involved; and (d) are provided in conformity with the individualized education program required" (20 U.S.C. § 1401 (602)(9)(A-D)). To ensure compliance with the FAPE mandate, schools must pass the two-prong test. For the two-prong test, courts must (1) determine compliance with IDEA and (2) examine the IEP to determine if it was reasonably developed to enable the child to receive educational benefits (*Board of Education v. Rowley*, 1982).

Court Cases Pertaining to FAPE

In *Board of Educ. v. Rowley,* (1982), the parents of a first grade student named Amy Rowley who was deaf requested that the school provide a qualified sign language interpreter for their daughter. As Amy was academically successful in her class without the aid of a sign language interpreter, the school followed the advice of the experts to decline the provision of an interpreter for Rowley.

Justice William Rehnquist wrote "[t]he intent of the Act was more to open the door of public education to handicapped children on appropriate terms than to guarantee any particular level of education once inside" (*Board of Education v. Rowley*, 1982, p. 193). It is this decision that set the standard for understanding educational benefit. *Board of Education v. Rowley* (1982) held that the proper inquiry is twofold: "First, has the State complied with the procedural requirements set forth in the Act? And second, is the individualized educational program developed through the Act's procedures reasonably calculated to enable the child to receive educational benefits?" (*Board of Education v. Rowley,* 458 U.S. at 206-07). Jesteadt (2012) emphasized, "This decision clarified that children with disabilities were entitled access to a program that provided educational benefit; they were not entitled to the best program possible" (p. 40). As long as a student benefited from the education being provided, the school and school district complied with the law.

Another case that shaped the provision of FAPE was *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District Re-1* (2017). Endrew F. was diagnosed with autism at the age of two and attended a public school in Douglas County School District from preschool through the 4th grade. Each year, his IEP consisted of the "same basic goals and objectives from one year to the next, indicating that he was failing to make meaningful progress toward his aims" (*Endrew v. Douglas County School District*, 2017, p. 7). Endrew's parents were dissatisfied with his lack of meaningful academic and behavioral progress within the public school setting, so they withdrew him from the school after seeing the proposed in April 2010 similar IEP for his 5th grade school year. Endrew was then enrolled in a private school, specializing in educating students with autism, where he

made substantial progress in both academics and behaviors. According to court documents, in November 2010, Endrew's parents met with Douglas County School District and found their proposed new IEP inadequate. "They were particularly concerned that the stated plan for addressing Endrew's behavior did not differ meaningfully from the plan in his fourth grade IEP, despite the fact that his experience at Firefly suggested that he would benefit from a different approach" (p. 7).

Endrew's parents sought reimbursement for Endrew's tuition at the private school from the Douglas County School District beginning in February 2012. They "contended that the final IEP proposed by the school district was not 'reasonably calculated to enable [Endrew] to receive educational benefits' and that Endrew had therefore been denied a FAPE" (p. 8). An Administrative Law Judge, the Federal District Court, and the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals all disagreed and denied relief, citing *Rowley*, 458 U.S. Some of the courts' arguments included that although Endrew's performance "did not reveal immense educational growth," the "annual modifications to Endrew's IEP objectives were 'sufficient to show a pattern of, at the least, minimal progress'" and that proposed IEP had been "reasonably calculated to enable [him] to make some progress" (p. 8).

The U.S. Supreme Court determined on March 22, 2017, that "to meet its substantive obligation under the IDEA, a school must offer an IEP [individualized education program] that is reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances" (p.2). The Court additionally emphasized the requirement that "the goals may differ, but every child should have the chance to meet challenging objectives" (p. 3).

School Administrators and the Principle of FAPE

School administrators are responsible for all students in their building. Students with disabilities have a right to receive a free appropriate public education. The Office of Special Education through the Mississippi Department of Education "ensures that local school districts in Mississippi have special education programs, policies, and procedures that comply with the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its implementing regulations, and that eligible children and youth with disabilities receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)" (MDE, n.d., para. 2). When the special education programs, policies, and procedures are not followed and FAPE is not received, school administrators will face legal implications.

Provision 5: Procedural Due Process

The fifth principle of special education is procedural due process. According to Bateman and Bateman (2001), "Due process encompasses the legal procedures and requirements of IDEA […] and the state regulations protecting the rights of students with disabilities" (p. 103). Known as safeguards, this provision creates checks and balances, helps to guarantee that the student benefits from being in school and the school is providing the services and placements required by the other principles, and assures shared decision-making concerning the student's education (Turnbull et al., 2001, p. 449). During initial and annual IEP meetings, special educators review the procedural safeguards and provide parents with a copy of the document. Bateman and Bateman (2001) asserted, "Due process in special education helps to provide parents and school districts an opportunity to work out, in a legally recognized manner, their differences regarding the education of particular students" (p. 103). Due process also involves

parental written consent for evaluation and placement as well as written notices of meetings scheduled at a time convenient for parents. These written notifications "meets the spirit of the law with the intent of involvement of the parents" and "meets the Supreme Court's definition of appropriateness" (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, p. 104)

Due process also involves impartial due process hearings, which can be at the request of the parent or the school district, which Bateman and Bateman (2001) defined as "a procedure used to resolve differences between parents and the school district" (p. 105). The authors further cautioned, "An important point to remember about due process hearings is that no matter who requests the hearing, after a decision has been rendered everyone will have to implement the decision, regardless of which side has 'won' or 'lost'"

Court Cases Pertaining to Due Process

Court cases involving due process include *Stuart v. Nappi* (1978), *Schaffer v. Weast* (2005) and *Arlington v. Murphy* (2006). In *Stuart v. Nappi* (1978), Stuart was a student in the Danbury School District in Connecticut. She had a complex learning disability as well as a history of behavioral problems. She was involved in a school-wide disturbance, and the school

district sought expulsion. The court asserted:

> The expulsion of handicapped children not only jeopardizes their right to an education in the least restrictive environment, but is inconsistent with the procedures established by the Handicapped Act for changing the placement of disruptive children. The Handicapped Act prescribes a procedure whereby disruptive children are transferred to more restrictive placements when their

behavior significantly impairs the education of other children. (*Stuart v. Nappi*,

443 F. Supp. 1235 (1978))

Stuart v. Nappi (1978) set the precedence of the 10-day suspension rule in which students

with a disability cannot be suspended for more than 10 days. During this time, the IEP

team should convene and hold a manifestation determination review to determine if the

child's behavior was a result of his/her disability or a failure of the LEA to implement the

IEP. If the behavior was related to the child's disability, the IEP team must:

(i) Conduct a functional behavioral assessment, unless the LEA had conducted a

functional behavioral assessment before the behavior that resulted in the change

of placement occurred, and implement a behavioral intervention plan for the

child; or

(ii) If a behavioral intervention plan already has been developed, review the

behavioral intervention plan, and modify it, as necessary, to address the behavior;

and

(2) Except as provided in paragraph (g) of this section, return the child to the

placement from which the child was removed, unless the parent and the LEA

agree to a change of placement as part of the modification of the behavioral

intervention plan. (34 CFR § 300.530)

If the conduct was a result of the failure to implement the IEP, the LEA must

immediately rectify the failure and follow the provisions of the child's IEP. If the conduct

was determined not to be a result of the student's disability or failure of the LEA to

provide services, the student will receive the same disciplinary consequences as

nondisabled students except for whatever special education and related services the school system is required to provide the child with disabilities under §300.530(d).

Another case involving due process was *Schaffer v. Weast* (2005). Brian was a student who had learning disabilities and speech-language impairments. According to the court document, Brian's parents enrolled him in a private school from pre-Kindergarten to 7th grade before the school advised Mrs. Schaffer that Brian needed a school that could better accommodate his learning needs as he struggled within the private school setting. After meeting with the Montgomery County Public School System (MCPS) who conducted an evaluation and determined two placement options for Brian to which the parents disagreed and enrolled him in a different private school before initiating a due process hearing, seeking compensation for Brian's private school tuition.

This case went before the administrative law judges (ALJs) who ruled in favor of the school district; however, in a civil suit brought against the school, the United States District Court for the District of Maryland reversed and remanded the verdict, holding that the school district was responsible for the burden of persuasion. After several appeals, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit "granted certiorari, 543 U. S. 1145 (2005), to resolve the following question: At an administrative hearing assessing the appropriateness of an IEP, which party bears the burden of persuasion?" (Schaffer v. Weast, 546 U.S. 49 (2005))

Justice O'Connor delivered the ruling of the Court stating that:

> If parents believe their child's IEP is inappropriate, they may request an "impartial due process hearing." §1415(f). The Act is silent, however, as to which party bears the burden of persuasion at such a hearing. We hold

that the burden lies, as it typically does, on the party seeking relief.

(*Schaffer v. Weast* (2005)

In another words, whoever believes there is a problem is responsible for proving there is a problem. Had the school district brought the claim before the court, the school district would have had to provide the evidence showing proof of the claim.

In *Arlington v. Murphy* (2006), Justice Alito delivered the opinion of the Supreme Court asserting:

> The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA or Act) provides that a court "may award reasonable attorneys' fees as part of the costs" to parents who prevail in an action brought under the Act. 111 Stat. 92, 20 U. S. C. ß1415(i)(3)(B). We granted certiorari to decide whether this fee-shifting provision authorizes prevailing parents to recover fees for services rendered by experts in IDEA actions. We hold that it does not.

This decision was rendered after the parents of Joseph Murphy "sought $29,350 in fees for the services of an educational consultant, Marilyn Arons, who assisted respondents throughout the IDEA proceedings" of a previous court cases [District Court, 86 F. Supp. 2d 354 (SDNY 2000)] and Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, 297 F. 3d 195 (2002)] in which they were awarded reimbursement for their son's tuition fees for the private school he attended (*Arlington v. Murphy* (2006).

School Administrators and the Principle of Due Process

Bateman and Bateman (2001) advised that regarding procedural due process, principals should provide parents with a copy of the procedural safeguards and be able to explain the components of the procedural safeguards; participate in meetings and be

available to meet with parents to discuss the implementation of the IEP and related services; keep detailed documentation of parental concerns and pertinent information about the student; make informed decisions about the LRE placement of students with disabilities based on their individual needs; and inform central office or the special education department of issues or perceived problems involving a student receiving special education and related services (pp. 104-105). If principals find themselves involved in an impartial due process hearing, they "need to know the rights and obligations of the parents and the district, the process, how to prepare for a hearing, what is involved, the principal's role, and what happens when the hearing is over" (p. 103). Following the procedural safeguards outlined in IDEA 2004 and maintaining detailed documentation and communication will assist principals if they are ever involved in a due process hearing or mediation, which is another way to resolve a dispute.

Provision 6: Parent/Student Participation

The final provision of IDEA 2004 is parent and student participation. This principle ensures shared-decision making with parents and, when appropriate, students. The IDEA 2004 amendment states that "the education of children with disabilities will be made more effective by strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of the children at school and at home" (Turnbull et al., 2007, p. 291). A significant part of educating students with disabilities is working with their parents. Communication is crucial for the success of students, but even more so for students with disabilities.

Court Cases Pertaining to Parent Participation

Shapiro v. Paradise Valley Unified School District (2003) provided a decisive view at parent participation in the IEP. Dorie Shapiro was a seven-year old student who was deaf and attended a private out-of-state three-year grant funded school. The PVUSD held an IEP meeting without Dorie's parents or representative from Dorie's private school. At the meeting, the PVUSD determined to change Dorie's placement to a district-created program for students with hearing impairments. When Dorie's parents were made aware of the meeting and unilateral placement decision, they enrolled Dorie in a private school and initiated a due process hearing.

The District Court and U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Ninth District both held that:

> Procedural flaws do not automatically require a finding of a denial of a FAPE. However, procedural inadequacies that result in the loss of educational opportunity, or seriously infringe the parents' opportunity to participate in the IEP formulation process, clearly result in the denial of a FAPE. (*Shapiro v. Paradise Valley Unified School District*, 2003)

In *Jacob Winkelman v. Parma City School District* (2007), Jacob's parents did not agree with the school district's plan to enroll Jacob in a public elementary school so they enrolled him in a private school and sought reimbursement through the District Court who ruled in favor of the school district. When the Winkelmans petitioned the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth District, the case was dismissed due to the family not having a lawyer. The Sixth Circuit Court contended, "IDEA does not establish any right of a non-lawyer parent to represent his disabled child in federal court. Non-lawyer parents cannot

represent themselves either […] because the IDEA protects the rights of the child, not the parents" (*Jacob Winkelman v. Parma City School District*, 2007).

The case went before the U.S. Supreme Court who held that "IDEA grants parents independent, enforceable rights, which are not limited to procedural and reimbursement-related matters but encompass the entitlement to a free appropriate public education for their child" (*Jacob Winkelman v. Parma City School District*, 2007). Furthermore, in a 7-2 decision, the Court asserted, "We instead interpret the statute's references to parents' rights to mean what they say: that IDEA includes provisions conveying rights to parents as well as to children" (*Jacob Winkelman v. Parma City School District*, 2007).

The case of *Doug C. v. Hawaii* (2013) provided additional insight about parent participation and involvement in their child's IEP and special education program. Doug C. (the parent of 15-year old Spencer C.) filed a due process hearing due to his son's IEP meeting being held in his absence, when he was sick and unable to attend. In the case, the school district provided documentation that attempts at scheduling an IEP meeting prior to the expiration of Spencer's current IEP were difficult as Doug C. rescheduled them or was unable to attend by phone or other methods. The teacher opted to hold Spencer's IEP meeting without the attendance of Doug C., or the staff member from Spencer's private school placement. In the meeting, the IEP was written without parental participation and the teacher and team changed Spencer's placement from the private special education facility to the local high school.

The Supreme Court emphasized:

> Under the IDEA, the attendance of Doug C., Spencer's parent, must take
> priority over other members' attendance for the reasons discussed above.
> Indeed, a parent can consent to the absence of other team members at the
> meeting. 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(C). In *Shapiro*, we clearly held that an
> agency cannot exclude a parent from an IEP meeting in order to
> "prioritize[] its representatives' schedules." (p.13)

Moreover, the Court proclaimed, "The IDEA mandates annual review of a student's IEP.
20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(4); […] However, the Department cites no authority, nor could it, for
the proposition that it cannot provide any services to a student whose annual review is
overdue." (p. 14). Parents must be involved in the development of the IEP and participate
in the meetings to ensure that their voice and concerns are considered when drafting and
finalizing the IEP and discussing any other situations concerning their child. The
Supreme Court reversed and remanded previous rulings made in favor of the school
district. Thus, rendering Spencer's IEP invalid.

School Administrators and the Principle of Parent Participation

Parental participation is required for students with disabilities. Communication is
one of the key aspects in the successful implementation of a program. When principals
collaborate with parents, teachers, and related service providers, the student benefits
within the educational institution. When there is a cohesive environment with
understanding and a shared vision for the goals and appropriate interventions to utilize
for student success in their least restrictive environment, progress will ensue.

Disabilities Eligible for Special Education Services

According to Sacks and Halder (2017), "More than one billion people –

approximately 15% of the world's population – have sensory, physical, mental, and/or

intellectual disabilities [… and] encounter greater challenges … than typically developing

citizens (p. 958). Individuals with disabilities have the right and the opportunity to learn

and be educated in the classroom as established by the laws mentioned in the previous

section of this review. There are thirteen conditions covered under IDEA, which require

schools to provide special education services to students if their disability adversely

affects their educational performance. *Table 7* identifies, defines, and provides examples

and additional information about the qualifying disabilities.

Table 7

Qualifying Conditions for Special Education Covered Under IDEA

Diagnosis	Definition	Examples/Additional Information
Intellectual Disability (ID)	"significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning [IQ], existing concurrently [at the same time] with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance" (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Intellectual Disability)	• Down Syndrome • Developmental Delay • Fragile X Syndrome • Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
Hearing impairments	"an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance but is not included under the definition of 'deafness'" (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Hearing Impairments)	• Hearing Impairment = a hearing loss below 90 decibels

Table 7 Continued

Diagnosis	Definition	Examples/Additional Information
Deafness	"a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification" (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Deafness)	- Deafness = a hearing loss above 90 decibels "The phrase "with or without amplification" is significant as it indicates that a hearing aid will not provide sufficient accommodation so that the student can succeed in the classroom." (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Deafness)
Speech/Language impairments	"a communication disorder such as stuttering [fluency], impaired articulation [pronunciation], a language impairment [comprehension], or a voice impairment [ability to use voice] that adversely affects a child's educational performance" (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Speech and Language Impairments/)	- Stuttering - Impaired Articulation - Language Impairment - Voice Impairment
Visual impairments (including blindness)	"an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness" (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Visual Impairments)	- Near-sightedness - Far-sightedness - Congenital Cataracts - Strabismus

Table 7 Continued

Diagnosis	Definition	Examples/Additional Information
Emotional disturbance (ED)	"the term 'emotional disturbance' is associated with mental health or severe behavior issues" (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Emotional Disturbance)	• Anxiety Disorders • Bipolar Disorder • Conduct Disorder • Eating Disorders • Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) • Psychotic Disorders
Orthopedic impairments	"a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance" (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Orthopedic Impairments)	• Cerebral Palsy • Congenital Anomalies • Bone Tuberculosis • Poliomyelitis • Amputation
Autism (AU)	"a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child's educational performance" (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Autism)	• Additional Characteristics: • Repetition in activities • Stereotypical movements (flapping, rocking, etc.) • Resistance to change (environmental or daily routine) • Unusual sensory responses
Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)	"an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance" (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Traumatic Brain Injury)	• "The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma." (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Traumatic Brain Injury)

Table 7 Continued

Diagnosis	Definition	Examples/Additional Information
Other Health Impairments (OHI)	"having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment" (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Other Health Impairments)	• ADD / ADHD • Asthma • Diabetes • Epilepsy • Heart Conditions • Hemophilia • Tourette Syndrome • Sickle Cell Anemia • Leukemia
Specific Learning Disability (SLD)	"a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations" (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Specific Learning Disabilities)	• Dyslexia • Dysgraphia • Dyscalculia
Deaf-blindness	"concomitant [simultaneous] hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness" (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Deaf-Blindness)	• Usher Syndrome • "Deaf-blindness does not necessarily mean complete losses [in vision and in hearing]" (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Deaf-Blindness)

Table 7 Continued

Diagnosis	Definition	Examples/Additional Information
Multiple Disabilities	"concomitant [simultaneous] impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness, intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in a special education program solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness" (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Multiple Disabilities)	• "A student whose special needs are categorized under multiple disabilities requires coinciding adaptions for more than one disability" (Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA: Multiple Disabilities)

(Wiley University Services, 2021, Profiles of Disabilities under IDEA)

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), in the 2020-2021 school year, the top five disability categories for which students received special education services were (1) specific learning disabilities (33%), (2) speech/language impairment (19%), (3) other health impairment (15%), (4) autism (12%), and (5) intellectual disability (6%).

Students with a ruling of specific learning disability rendered the largest percentage of students (33%) who received special education services under IDEA in 2020-2021. According to the definition found in *IDEA,* a specific learning disability is "a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations" (34 CFR § 300.8). Children with dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and developmental aphasia

qualify for special education services under this ruling. Students with specific learning disabilities have the ability to learn; however, they process information differently and require accommodations that are specific to their individual educational needs.

Students who received services for speech and/or language disabilities constituted 19% of students receiving special education and related services under IDEA in 2020-2021. According to IDEA 2004, an impairment in speech or language "means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance" (34 CFR § 300.8). A speech language pathologist provides related services in small group or individual pull out sessions according to the student's IEP.

Other health impairments (OHI) comprised 15% of students receiving special education services in 2020-2021. a category that encompasses a number of disabilities is the ninth qualifying condition. *IDEA* defines OHI as:

> Having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that - (a) is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis [a kidney disorder], rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and (b) adversely affects a child's educational performance." (34 CFR § 300.8)

Once again, the educational challenges of students with a ruling of OHI is dependent upon by which disability or health problem the student is affected. According to the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2022, August 9), "The estimated number of children aged 3–17 years ever diagnosed with ADHD, according to a national survey of parents, is 6 million (9.8%) using data from 2016-2019." Children with ADHD often struggle to remain alert and attentive during academic lessons and, without proper supports in place, children with ADHD may fall behind academically.

Autism Spectrum Disorder was the fourth most prevalent disability for students receiving special education services in 2020-2021. According to Nah and Tan (2021):

> Individuals with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis are characterized by difficulties in two key domains: (1) social communication and interaction and (2) restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, and activities [… in which] difficulties in both domains affect … their interactions with peers, teachers, and other personnel in the school setting and pose challenges to teaching and learning in the school environment. (pp. 315-316)

Many students diagnosed with autism have difficulty understanding social cues and situations, which often results in inappropriate interactions with peers and adults. Additionally, changes in routines or schedules prove more challenging for individuals with autism, as it sometimes requires additional thought process to understand that they may have to deviate from their normal routine due to a wide range of situations.

Although autism is a spectrum disorder, changes in the DSM-5 have determined that there are three levels of autism: Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3. According to Kandola (2019), individuals diagnosed with Level 1 ASD may need support especially in social situations involving conversational skills, maintaining friendships, and changes in their daily routines in which they are not in control.

Students diagnosed with Level 2 ASD require substantial support. Individuals on this level of the spectrum may or may not be able to communicate verbally, but those who can verbally communicate often speak in short sentences, discuss only specific topics of interest, and struggle to understand nonverbal communication and cues (Kandola, 2019). Gilmore (2019) asserted, "the nonverbal behavior of people with Level 2 ASD may be more atypical from the majority of their peers," which may include aversions to looking at someone who is speaking to them or making eye contact. At this level, if a person's routines are interrupted, oftentimes, they become very upset and unable to process the change without substantial support.

Students diagnosed with Level 3 ASD require the most substantial amount of support as their needs are the most severe. Characteristics of a diagnosis of Level 3 ASD include significant difficulties with social interaction, verbal communication, and sensory input. At this level, individuals struggle with unexpected events and engage in restrictive, repetitive behaviors such as rocking, flapping their arms, spinning, vocalizations, echolalia, and other behaviors which are often called 'stims' in order to cope with the situations.

Educational challenges of students with autism vary depending on their level on the spectrum. However, some barriers may include difficulty following directions, impeded communication, and challenges involving academics, fine motor skills, and gross motor skills. Having the proper supports in place is vital to the education of students with autism. Social skills lessons, visual aids, and daily schedules are beneficial for students with an autism diagnosis.

The fifth disability to receive services in the top five for the 2020-2021 school year was intellectual disability. *IDEA* defines intellectual disability as "significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning [IQ], existing concurrently [at the same time] with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance" (34 CFR § 300.8). Disabilities categorized as intellectual disabilities include Down syndrome, developmental delay, fragile X syndrome, and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. The two components of an intellectual disability are (1) a student's IQ is below 75 and (2) a student's deficits in adaptive behaviors result in the inability to function independently or without repeated direct instruction over the course of an extended amount of time to learn the adaptive skill. The educational challenges of students with a ruling of intellectual disability vary.

The thirteen qualifying disability categories outlined by *IDEA* allow students with disabilities to receive services, accommodations, and modifications as documented in their IEP, which enable them to learn and participate in their educational experiences despite the limitations they may face due to their disability. School leaders should be knowledgeable about the laws, policies, and procedures involving special education for students with disabilities. Understanding the disability categories, their definitions, and characteristics as well as best practices and interventions will aid administrators in following the safeguards and provisions in place for their more vulnerable population of students.

School Leaders' Responsibilities to the IEP and Students with Disabilities

Although special education teachers maintain the responsibility of writing and implementing the committee-approved IEP, school leaders have a responsibility to the

IEP and to students with disabilities receiving special education and related services. School principals serve as the Local Education Agency (LEA) representative. Within this title, they must be knowledgeable about the six provisions of IDEA 2004 and the role of the LEA representative (Lightner, 2023, February 8). Ensuring that students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education with the necessary accommodations, modifications, interventions, and related services in their least restrictive environment with opportunities for participation with their nondisabled peers is fundamental (20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004); Wright & Wright, n.d. "Special Ed. Faqs"). The involvement and participation of parents is also critical for students with disabilities. IDEA 2004 and various court cases, which provide more insight to special education law, policies, and procedures – including discipline and due process, give administrators a blueprint for making socially just and ethical decisions during situations involving students with disabilities.

The Development of Principal Leadership Standards

Babo and Ramaswami (2011) concurred, "Anyone associated with schools, public or private, would be hard pressed to argue against the fact that the role of the building principal is an essential one when it comes to promoting and facilitating student success and school efficacy" (p. 77). According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, "states need to develop and implement comprehensive strategies to ensure today's leaders have the skills, knowledge and support required to guide the transformation of schools and raise achievement for all students" (Shelton, 2009, p. 4).

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015) agreed that, "Professional standards define the nature and the quality of work of persons who practice

that profession […]. They are created for and by the profession to guide professional practice and how practitioners are prepared, hired, developed, supervised and evaluated" (p. 2). Mendels and Mitgang (2013) asserted, "Standards spell out the key behaviors and competencies of a successful school leader" (p. 24). The authors also contended that, "many districts follow their state's leadership standards—usually some form of the standards created by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium [ISLLC], with a focus on skills needed to improve instruction" (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013, p. 24). Guthrie and Schuermann (2010) imparted that the ISLLC Standards "link leadership more directly to productive school practices and enhanced educational outcomes [and] confirm the centrality of the principal's role in ensuring student achievement through an unwavering emphasis on learning-centered leadership" (p. 242). School leadership is vital to the improvement of instruction and student achievement. The implementation of the ISLLC Standards sought to provide consistency in requirements for educational leadership programs.

ISLLC Standards of 1996

According to Murphy and Shipman (1998), "ISLLC set out to develop a powerful framework for redefining school leadership and to marshall the forces necessary to bring that design to life" (p. 1). Murphy and Shipman (1998) further explained:

The Consortium tackled this task by constructing an ideological scaffolding that heavily influenced the shape that our understanding of leadership would take--and subsequently the standards that would animate that understanding. This infrastructure was built from two bodies of information: the changing

87

environment [i.e., economic, social, and political] in which education operates and knowledge about appropriate models of schooling for the 21st century. (p. 2)

The standards were developed for the following reasons:

(1) standards provided an especially appropriate and particularly powerful leverage point for reform; (2) there was a major void in this area of educational administration--a set of common standards for school leaders across all levels was conspicuous by its absence; (3) the belief that the standards approach provided the best avenue to allow diverse stakeholders to drive improvement efforts along a variety of fronts: licensure, certification, program approval, candidate assessment, and so forth; and (4) the belief that we would be advantaged in the standards-development work if we could tease out central tenets that should shape our work and could operate from a set of overarching guiding principles. (p.20)

The first set of ISLLC Standards were published in 1996. These standards included:

1. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

2. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

3. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

4. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

5. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

6. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. (The Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996).

Waters and Kingston (2005) clarified that, "There are 184 indicators for the six Standards for School Leaders developed in the United States by the ISLLC and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration in 1996" (p. 14). Within each standard, indicators provided additional guidance and information about expectations within that standard. Murphy and Shipman (1998) reiterated that:

The ISLLC standards and indicators were forged with the intent of strengthening school leadership in a variety of ways, e.g., by improving the quality of programs that prepare school leaders and ensuring greater accountability for the efforts of these programs; by upgrading and bringing greater coherence to professional development for school leaders; by creating a framework to better assess candidates for licensure and relicensure; [and] by establishing a foundation on which certification programs can be constructed. (p. 25)

As with any policy or procedures, there were critics and dissent among researchers and educators concerning the standards. Yet, Murphy (2008) responded to the criticisms by

avowing, "The standards are exactly what they claim to be – what practitioners and researchers have told us are critical aspects of effective leadership" (p. 41). Nevertheless, the ISLLC Standards were revised in 2008.

ISLLC Standards of 2008

The Council of Chief State School Officers (2008) asserted that the ISLLC Standards were revised "to provide a framework for policy creation, training program performance, life-long career development and system support" (p. 11). The guiding principles for the revision of the standards were:

1. Reflect the centrality of student learning;

2. Acknowledge the changing role of the school leader;

3. Recognize the collaborative nature of school leadership;

4. Inform performance-based systems of assessment and evaluation for school leaders;

5. Demonstrate integration and coherence; and

6. Advance access, opportunity, and empowerment for all members of the school community. (The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008)

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration adopted the ISLLC 2008 Standards on December 12, 2007. The revised ISLLC Standards were:

1. An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.

2. An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

3. An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

4. An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

5. An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

6. An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).

These standards and their corresponding elements and indicators provided the framework for states to use in the development of their state's principal leadership standards as well as in pre-service school leadership programs and for the continued professional development of in-service school leaders.

PSEL Standards for Educational Leadership of 2015

Smylie and Murphy (2018) disclosed that, "in 2014, responding to growth in the knowledge base and changes in the job of school leadership, it was decided to further update the standards" (p.24). The ISLLC Standards of 2008 were replaced with the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) in October 2015. Smylie and

Murphy (2018) outlined four elements developed from ISLLC to PSEL that "stand to enhance the prospects that the standards will contribute to the advancement of the profession and student success" (p. 24). The four elements included foundations of knowledge about school leadership, vision of school leadership, a statement of principles and values, and emphasis on student success (pp. 24-25).

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015) asserted, "The 2015 Standards have been recast with a stronger, clearer emphasis on students and student learning, outlining foundational principles of leadership to help ensure that each child is well-educated and prepared for the 21st century" (p. 2). Furthermore:

The 2015 Standards reflect interdependent domains, qualities and values of leadership work that research and practice suggest are integral to student success:

1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values

2. Ethics and Professional Norms

3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness

4. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

5. Community of Care and Support for Students

6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel

7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff

8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community

9. Operations and Management

10. School Improvement. (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, p. 3)

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015) provided 10 professional standards for educational leaders:

1. Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of *each* student.

2. Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote *each* student's academic success and well-being.

3. Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote *each* student's academic success and well-being.

4. Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote *each* student's academic success and well-being.

5. Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of *each* student.

6. Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote *each* student's academic success and well-being.

7. Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote *each* student's academic success and well-being.

8. Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote *each* student's academic success and well-being.

9. Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote *each* student's academic success and well-being.

10. Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote *each* student's academic success and well-being. (pp. 9-18)

In utilizing the core principles of these standards, school leaders have an opportunity to be a catalyst for change in the realm of education and to influence the lives of students, educators, parents, and community members, positively.

The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders and Responsibilities of Higher Education

Smylie and Murphy (2018) acknowledged that, "higher education has been central to the creation and ongoing development of school leader standards. And higher education is uniquely positioned to promote and care for the standards and to further their contributions to professional practice and outcomes" (p. 28). Shelton (2009) concurred and asserted that:

> Intense scrutiny from policymakers, teachers, administrators and others in the field has prompted states to press universities to redesign their leadership preparation programs. Several colleges and universities are redesigning their administrator preparation programs to reflect statewide leadership standards, incorporate effective leadership practices and real-world problems, emphasize instructional leadership, integrate theory and practice, provide authentic school-based experiences, and create partnerships between universities and school districts. (p. 5)

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015) emphasized that, "the 2015 Standards can be a guiding force to states and leadership preparation programs as they identify and develop the specific knowledge, skills, dispositions, and other characteristics required of educational leaders to achieve real student success in school" (p. 5). When school leaders are properly prepared for their role in leadership, they will be able to provide an atmosphere conducive to student learning and supportive for teachers, parents, and community members.

The Principal Leadership Standards of Mississippi

According to Murphy and Shipman (1998), in Mississippi, the 1996 ISLLC Standards "have served as the raw material from which state standards were crafted" (p. 25). Mississippi also participated in a whole-state reform initiative of formal training programs for school administrators in which all colleges and universities in the state were asked to reconstruct their training programs to align with the new standards (p. 26). Once the programs had been developed and implemented, a national review panel assessed the program and programs at universities with passing scores received reauthorization while universities with programs that did not receive passing scores had to address the noted deficiencies (pp. 26-27).

Program Accreditation

Mississippi linked "program accreditation with passing rates of students taking the new interstate licensure examination for school leaders" (Murphy & Shipman, 1998, p. 27). Mississippi also collaborated with the Educational Testing Service, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, and the District of Columbia to develop comprehensive performance-based examinations for licensure (p. 27). This

comprehensive performance-based examination is also known as the Praxis. The

Mississippi Department of Education (n.d.) stipulated that:

> In order to obtain a license to practice as an educator in the state of Mississippi,
> all prospective teachers, administrators and instructional support personnel must
> achieve Mississippi's minimum qualifying passing score on the state's required
> licensing assessment(s) as appropriate: Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators
> (Praxis Core) (or attain a composite score of at least 21 on the ACT or SAT
> equivalent), Praxis Subject Assessment, and Praxis Principles of Learning and
> Teaching (PLT) assessment, as outlined in the current version of the *Guidelines*
> *for Mississippi Educator Licensure K-12*. Please remain mindful that the
> assessment serves as one criterion in the multi-step licensing process. (*Praxis*
> *information*, para. 1)

According to The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education/Council for

the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (NCATE/CAEP), "When an institution or

specialized program is accredited, it has demonstrated that it meets standards set by

organizations representing the academic community, professionals, and other

stakeholders" (What is accreditation, para. 1).

The CAEP 2022 Initial Level Standards consist of the following:

1. Standard 1: Content and Pedagogical Knowledge

    a. The provider ensures that candidates develop an understanding of the
       critical concepts and principles of their discipline and facilitates
       candidates' reflection of their personal biases to increase their
       understanding and practice of equity, diversity, and inclusion. The

provider is intentional in the development of their curriculum and clinical

experiences for candidates to demonstrate their ability to effectively work

with diverse P-12 students and their families.

2. Standard 2: Clinical Partnerships and Practice

    a. The provider ensures effective partnerships and high-quality clinical

       practice are central to candidate preparation. These experiences should be

       designed to develop candidate's knowledge, skills, and professional

       dispositions to demonstrate positive impact on diverse students' learning

       and development. High quality clinical practice offers candidates

       experiences in different settings and modalities, as well as with diverse P-

       12 students, schools, families, and communities. Partners share

       responsibility to identify and address real problems of practice candidates

       experience in their engagement with P-12 students.

3. Standard 3: Candidate Recruitment, Progression, and Support

    a. The provider demonstrates the quality of candidates is a continuous and

       purposeful focus from recruitment through completion. The provider

       demonstrates that development of candidate quality is the goal of educator

       preparation and that the EPP provides supports services (such as advising,

       remediation, and mentoring) in all phases of the program so candidates

       will be successful.

4. Standard 4: Program Impact

   a. The provider demonstrates the effectiveness of its completers' instruction on P-12 student learning and development, and completer and employer satisfaction with the relevance and effectiveness of preparation.

5. Standard 5: Quality Assurance System and Continuous Improvement

   a. The provider maintains a quality assurance system that consists of valid data from multiple measures and supports continuous improvement that is sustained and evidence-based. The system is developed and maintained with input from internal and external stakeholders. The provider uses the results of inquiry and data collection to establish priorities, enhance program elements, and highlight innovations.

6. Standard 6: Fiscal and Administrative Capacity

   a. The EPP has the fiscal and administrative capacity, faculty, infrastructure (facilities, equipment, and supplies) and other resources as appropriate to the scale of its operations and as necessary for the preparation of candidates to meet professional, state, and institutional standards.

      i. For EPPs whose institution is accredited by an accreditor recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education (e.g., SACSCOC, HLC), such accreditation will be considered sufficient evidence of compliance with Standard 6.

      ii. If an EPP's institution is not accredited by an accreditor recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education, the EPP must address each component of ST 6 in narrative supported by evidence.

7. Standard 7: Record of Compliance with Title IV of the Higher Education Act

    a. Only for EPPs seeking access to Title IV funds. (2022 Initial Level Standards 1 Pager, pp. 1-2).

The initial level standards apply to undergraduate programs at colleges and universities. CAEP also has standards for the graduate level programs at colleges and universities. The CAEP acknowledged that while "the CAEP Standards for Advanced-Level Preparation Programs parallel the CAEP Standards for Initial Programs, there are distinct differences in the evidence required" (2022 CAEP Advanced-Level Standards, para. 3). Universities and colleges are required to undergo a review process on a regular basis (i.e., 7 to 10 years) in order to maintain accreditation. This review process serves to certify that programs continue to meet the compulsory criteria and standards expected of them.

Mississippi's State Standards for the Principal Evaluation System

    The Mississippi Department of Education incorporated the ISLLC Standards of 2008 into the state standards for the principal evaluation system. In the 2012 Mississippi Standards, the Mississippi Department of Education asserted that principals make student success a reality by:

1. Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders;

2. Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth;

3. Ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment;

4. Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interest and needs, and mobilizing community resources;

5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and

6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. (MDE, 2012, p. 1-2)

After PSEL updated the ISLLC standards in 2015, Mississippi updated their Mississippi Professional Growth System for Administrators to ensure compliance with the revised standards, which provided more a targeted criteria for school administrators. In the Administrator Growth Rubric found on the Mississippi Department of Education's (2016, August) website, the following domains and standards for school administrator were outlined:

1. Domain I: Shared Vision, School Culture, and Family Engagement

   a. Implements a shared vision

   b. Maintains a supportive, secure, and respectful learning environment

   c. Engages in courageous conversations about diversity

   d. Welcomes families and community members into the school

2. Domain II: Teaching and Learning

   a. Supports the development and implementation of Mississippi standards-based lesson and unit plans

   b. Implements effective instructional strategies to meet student learning needs

   c. Tracks student level data to drive continuous improvement

   d. Uses disaggregated data to inform academic intervention

3. Domain III: Staff Development

    a. Provides actionable feedback

    b. Coaches and implements learning structures

    c. Provides leadership opportunities

    d. Develops a highly effective leadership team

4. Domain IV: Strategic Planning and Systems

    a. Develops and implements a strategic plan

    b. Monitors progress toward goals

    c. Effectively manages professional time

    d. Aligns and manages the school's resources

5. Domain V: Personal Leadership & Growth

    a. Demonstrates self-awareness, reflection, and ongoing learning

    b. Demonstrates resiliency in the face of challenge

    c. Communicates with stakeholders. (pp. 1-10)

Just as society has evolved through time, schools must continue to grow, change, and progress to ensure that students are engaged in learning, teachers are supported in instruction, and parents/community members are a valued member of the educational system. With these guidelines in place for school administrators, they will be able to know and understand the requirements and specifications expected of them in their roles as school leaders.

Administrative Training and Professional Development for Special Education

Hackmann and Alsbury (2005) contended that "the school principal's role has changed dramatically in the past few decades, moving away from management issues and

into responsibilities related to leading school reform and facilitating student learning" (p. 36). Furthermore, "there is an emerging consensus that successful principals not only must be effective instructional leaders, but they must possess the capacity to transform the school culture to promote improved student achievement" (Hackmann and Alsbury, 2005, p. 36). Student achievement also encompasses the achievement of students with disabilities who are serviced under the umbrella of special education.

According to Rinehart (2017), "principals often feel unprepared for their roles in the administration of special programs" (p. 57). Rinehart (2017) found in the experience of Arthur Levine that "principals were at a disadvantage with regard to being provided with the curriculum and experiences ... in terms of being a leader of special education programs" (p. 57). Mendels and Mitgang (2013) averred that "principal training at the majority of university-based programs has long been upbraided for being out of touch with district needs and leaving graduates ill-prepared to lead" (p. 24). Shelton (2010) found "many training programs, be they university, state or district-based, do not adequately prepare principals who can lead improvement in teaching and learning" (p. 5). Sumbera et al. (2014) agreed with a multitude of other researchers that, "Many principals receive minimal training or exposure to special education and special education law and policy within their leadership preparation programs" (p. 299).

University Preparation Programs in Mississippi

While the principal preparation programs in Mississippi have been revised to meet the standards set forth by the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders to help prepare principals for that school leadership position, the inclusion of concentrated special education coursework in these programs has not been prioritized. After

researching the programs available for principal preparation at the University of Southern Mississippi, the University of Mississippi, Mississippi State University, Jackson State University, Delta State University, Mississippi College, and William Carey University it was determined that, the only classes in educational leadership preparation programs that allude to special education are courses about school law or legal issues and diversity. In these courses, educators may spend one or possibly two weeks discussing topics related to special education.

In the specialist program at Jackson State University, educators did have one course specific to special education: Psychoeducational Aspects of Exceptional Children. Additionally, the principal preparation program at Mississippi College requires educators pursuing a specialist degree in elementary K-6 education to take Legal Structures and Special Services Laws, which does provide information about special education. Mississippi College also requires students in their specialist and doctoral programs to take a course called Engaged Learning that may provide additional instruction about special education for future administrators. Apart from these limited courses at two higher education institutions in Mississippi, there are no requirements for future school administrators to complete coursework specific to special education, which encompasses one of our schools' most vulnerable populations.

According to Poetter et al. (2001),

> To support changes [for inclusive models of service], principals must have knowledge of special education as well as an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the conceptual frameworks, literature, and practices of inclusion. Because many school administrators lack experience in

inclusive educational settings, preparation programs for administrators

need to incorporate information on special education and inclusive

practices. (p. 163)

Although Poetter et al. (2001) focused on inclusion, the overall focus should be on

special education as a whole which includes self-contained and resource classrooms.

School administrators need to be knowledgeable about special education laws and

practices, especially since they sign the legally binding IEP for the students in their

schools.

Professional Development Requirements for Administrators in Mississippi

Educators have multiple opportunities to participate in professional development

workshops on a variety of topics. Principals may require teachers to attend various

workshops to gain knowledge of policies/programs, management styles, and a

conglomeration of other skills needed in the classroom. Both teachers and principals are

required to renew their educator license every five years per the Mississippi Department

of Education's 2023 Guidelines for Mississippi Educator Licensure K-12. Requirements

for continued professional development for school administrators and licensure renewal

include: "Seventy (70) School Executive Management Institute (SEMI) credits OR Six

(6) hours of coursework OR 35 SEMI credits AND 3 hours coursework OR Completion

of a specialist or doctoral degree in educational administration/leadership" (MDE, 2023,

p. 5).

The 2004 SEMI Structure and Guidelines developed by the Mississippi

Department of Education asserted, "Every practicing administrator who holds an Entry-

Level Administrator License must complete Orientation for School Leaders (OSL)

training within five years of issuance of the license. […] Upon completion of the OSL training, an administrator is eligible for a Standard Career-Level Administrator License" (p. 2). According to the guidelines:

> The OSL module consists of ten training days (five days per school year) delivered in two, 2-day sessions and one, 1-day session. Training is delivered over a period of several months. Intervals between training sessions allow for on the job application of administrative skills. (MDE, 2004, p. 2)

Although administrators have five years before license renewal is warranted, the recommendation for new administrators is to complete the OSL training within the first two years as the training is designed to prepare administrators for "practical, effective leadership, which positively impacts school improvement and, subsequently, student learning" (p. 2). Moreover, this training is designed to:

- Provide orientation on state mandates including accreditation standards, local board policy, school administrator licensure procedures, instructional management, and interpretation/use of student assessment data;
- Employ activities dealing with personality/leadership styles and teamwork; and
- Provide the administrator with opportunities to practice skills needed as a change agent, a human resource manager, and an instructional leader. (p. 2)

The OSL trainings will provide school leaders who are in the early stages of their administrative career with information and practice in skills that are vital to the success of their schools and students.

Once a school administrator has completed the OSL training module, unless they elicit to pursue a specialist or doctoral degree, they will be required to complete the SEMI

professional development trainings to ensure they are meeting the mandates of the state

licensure requirements as well as continuing their education through professional

development opportunities as outlined in the fifth domain of the Mississippi Professional

Growth System for Administrators. For career-level administrators needing 70 hours of

SEMI credits, "credit is earned via training programs offered through or approved by the

School Executive Management Institute" (p. 3). There are three options for SEMI credit

trainings:

1. Training offered by subcontractors

    a. The School Executive Management Institute sponsors a wide variety of

       training programs for administrators. Training is offered in regional

       locations.

2. Training sponsored by local school districts [must be approved eight weeks in

   advance]

    a. Offering a module open to administrators from other districts.

        i. The district provides facilities, equipment, refreshments, and

           training supplies.

        ii. The Office of Leadership Development and Enhancement provides

            training manuals and supplemental materials.

        iii. The district pays trainers' fees and travel expenses through a grant

             from SEMI.

    b. Offering a module limited to administrators from the requesting district.

        i. The district provides facilities, equipment, refreshments, and

           training supplies.

106

> ii. The district may be eligible to receive a grant from SEMI to pay trainers' fees and travel expenses if the required number of participants can be met with career-level administrators within the district.
>
> iii. The Office of Leadership Development and Enhancement provides training manuals and supplemental materials.

3. Training provided through other agencies

   a. Administrators may earn SEMI credit through approved training programs offered by colleges, universities, professional organizations, or other agencies.

   b. Local school districts, consortia, or other agencies may apply to have leadership/management programs approved for SEMI credit by submitting an application for SEMI credit [8 weeks in advance] before the class is taken. (p. 3)

The SEMI trainings offered by subcontractors are available through the following programs: Delta Area Association of Improvement of Schools (DAAIS), East MS Center for Education Development (EMCED), North MS Education Consortium (NMEC), Southern-Regional Educational Service Agency (S-RESA), Gulf Coast Education Initiative Consortium (GCEIC), Southwest MS Education Consortium (SMEC), MS University for Women Office of Outreach and Innovation, and Mississippi State University - Research and Curriculum Unit (RCU). There is a multitude of professional development trainings on a variety of topics for educational leaders through each program. Some trainings are available online or online, self-paced, while others are

conducted in-person. School leaders have many responsibilities within the school setting; however, continued professional development is necessary. With access to these opportunities for continued learning in various formats, school leaders will be able to meet the requisites outlined by the state.

*Professional Development Opportunities for Special Educatio*n

There are a number of professional development opportunities for educators to attend involving special education. Margaret Ellmer, former interim Executive Director of the Office of Special Education at the Mississippi Department of Education, confirmed that a limited number of principals/administrators attend special education trainings/workshops (M. Ellmer, personal communication, April 24, 2018).

When the University of Southern Mississippi's Autism Project provided two-day trainings for educators that detailed various special education policies, programs, instructional techniques, and information relevant to students with disabilities, very few school principals attended the trainings. According to the program's administrative assistant, three administrators were present at the trainings out of approximately 100 participants (B. Gillespie, personal communication, March 6, 2018).

Additionally, the subcontractors offering SEMI trainings for school administrators have a variety of trainings with options for special education-centered professional development. School administrators may choose from online; online, self-paced; or in-person formatted trainings. As there are different companies, the number of special education professional development trainings vary as does the availability. Therefore, school administrators have several routes for professional development engagement, specific to special education.

Conclusion

All students have a right to a free, appropriate education. Although school principals participate in principal preparation programs and attend professional development trainings, there is not enough focus on the realm of special education. Principals are less prepared to observe or to interact in a special education classroom unless they have extensive background knowledge and experience in special education. The majority of students in a school are not disabled and do not receive special education services so principal preparation programs tend to focus on preparing school leaders in regard to school culture, testing, finances, laws, student achievement, etc. However, how can principals ensure that all students – especially those with disabilities – are receiving an appropriate education that caters to and meets their needs if they do not receive the proper training in university programs or if they choose not to attend special education professional development opportunities/workshops? If a school leader does not know the terminology or the laws associated with special education and the IEP, who is more at fault – the university program that was supposed to prepare them or the principal who failed to attend professional development workshops specific to special education?

Additional research should be conducted to determine the extent of university coursework for principal preparation programs in special education and the total number of special education workshops or professional development opportunities available for school leaders to complete either in person or online. What prevents school principals from attending workshops specific for special education? What courses do practicing principals believe should be incorporated into university programs to prepare future administrators for special education? Once these questions are answered, a workshop or

109

institute can be developed so that school principals can participate and become more knowledgeable about special education and how they, as school leaders, can assist students and teachers in both special education and general education classrooms.

CHAPTER III - METHODS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the level of knowledge practicing K-12 school principals in Mississippi have pertaining to special education laws and policies. A quantitative survey was employed to determine by which method (i.e., academic coursework, administrative trainings, on-the-job experiences, or self-taught research) school administrators gleaned the majority of their knowledge concerning the six principles of IDEA 2004, which included zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, free appropriate public education, due process, and parent participation. Additionally, this study sought to add to the literature concerning the importance of special education coursework for future administrators and professional development opportunities for current practicing principals.

Research Hypotheses

The guiding research question of this quantitative study was: What knowledge of special education laws and policies, especially those pertaining to the six principles of IDEA 2004, do practicing Mississippi K-12 school administrators possess, and by which method (i.e., academic coursework, administrative trainings, on the job experiences, or self-taught research) did they obtain most of their knowledge? In order to determine this information, the following research hypotheses were addressed:

H_1: There will be a significant difference in the level of knowledge of special

education policies and procedures between school administrators who received

formal special education training in their administrator coursework and school

administrators, who did not receive formal special education training in their administrator coursework.

H$_2$: There will be a significant difference in school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures of the six principles of IDEA 2004 based on the method (i.e., academic coursework, professional development trainings, on the job experiences, or self-taught research) by which they were trained.

H$_3$: There will be a significant difference in principals' level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures between school demographics (i.e., school level, type of community, school size/average daily attendance, and population of students receiving special education services).

H$_4$: There will be a significant difference in the level of knowledge pertaining to special education policies and procedures between principals with special education teaching experience and those with no special education teaching experience.

Participants

According to the digital Superintendent's Annual Report for the 2021-2022 school year, there were 138 school districts in the state (Mississippi Department of Education, 2022a, p. 5). The data showed that there were 625 elementary and middle schools, 153 high schools, and 85 schools with combined grades. The target population for this study was all traditional elementary, middle, and high school principals in Mississippi K-12 public schools. According to the 2021-2022 Superintendent's Annual Report: Instructional Personnel by District (Mississippi Department of Education, 2022b)

spreadsheet, there were 896 public school principals and 907 assistant principals. This sample of convenience was established in hopes that the researcher would have enough respondents in order to generalize the findings of the study.

To be eligible to participate in the study, potential participants had to be public school building principals in the state of Mississippi. They had to hold a valid Mississippi Administrative License, have a valid school email, and access to the Internet. Ideally, the sample size for this study would have consisted of 200-300 participants. However, in this research study, only 1.8% of the proportion of the population responded to the survey.

Positionality

As a special education teacher and an Educational Leadership graduate student, I saw two sides to the issues addressed in this research topic. As a special education teacher, I had experienced school administrators who have vast knowledge and understanding of special education as well as administrators who seemed to have limited knowledge and understanding of special education. As a graduate student at a university in Mississippi, I had the opportunity to see how many administrative courses offer special education content and the extent to which that content was presented to future school administrators. Overall, I hoped that this study would lead to changes in the requirements of university coursework for both traditional route and alternate route principal preparation programs. Additional changes spurred from the results of this study that would benefit school leaders would be to provide access to additional mandatory in-service trainings pertaining to special education which would further aid school administrators in improving their understanding of special education and promoting a

positive, inclusive environment within their schools for special education teachers and students.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to assess Mississippi K-12 school principals' level of special education knowledge. The researcher adapted a two-part survey using Google Forms.

Instrument, Validity, and Reliability

On April 20, 2022, Dr. Lindsay Jesteadt gave written permission for the two-part survey instrument she developed, piloted, validated, and used for her own dissertation study entitled "Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Policies and Procedures: Does It Matter in Leadership?" (2012) to be used in this research study. According to Jesteadt (2012), content validity of the instrument was assessed in two ways. First, six experts in the field of special education, including a district level coordinator of special education, three program specialists within the special education department, and two school psychologists, provided corrective feedback which was used to revise the questions, scenarios, and terminology of the instrument (Jesteadt, 2012, pp. 72-73). To determine face validity, the survey scenarios were distributed to a graduate level class in the Educational Leadership Department of Florida Atlantic University in which the students were asked to read the scenarios and respond to four questions which provided additional corrective feedback for the researcher (Jesteadt, 2012, p. 73).

Once Jesteadt (2012) made the necessary corrections, the instrument was tested for usability in which the participant, a Director of Exceptional Student Education, "was asked to address the clarity of the survey directions, the length of time it took to respond

to the survey, and the overall user-friendliness of SurveyGizmo as a survey tool" (p. 73-74). The survey was then piloted. Jesteadt (2012) used Crohnbach's alpha to measure the reliability and validity of the instrument (p. 74). Using SPSS version 19.0, Jesteadt (2012) "determined that Cronbach's alpha reliability statistic for the instrument was .723 … which was acceptable with new instruments" (p. 74).

Jesteadt's (2012) two-part survey was adapted and used in the current research study. The first three sections of the survey instrument in this study were used to collect demographic information about the school/community, principals' educational, teaching, and administrative background, age/gender, and information specific to special education training.

In addition to Jesteadt's instrument, the fourth section of this study's survey instrument contained a section of acronyms pertinent to special education policies, procedures, services, etc. Respondents were required to type in the meaning of the acronym or "Unsure" which provided additional data to determine administrators' level of knowledge of special education.

The fifth section of the survey consisted of 12 hypothetical scenarios containing two situations for each of the six major special education principles (i.e., zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, free appropriate public education, due process procedures, and parent participation) found in IDEA 2004. In order to determine by which method of learning administrators received their knowledge concerning each principle, the survey required respondents to select where he/she received his/her information for the sixth section of the survey tool.

Procedures

Once IRB approval was obtained, the researcher emailed the cover letter and survey link to the Mississippi Association of School Administrators (MS ASA) as written permission was given by the association to distribute the survey tool to all members of their organization. Additionally, the researcher utilized her personal social media Facebook account to post the cover letter and survey link and tag all educator friends/acquaintances. Finally, the researcher emailed all Mississippi Public School superintendents requesting permission for K-12 school principals within their district to participate in the study. In this email, the researcher included the cover letter and survey link for superintendents, if they consented to the participation of their administrators, to forward to their school district's principals and assistant principals who may have then chosen to participate in the study, if desired.

Data Analysis

The data collected through a Google Forms survey platform was analyzed and evaluated using SPSS version 29.0. One-way ANOVAs and t-tests were run to determine the difference in participants' level of knowledge of special education policies/procedures and their formal training/coursework in administration program, methods of knowledge acquisition, school demographic information (i.e., school level, type of community, school size/average daily attendance, and population of students receiving special education services), and prior teaching experience in special education.

CHAPTER IV – DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The overall purpose of this study was to assess the knowledge of Mississippi K-12 public school principals and assistant principals in special education policies and procedures. The survey, originally created by Dr. L. Jesteadt and with permission from the researcher, was adapted and used in this study. The survey consisted of 59 items. The first four items pertained to school demographics. Seven items consisted of questions about general information concerning age, gender, administrative experience, special education teaching experience, and special education litigation. Nine survey items elicited responses about the participant's university training and coursework, including professional development opportunities. Additionally, the survey asked participants to identify the meaning of 20 acronyms associated with special education.

The researcher asked participants to respond to 12 hypothetical scenarios based on the six major principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. The six major principles were (1) zero reject, (2) non-discriminatory evaluation, (3) least restrictive environment, (4) free appropriate public education, (5) due process, and (6) parent participation. The survey also sought to elicit responses to establish by which method (i.e., college coursework, professional development trainings, on-the-job experiences, self-taught, or did not learn this principle) school leaders contended to have learned about special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles assessed in this study. The data generated from the participants' knowledge of special education policies and procedures established by the number of correct responses to the hypothetical scenarios was then compared by (1) the amount of special education coursework taken during the participant's administrative program; (2) the

method by which principals purported to have learned the majority of their knowledge of special education policies and procedures; (3) school demographics, including school types (i.e., elementary school, elementary/middle school, middle school, or high school); types of community (i.e., rural, suburban, or urban); school enrollment/average daily attendance (i.e., 0-499, 500-999, 1000-1499, or 1500+); percentage of students receiving special education services (i.e., 0-10%, 11-20%, 21-30%, 31-40%, 41-50%, or 51%+); and (4) past teaching experience in the field of special education.

Research Hypotheses

The guiding research question of this quantitative study was what knowledge of special education laws and policies, especially those pertaining to the six principles of IDEA 2004, practicing Mississippi K-12 school administrators possessed, and by which method (i.e., academic coursework, administrative trainings, on the job experiences, or self-taught research) they obtained most of their knowledge. In order to determine this information, the researcher addressed the following research hypotheses:

H_1: There will be a significant difference in the level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures between school administrators who received formal special education training in their administrator coursework and school administrators, who did not receive formal special education training in their administrator coursework.

H_2: There will be a significant difference in school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures of the six principles of IDEA 2004 based on the method (i.e., academic coursework, professional development

118

trainings, on the job experiences, or self-taught research) by which they were trained.

H$_3$: There will be a significant difference in principals' level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures between school demographics (i.e., school level, type of community, school size/average daily attendance, and population of students receiving special education services).

H$_4$: There will be a significant difference in the level of knowledge pertaining to special education policies and procedures between principals with special education teaching experience and those with no special education teaching experience.

Target Population and Sample

The target population for this study was Mississippi K-12 public school principals and assistant principals across the 138 school districts in the state. Within these school districts are 863 traditional public schools. The 2021-2022 Superintendent's Annual Report found on the Mississippi Department of Education website established there are 625 elementary and middle schools, 153 high schools, and 85 schools with combined grades. According to the 2021-2022 Superintendent's Annual Report: Instructional Personnel by District (Mississippi Department of Education, 2022) spreadsheet, there were 896 public school principals and 907 assistant principals.

Upon receiving IRB consent to conduct the study, the researcher emailed the consent form with a survey link to the Mississippi Association of School Administrators who then distributed the form to their members on December 12, 2022 and January 3, 2023. The researcher also posted a statement of consent and survey link on her personal

social media Facebook page and tagged educator friends/acquaintances on December 10, 2022 and December 29, 2022. Using these two methods of survey distribution to garner convenience sampling, only 17 responses were received. One additional respondent declined to participate in the survey. This convenience sample did not provide the researcher with enough data.

The researcher then submitted a modification to the IRB and received approval to email the superintendents at each district in the state. In her email to superintendents, the researcher included information about the study and the following statement: "I am seeking your assistance in collecting survey data for my research. If you would not mind assisting in the collection of the survey data, please forward the following to your current principals and assistant principals in your district." The researcher then sent a separate email with the consent form and survey link that superintendents could forward to principals and assistant principals within the districts who consented to the survey.

Eight of 136 superintendents responded to the researcher's request with approval to conduct the research within their district and stated that they had forwarded the email consent and survey link to their administrators. Three of the school districts in the state granted permission for the researcher to send the consent form and link to the administrators at each school by utilizing the school district's website to find the principals' email addresses. The researcher did as directed and emailed each principal directly. Two of the school districts declined to allow their principals to participate in the study. One district had their own approval process for which the deadline for application submission for any research to be conducted within the district had passed while the other district determined that "due to the volume and timing of research requests currently, the

district is not able to support you [the researcher]." One district asked for additional information before a decision would be made concerning the distribution of the consent form and survey link; however, once the researcher sent the requested information, the district did not provide follow-up as to whether permission was granted and if the principals within their district were given access to the survey tool. The remaining districts did not reply to the researcher's request for assistance in permission to conduct research within their district. However, this is not indicative of their refusal to distribute the consent form and survey link as they may have forwarded the study information to their building administrators.

Of the 11 districts who granted permission for the study to be conducted, 3 were from District 1, 1 was from District 2, 1 was from District 3, 1 was from District 6, 3 were from District 7, and 2 were from District 8. Although other districts may not have consented to the participation of the study for their administrators, some administrators in the state may have received access to the survey tool via the Mississippi Association of School Administrators or via the researcher's social media post. As the data was anonymous and participants' email addresses were not collected during the survey, the researcher cannot ascertain from where participants hailed and which districts were represented in the data collection. Of the approximate 1,761 eligible principals and assistant principals in Mississippi, 32 participants completed the survey. This sample size was 1.8% of the proportion of the population who responded.

Demographic Statistics

When analyzing the school demographics (see *Table 8*), the data showed that of the participating administrators, 13 were at the high school level, 11 were at the

121

elementary level, 5 were at the middle school level, 2 were at an elementary/middle school level, and 1 established to be a district wide administrator. Regarding the type of community, only 1 principal represented an urban community (3%) while 19 of the principals were employed in rural communities (59%) and 12 principals led in suburban communities (37%). A total of 12 administrators had an Average Daily Attendance (ADA) of up to 499 students (38%), 8 principals had an ADA between 500-999 students (25%), 9 administrators had an ADA between 1,000-1,499 students (28%), and 3 principals had an ADA over 1,500 students (9%).

Table 8

School Demographics

School Level (N=32)	N	Percentage (%)
Elementary/Primary School	11	34%
Middle School	5	16%
Elementary/Middle School	2	6%
High School	13	41%
District Wide	1	3%
Type of Community	**N**	**Percentage (%)**
Rural	19	59%
Suburban	12	37%
Urban	1	3%

Table 8 Continued

ADA	N	Percentage (%)
Up to 499	12	38%
500 – 999	8	25%
1000 – 1,499	9	28%
1,500+	3	9%

Percentage of Students Receiving SPED Services	N	Percentage (%)
0-10%	5	16%
11-20%	20	62%
21-30%	5	16%
31-40%	1	3%
41-50%	1	3%

An analysis of the demographics of the participating principals and assistant principals (see *Table 9*) established that, of the 32 returned surveys, 12 participants (38%) were male and 20 participants (62%) were female. Thirteen participants (41%) were between the ages of 35-44 years old. The largest percentage of participants was between the ages of 45-54 years of age with 15 participants (47%). Only four of the participants were age 55 or older (12%). No participating administrators were younger than 35 years of age. Eighteen participants (56%) were principals of their respective schools while fourteen participants (44%) were assistant principals. The data conveyed that the largest percentage of participants (41%) have served in their capacity as building administrator for 1-5 years. Participants who have served between 6-10 years and between 11-15 years

each constituted 25% of the survey data results. Only one participant (3%) has served as an administrator for 16-20 years, while two participants (6%) of the sample population have served as principal or assistant principal for more than 20 years. Inquiries about highest degree obtained established that 11 participants (34%) had a master's degree, 13 participants (41%) attained a specialist degree, and 8 participants (25%) held a doctorate. Of the responses, 72% of participants (23 administrators) received their administrative degree through the traditional route while 28% of sample population (9 administrators) achieved their administrative degree via alternate route.

Table 9

Demographics of the Participants

Gender	N	Percentage (%)
Male	12	38%
Female	20	62%
Age	**N**	**Percentage (%)**
25-34 years old	0	0%
35-44 years old	13	41%
45-54 years old	15	47%
55+ years old	4	12%
Job Title	**N**	**Percentage (%)**
Principal	18	56%
Assistant Principal	14	44%

Table 9 Continued

Years Served as Administrator	N	Percentage (%)
1-5 years	13	41%
6-10 years	8	25%
11-15 years	8	25%
16-20 years	1	3%
More than 20 years	2	6%

Highest Degree Obtained	N	Percentage (%)
Master's	11	34%
Specialist	13	41%
Doctorate	8	25%

Administrative Route	N	Percentage (%)
Traditional	23	72%
Alternate	9	28%

According to the responses regarding participants' educational background (see *Table 10*), 23 participants (72%) did not have a special education certification; however, 10 participants (31%) did have teaching experience in special education. One participant held a certification for special education; however, this participant did not have teaching experience in special education. Regarding years of teaching experience in special education, 23 participants (72%) had no experience teaching special education. One participant (3%) had 1-2 years of teaching experience, one participant (3%) had 3-5 years of teaching experience, and one participant (3%) had more than 15 years of teaching

experience respectively. Finally, three participants (9%) had 6-9 years of experience and

three participants (9%) had 10-14 years of teaching experience in special education.

Table 10

Special Education Background of Participants

SPED Certification	N	Percentage (%)
No	23	72%
Yes	9	28%
SPED Teaching Experience	**N**	**Percentage (%)**
No	22	69%
Yes	10	31%
Number of Years Teaching Special Education	**N**	**Percentage (%)**
No SPED teaching experience	23	72%
1 to 2 years SPED teaching experience	1	3%
3 to 5 years SPED teaching experience	1	3%
6 to 9 years SPED teaching experience	3	9%
10 to 15 years SPED teaching experience	3	9%
More than 15 years SPED teaching experience	1	3%
Total SPED Courses Taken in All Coursework	**N**	**Percentage (%)**
None	8	25%
1-2	15	47%
3-4	4	12%
5+	5	16%

Table 10 Continued

Total SPED Courses Taken in Admin. Program	N	Percentage (%)
None	15	47%
1-2	15	47%
3-4	1	3%
5+	1	3%

Special Education Information through Program	N	Percentage (%)
A little	18	57%
Some	11	34%
A lot	3	9%

When examining the total number of special education courses taken during formal education, the sample population had taken more courses in special education in their overall university education than in their administrative programs. There were 8 participants (25%) who had taken no courses in special education during their undergraduate and graduate coursework combined; however, a total of 15 participants (47%) had taken no courses in special education during their administrative program. In the sample, 47% of the participants had taken 1-2 special education courses in both their undergraduate and graduate level coursework combined as well as in their administrative program coursework. During undergraduate and graduate school, four participants (12%) completed 3-4 special education courses and five participants (16%) had taken more than five special education classes. Yet, in their administrative program coursework, only one participant (3%) had taken 3-4 special education courses and one participant (3%) had

taken more than five special education courses. The survey posed the following question: "How much information about special education programs/laws do you feel you received in your education administration/leadership licensing or degree (Master's, Specialist, Ph.D., Ed.D.) program?" The results revealed that 18 participants (57%) indicated that they felt they had received a little information about special education programs/laws, 11 participants (34%) acknowledged they had received some information, and 3 participants (3%) reported that they had received a lot of information about special education programs/laws within their administrative program.

The researcher also sought to establish the amount of participation in special education in-service professional development trainings provided by the participants' school districts as well as the frequency of participation in these professional development opportunities in addition to other special education conferences and workshops (see *Table 11*). According to the data, within the past two years, two participants (6%) had attended no in-service special education trainings provided by their respective school districts. Thirteen participants (41%) reported attending 1-2 trainings and twelve participants (37%) acknowledged they had attended 3-4 in-service trainings. Of the sample population, five administrators (16%) participated in 5 or more in-service special education professional development trainings.

When asked the frequency of participation in special education professional development trainings, conferences, and workshops, most participants (56%) reported they participated in special education professional development trainings annually. Six participants (19%) reported they never attend special education professional development trainings. Five participants (16%) attended monthly special education in-service

professional development trainings, conferences, or workshops while three participants

(9%) participated in special education trainings quarterly.

Table 11

Special Education Professional Development Training of Participants

In-service SPED Professional Development Trainings	N	Percentage (%)
None	2	6%
1-2	13	41%
3-4	12	37%
5+	5	16%
Frequency of SPED Professional Development Trainings	**N**	**Percentage (%)**
Never	6	19%
Monthly	5	16%
Quarterly	3	9%
Annually	18	56%

  Table 12 denotes the manner in which participants asserted where they obtained

assistance in meeting their professional needs with regard to special education policies

and procedures. Respondents were asked to select the three most utilized forms of

assistance. The data comprises the total number of responses for each of the forms of

assistance and their overall rank based on the number of favorable responses.

Table 12

Participants' Rankings of Forms of Assistance for Special Education Policies and

Procedures

Form of Assistance	Total Score	Overall Rank
Special Education Director	25	1
Special Education Teacher	21	2
Central Office	15	3
Professional Development Trainings	9	4
Another Principal	6	5
Policy Manuals	6	5
Professional Literature	2	6
College Coursework	0	7

Although there are eight forms of assistance, there are seven rankings as there was a tie between asking another principal for assistance and using policy manuals. The most utilized form of assistance concerning special education was the special education director (25), followed by the special education teacher (21), central office (15), professional development trainings (9), another principal (6) and policy manuals (6), and professional literature (2). College coursework received no votes for form of assistance used in regard to special education needs.

The researcher included an additional section consisting of 20 special education acronyms in the survey to determine the level of knowledge practicing principals and assistant principals held in more frequently used special education terminology (see

Tables 13 and *14*). Participants were required to type the meaning of the acronym or "unsure" if they did not know the answer. The researcher examined the responses and determined whether the participant was correct, incorrect, or unsure. The researcher also took into account the overall understanding of the meaning of the acronym when establishing correct and incorrect responses. The researcher tallied the total number of correct responses per acronym as well as per participant.

Table 13

Responses for Special Education Acronyms

Acronym	Acronym Meaning	% Correct (N)	% Incorrect (N)	% Unsure (N)
AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication	28% (9)	--	72% (23)
ABA	Applied Behavior Analysis	44% (14)	3% (1)	53% (17)
ABC	Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence	31% (10)	6% (2)	63% (20)
ADD/ ADHD	Attention Deficit Disorder or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	100% (32)	--	--
ASD/ AU	Autism Spectrum Disorder or Autism	63% (20)	--	37% (12)
BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan	100% (32)	--	--
ED/EMD/ EBD	Emotional Disability or Emotional and Behavioral Disorders	94% (30)	--	6% (2)

Table 13 Continued

Acronym	Acronym Meaning	% Correct (N)	% Incorrect (N)	% Unsure (N)
EDR	Eligibility Determination Report/Review	3% (1)	19% (6)	78% (25)
ESY	Extended School Year	97% (31)	3% (1)	--
FBA	Functional Behavior Assessment	94% (30)	3% (1)	3% (1)
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	97% (31)	--	3% (1)
IEE	Independent Educational Evaluation	15% (5)	19% (6)	66% (21)
IEP	Individualized Education Program/Plan	100% (32)	--	--
LEA	Local Educational Agency	72% (23)	--	28% (9)
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment	94% (30)	3% (1)	3% (1)
MDR	Manifestation Determination Review	53% (17)	6% (2)	41% (13)
OHI	Other Health Impairment	97% (31)	--	3% (1)
PLAAFP	Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance	50% (16)	6% (2)	44% (14)

Table 13 Continued

Acronym	Acronym Meaning	% Correct (N)	% Incorrect (N)	% Unsure (N)
PWN	Prior Written Notice	63% (20)	--	37% (12)
STIO	Short Term Instructional Objectives	28% (9)	6% (2)	66% (21)

Table 14

Individual Participants' Responses for Special Education Acronyms

Participant	% Correct (N)	% Incorrect (N)	% Unsure (N)
1	40% (8)	--	60% (12)
2	75% (15)	10% (2)	15% (3)
3	50% (10)	10% (2)	40% (8)
4	95% (19)	--	5% (1)
5	60% (12)	--	40% (8)
6	75% (15)	--	25% (5)
7	75% (15)	10% (2)	15% (3)
8	65% (13)	5% (1)	30% (6)
9	65% (13)	5% (1)	30% (6)
10	40% (8)	--	60% (12)
11	75% (15)	10% (2)	15% (3)
12	70% (14)	--	30% (6)
13	95% (19)	5% (1)	--
14	45% (9)	5% (1)	50% (10)

Table 14 Continued

Participant	% Correct (N)	% Incorrect (N)	% Unsure (N)
15	50% (10)	5% (1)	45% (9)
16	60% (12)	--	40% (8)
17	75% (15)	15% (3)	10% (2)
18	70% (14)	--	30% (6)
19	100% (20)	--	--
20	85% (17)	--	15% (3)
21	50% (10)	5% (1)	45% (9)
22	85% (17)	--	15% (3)
23	40% (8)	15% (3)	45% (9)
24	55% (11)	--	45% (9)
25	35% (7)	--	65% (13)
26	70% (14)	5% (1)	25% (5)
27	75% (15)	--	25% (5)
28	50% (10)	--	50% (10)
29	75% (15)	5% (1)	20% (4)
30	85% (17)	15% (3)	--
31	70% (14)	--	30% (6)
32	65% (13)	--	35% (7)

Findings show that less than half of the acronym responses received a 75% or more

response that was correct. Results show that more than half of the sample answered 75%

of these items correctly. All participants knew the following three acronyms: ADD or

ADHD, BIP, and IEP. The following acronyms received more than 60% reported unsure

selections: EDR (78%), AAC (72%), IEE (66%), STIO (66%), and ABC (63%).

Item Analysis and Summary of Responses

This study sought to establish the level of knowledge Mississippi K-12 public

school principals and assistant principals have concerning special education policies and

procedures as they relate to the six principles of IDEA 2004. To determine the level of

knowledge, participants responded to 12 hypothetical scenarios, grouped by the six

principles of IDEA 2004, which included (1) zero reject, (2) nondiscriminatory

evaluation, (3) least restrictive environment, (4) free appropriate public education, (5) due

process, and (6) parent participation. *Table 15* denotes an item analysis of the 12

hypothetical scenarios, while *Table 16* reports the individual results of each participant's

knowledge of the 12 hypothetical scenarios.

Table 15

Item Analysis Results for Hypothetical Scenarios

Item	Area	A	B	Ask for Help	Correct Answer	Percent Correct
41	Zero Reject	16	9	7	B	28%
42	Zero Reject	16	12	4	A	50%
43	Nondiscriminatory Evaluation	0	29	3	B	91%
44	Nondiscriminatory Evaluation	12	13	7	A	37%

Table 15 Continued

Item	Area	A	B	Ask for Help	Correct Answer	Percent Correct
45	Least Restrictive Environment	13	8	11	A	41%
46	Least Restrictive Environment	18	3	11	A	56%
47	FAPE	3	18	11	B	56%
48	FAPE	15	3	14	A	47%
49	Due Process	4	21	7	A	13%
50	Due Process	9	14	9	B	44%
51	Parent Participation	20	3	9	A	63%
52	Parent Participation	22	6	4	A	69%

Table 16

Individual Participants' Responses for Hypothetical Scenarios

Participant	% Correct (N)	% Incorrect (N)	% Ask for Help (N)
1	58% (7)	42% (5)	--
2	50% (6)	50% (6)	--
3	33% (4)	25% (3)	42% (5)
4	50% (6)	50% (6)	--
5	25% (3)	25% (3)	50% (6)
6	50% (6)	17% (2)	33% (4)
7	33% (4)	50% (6)	17% (2)

Table 16 Continued

Participant	% Correct (N)	% Incorrect (N)	% Ask for Help (N)
8	42% (5)	33% (4)	25% (3)
9	50% (6)	17% (2)	33% (4)
10	25% (3)	33% (4)	42% (5)
11	50% (6)	33% (4)	17% (2)
12	58% (7)	25% (3)	17% (2)
13	58% (7)	42% (5)	--
14	33% (4)	25% (3)	42% (5)
15	--	--	100% (12)
16	50% (6)	17% (2)	33% (4)
17	67% (8)	33% (4)	--
18	75% (9)	--	25% (3)
19	67% (8)	25% (3)	8% (1)
20	58% (7)	42% (5)	--
21	58% (7)	42% (5)	--
22	42% (5)	17% (2)	42% (5)
23	42% (5)	--	58% (7)
24	83% (10)	8% (1)	8% (1)
25	33% (4)	17% (2)	50% (6)
26	17% (2)	--	83% (10)
27	83% (10)	17% (2)	--

Table 16 Continued

Participant	% Correct (N)	% Incorrect (N)	% Ask for Help (N)
28	42% (5)	25% (3)	33% (4)
29	58% (7)	33% (4)	8% (1)
30	67% (8)	8% (1)	25% (3)
31	75% (9)	25% (3)	--
32	50% (6)	33% (4)	17% (2)

Participants' individual scores ranged from 0% correct to 83% correct. Of the 32 principals and assistant principals who participated in the survey, only 4 participants scored 75% or higher.

Focusing on an item-by-item analysis concerning the six principles of IDEA 2004, the results show that for the zero reject principle (Item 41), 72% of participants incorrectly answered the hypothetical scenario regarding prior knowledge of a suspected disability in relation to disciplinary consequences. Item 42 also dealt with the principle of zero reject, and 50% of participants incorrectly answered the scenario in which a student re-enrolled in school from a Department of Juvenile Justice Program. Under the principle of nondiscriminatory evaluation (Item 44), 63% of participants incorrectly answered the scenario involving parental consent for initial placement. Additionally, 59% of participants incorrectly answered the hypothetical scenario involving a student's least restrictive environment settings (Item 45). Under the principle of FAPE (Item 48), 53% of participants incorrectly answered the scenario pertaining to providing a free appropriate public education with the necessary related service to ensure FAPE is met. In

the scenario involving the "stay-put" clause during due process proceedings (Item 49), 88% of participants incorrectly answered the question. Likewise, Item 50 involved a due process scenario in which the student's behavior was determined not to be a manifestation of her disability. For this scenario, 56% of participants incorrectly answered the question involving the "stay-put" clause and alternative educational placement.

This item analysis found that the highest percentage of participants (91%) correctly answered the nondiscriminatory evaluation principle found in Item 43. The other 9% of participants reported that they would have asked for assistance from the special education department. The principle of parent participation (Items 51 and 52) was the only principle of IDEA 2004 in which more than 60% of participants selected the correct answer for both hypothetical scenarios.

The participating principals and assistant principals were also asked to identify by which primary method (i.e., academic coursework, professional development trainings, on-the-job experiences, self-taught, or did not learn) they learned the majority of their knowledge of special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles of IDEA 2004 as represented by the 12 hypothetical scenarios (see *Table 17*). *Table 17* shows the six principles of IDEA 2004 and the percentage of principals who selected each method pertaining to their level of knowledge acquisition.

Table 17

Item Analysis Results of Participants' Reported Method of Acquisition of SPED

Knowledge

Item	Area	Academic Coursework	PD Trainings	On-the-job Experiences	Self-taught	Did not Learn
53	Zero Reject	--	6%	19%	--	75%
54	Nondiscriminatory Evaluation	6%	25%	34%	3%	31%
55	Least Restrictive Environment	19%	22%	59%	--	--
56	FAPE	44%	28%	28%	--	--
57	Due Process	22%	28%	44%	3%	3%
58	Parent Participation	9%	16%	72%	--	3%

The findings indicate that the majority of participants reported that they received their

knowledge of special education policies and procedures from on-the-job experiences in

four (Items 54, 55, 57, and 58) of the six principles of IDEA 2004. For the principle of

zero reject (Item 53), 75% of participants purported not to have learned this principle.

Regarding FAPE (Item 56), 44% of participants indicated that academic coursework

provided them with their understanding and knowledge of special education policies and

procedures.

Statistical Analyses

The researcher utilized SPSS version 29.0 for Windows to analyze the survey data

submitted by the 32 participants of the study. The significance level was set at .05. The

analyses employed included 21 one-way ANOVAs and 2 t-tests in which the outputs were applied to test the researcher's hypotheses.

Hypotheses and Statistical Analyses

H_1: There will be a significant difference in the level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures between school administrators who received formal special education training in their administrator coursework and school administrators, who did not receive formal special education training in their administrator coursework.

An ANOVA was used to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the means of the level of knowledge scores as determined by participants' responses to the 12 hypothetical scenarios and the number of special education classes taken by participants during their administrative program coursework. The results from the one-way ANOVA for this study's first hypothesis denote that there was no statistically significant difference in the means of the level of knowledge scores based on the twelve hypothetical scenarios and the number of special education classes taken during formal administrative program coursework (F (3, 28) = .352, p = .788).

A second one-way ANOVA was employed to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the means of the level of knowledge scores as determined by participants' responses to the twelve hypothetical scenarios and the number of special education classes taken by participants during their undergraduate and graduate level courses combined. Once again, despite the combined undergraduate and graduate level special education coursework, the results from the one-way ANOVA

found no significant difference in the level of special education knowledge and the amount of formal training in special education (F (3, 28) = .455, p = .716).

Therefore, hypothesis one that there is a significant difference in the level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures between school administrators who received formal special education training in their administrator coursework and school administrators who did not receive formal special education training in their administrator coursework was not supported.

H$_2$: There will be a significant difference in school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures of the six principles of IDEA 2004 based on the method (i.e., academic coursework, professional development trainings, on the job experiences, or self-taught research) by which they were trained.

A one-way ANOVA was run to test for a statistically significant difference in principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures and the self-reported method by which they were trained. The researcher then performed twelve one-way ANOVAs for each principle of IDEA 2004. The 13 ANOVAs showed no significant difference in the 32 participants' level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures, as defined by the six principles of IDEA 2004, and the method by which they reported to have acquired their knowledge (F (2, 29) = .683, p = .513). The ANOVA results for the individual hypothetical scenarios are as follows: zero reject scenario 1 (F (2, 29) = .097, p = .908); zero reject scenario 2 (F (2, 29) = .175, p = .841); nondiscriminatory evaluation scenario 3 (F (4, 27) = .655, p = .622); nondiscriminatory evaluation scenario 4 (F (4, 27) = 1.483, p = .235); LRE scenario 5 (F (2, 29) = 1.010, p = .377); LRE scenario 6 (F (2,

29) = .961, *p* = .394); FAPE scenario 7 (*F* (2, 29) = .672, *p* = .518); FAPE scenario 8 (*F* (2, 29) = .253, *p* = .778); due process scenario 9 (*F* (4, 27) = .989, *p* = .430); due process scenario 10 (*F* (4, 27) = 1.219, *p* = .326); parent participation scenario 11 (*F* (3, 28) = .846, *p* = .480); and parent participation scenario 12 (*F* (3, 28) = 1.373, *p* = .271). Thus, hypothesis two that there is a significant difference in school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures of the six principles of IDEA 2004 and the methods by which they were trained for each principle was not supported.

H$_3$: There will be a significant difference in principals' level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures between school demographics (i.e., school level, type of community, school size/average daily attendance, and population of students receiving special education services).

An ANOVA was performed for each of the school demographics (i.e., school level, community type, school size based on average daily attendance, and the percentage of students receiving special education services) and the participants' level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures. The results for the difference in principals' level of special education knowledge and the school level (i.e., elementary, middle, elementary/middle, high, and district wide) were not statistically significant (*F* (4, 27) = 1.264, *p* = .309). Additionally, the findings for the difference in participants' level of knowledge and the type of community where their school is located (i.e., rural, suburban, and urban) were not statistically significant (*F* (2, 29) = .086, *p* = .918). The results for the difference in administrators' level of knowledge in special education policies and procedures and school size based on average daily attendance (i.e., up to 499, 500-999, 1,000-1,499, and more than 1,500) were also not statistically significant (*F* (3, 28) =

1.059, $p = .382$). The findings for the difference in participants' level of special education knowledge involving policies and procedures and the percentage of students receiving special education services within their schools (i.e., 0-10%, 11-20%, 21-30%, 31-40%, 41-50%, more than 51%) were not statistically significant ($F (4, 27) = 2.424$, $p = .072$). Therefore, hypothesis three that there is a significant difference in the overall level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures across different school demographics, including school level, community type, school size based on average daily attendance, and the percentage of students receiving special education services was not supported.

> H₄: There will be a significant difference in the level of knowledge pertaining to special education policies and procedures between principals with special education teaching experience and those with no special education teaching experience.

According to the descriptive data presented previously in Table 7, 22 administrators (69%) who participated in the survey had no prior teaching experience in special education while 10 participants (31%) had prior teaching experience in special education. An ANOVA was run to determine if there was a significant difference in the level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures between administrators with teaching experience in special education and those with no special education teaching experience, as well as the number of years' teaching experience.

The results of the ANOVAs determined that there is no significant difference in the level of knowledge pertaining to special education policies and procedures between principals with special education teaching experience and administrators with no special

education teaching experience (F (1, 30) = .368, p = .549). Additionally, the level of knowledge and the number of years teaching experience is not statistically significant (F (5, 26) = .780, p = .573).

The researcher employed a t-test to compare the means between participants' level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures and past special education teaching experience. The findings show that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was tested by Levene's Test for Equality of Variances and the p-value was greater than .05 (p = .152) which confirms the assumption of equal variance. The results of this analysis consisting of survey responses from 32 Mississippi K-12 public school principals and assistant principals found that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups of participating administrators (t = (30) = -.606, p = .549). Thus, hypothesis four that there is a significant difference in the level of knowledge pertaining to special education policies and procedures between principals with special education teaching experience and those with no special education teaching experience was not supported.

Additional Findings

For this study, the researcher used SPSS to run additional statistics to determine if there were differences in principals' level of knowledge and other factors. A one-way ANOVA was run to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the means of the level of knowledge scores as determined by participants' responses to the twelve hypothetical scenarios and their administration degree route (i.e., traditional or alternate). The findings concluded there was no significant difference in the level of special education knowledge and the degree route (F (1, 30) = .006, p = .941). A t-test

was also employed. The findings show that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was tested by Levene's Test for Equality of Variances and the p-value was greater than .05 ($p = .152$) which confirms the assumption of equal variance. The results of this analysis consisting of survey responses from 32 Mississippi K-12 public school principals and assistant principals found that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups of participating administrators ($t = (30) = .075$, $p = .941$).

Another one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference in the level of knowledge and the number of special education in-service professional development trainings they attended. Findings indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in participants' level of knowledge and the number of special education professional development trainings ($F (3, 28) = .072$, $p = .974$).

Likewise when a one-way ANOVA was run to establish if there was a statistically significant difference in the level of knowledge and the frequency of attendance in special education professional development trainings, the findings indicated that the difference in participants' level of knowledge and the frequency of special education professional development trainings ($F (3, 28) = .569$, $p = .640$) was not statistically significant.

Summary

This chapter rendered an analysis of the survey data collected for this research study. In this chapter, the researcher reintroduced the research hypotheses. The researcher then provided a detailed description of the sample population. Following the description of participants, the researcher employed descriptive statistics to describe demographic

information of the participants, including school background, educational credentials,

prior teaching experience, and participation in professional development trainings. The

researcher also provided an item analysis and response summary of the twelve

hypothetical scenarios and a response summary of the methods by which participating

administrators reported to have obtained the majority of their knowledge about the six

special education principles of IDEA 2004 that were utilized in this study. The results of

the statistical analyses were reported for the four research hypotheses, which found the

data did not support the hypotheses at the .05 significance level.

CHAPTER V – DISCUSSION

This study sought to assess the knowledge current Mississippi K-12 public school principals and assistant principals have in special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles (i.e., zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, free appropriate public education, due process, and parent participation) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, and by which method (i.e., university coursework, administrative trainings, on-the-job experiences, or self-taught research) they contended they had acquired the knowledge.

Interesting Data Points

Although the findings of differences were not statistically significant and did not support the hypotheses of this study, the data did reveal some interesting results regarding descriptive statistics. Only one participant correctly identified each acronym in this section of the survey. This participant did have special education certification and teaching experience in special education. The four participants scoring 75% or higher on the hypothetical scenarios served in rural communities with a special education student population between 11-20%. These administrators obtained their specialist degree following the traditional route and attended special education professional development trainings, conferences, and workshops annually.

Concerning experience in special education, the data showed only one participant who had 10-15 years of teaching experience in special education; however, this participant did not hold a special education certification. It may be possible that this participant's experience came from experience as an assistant teacher or paraprofessional, a prior certification, or a prior certification in another state. Another participant indicated

148

that he/she had experience in teaching special education; yet, this participant held no special education certification and selected 0 years of teaching experience in special education. It may be possible that their experience did not equal a full year or the selection choice was a mistake. One participant held a certification for special education; however, this participant did not have teaching experience in special education.

Considering the route by which administrators obtained their administrative degree, the data showed several interesting facts. The nine school administrators who received their degree by an alternate route scored less than 60% correct on the hypothetical scenarios, whereas 70% of administrators who obtained their degree by a traditional route scored less than 60% correct. However, more than half of the participants who received their degree following the alternate route scored 75% or higher on the special education acronyms section, yet less than half of the traditional route participants scored 75% or higher on this section. Only 35% of traditional route principals scored 75% or higher on the special education acronyms compared to 56% of alternate route principals' score of 75% or higher. These percentages suggest that the 9 administrators who obtained their administrative degree via alternate route were more familiar with the 20 special education acronyms used in this study than the 23 administrators who obtained their administrative degree following the traditional route. However, concerning the hypothetical scenarios, administrators obtaining their certification from either degree route struggled to answer at least 75% of the scenarios correctly, with the exception of four traditional route administrators, which suggests that administrators are not prepared for scenarios involving special education and the six provisions of IDEA 2004 used in this study.

In examining the data reporting administrators' knowledge of special education acronyms, the acronyms with the highest correct response rates were more in alignment with reporting and/or accountability. The following acronyms received more than 90% correct responses: ADD/ADHD, BIP, ED/EMD/EBD, ESY, FBA, IDEA, IEP, LRE, and OHI. The following acronyms align with reporting and/or accountability: BIP, ESY, FBA, IDEA, IEP, LRE. ADD/ADHD, ED/EMD/EBD, and OHI are qualifying disabilities for special education that may have had a larger percentage of diagnosed students within the participating administrators' schools. However, it was concerning to see the number of participants who were unsure or incorrect in their responses. *Table 18* outlines the most troubling acronyms that were either not familiar to the majority of the survey population or were not correctly identified by all of the survey population.

Table 18

Most Concerning Unknown/Incorrect Acronyms

Acronym	Correct Response	% Correct (N)	% Incorrect (N)	% Unsure (N)
ABC	Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence	31% (10)	6% (2)	63% (20)
AU / ASD	Autism	63% (20)	--	37% (12)
EDR	Eligibility Determination Report	3% (1)	19% (6)	78% (25)
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	97% (31)	--	3% (1)
IEE	Independent Educational Evaluation	15% (5)	19% (6)	66% (21)
LEA	Local Educational Agency	72% (23)	--	28% (9)
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment	94% (30)	3% (1)	3% (1)
MDR	Manifestation Determination Review	53% (17)	6% (2)	41% (13)

Although there was a high percentage (97%) of participants who correctly identified IDEA, one participant wrote "unsure" for IDEA, which is the law that was enacted to provide education for students with special needs. Likewise, LRE received a high percentage (94%); however, one participant answered incorrectly and another participant was "unsure." Principals are responsible for ensuring that all students, especially those with disabilities, are receiving FAPE in the setting or LRE that best meets their educational and functional needs.

The following acronyms pertain to behaviors: MDR, ABC, and ABA. There were 13 participants (41%) who were "unsure" what MDR represented and 2 respondents (6%) answered incorrectly. When dealing with disciplinary actions, including suspensions and

expulsion, it is vital for school leaders to know what an MDR is and how to conduct an MDR. If not, they would be more likely to invoke due process complaints. Only 10 participants (31%) correctly identified ABC, while 20 school leaders (63%) were "unsure" and 2 of the population sample (6%) were incorrect in their responses. Administrators should understand there is an antecedent (A) for most behaviors (B) and a consequence (C) that is either effective or ineffective in stopping the inappropriate behavior. As school leaders, they have a responsibility to ensure a safe learning environment. At times, an observation involving ABC may be needed for students with or without disabilities.

EDR and IEE may coincide with one another if the parent or school is unsatisfied with the result of an evaluation used for an eligibility determination report (EDR) and requests and independent educational evaluation (IEE). When principals act as the LEA, they are required to attend and participate in the eligibility meetings for students suspected of having a disability, which would qualify students for special education services. Of the survey sample, only one participant correctly identified EDR. Of the sample population, 25 participants (78%) were "unsure" and 6 administrators (19%) responded incorrectly. The responses for the IEE were slightly better with 5 participants (15%) responding correctly, 21 respondents (66%) stating "unsure," and 6 school leaders (19%) answering incorrectly.

School principals and assistant principals step into the role of LEA or local educational agency and serve as a member of the IEP team for students with disabilities. Of the sample population responses, nine administrators (28%) were "unsure" of what

this acronym means. That is troubling, especially since they are signing IEPs and other documents, school administrators must know their role as the LEA of their schools.

Finally, the last acronym that provided the most shocking results to the researcher was AU or ASD. There were 12 school leaders (37%), who did not identify this acronym as autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder, and typed a response of "unsure." Awareness for autism has its own day and its own awareness month (April 2nd and the month of April). According to the 2020 data collected by the CDC (2023, April 4), approximately 1 in 36 eight-year old children are diagnosed with autism. Autism is one of the most widely discussed disabilities with a multitude of resources and intervention strategies compared to other disabilities.

When broken down by principle of IDEA 2004, the results revealed that the mean percentage of correct responses for each of the IDEA 2004 provisions measured in this study were as follows: zero reject had a 39% correct response rate; nondiscriminatory evaluation had a 64% correct response rate; LRE had a 49% correct response rate; FAPE had a 52% correct response rate; procedural due process had a 29% correct response rate; and parent participation had a 66% correct response rate. This data reveals that participating principals' knowledge of special education was weakest regarding the policies of procedural due process, zero reject, and least restrictive environment.

When examining the data, the findings were concerning as to the percentage of incorrect responses, combined with asking the special education department for assistance compared to the number of correct responses for the 12 hypothetical scenarios. One respondent selected "I would ask the special education department for help" for all 12 of the hypothetical scenarios. This raised the question as to whether the participant

became tired of completing the survey or if they truly were unsure. After adding the number of correct item responses for each of the six principles of IDEA, parent participation totaled 42 correct answers between the two scenarios and nondiscriminatory evaluation totaled 41 correct answers between both scenarios. When adding the number of correct responses for the two scenarios involving due process, this was the principle that received the least number of correct answers with 18. Due process is very serious and there are several court cases pertaining to due process that have influenced special education and the procedural safeguards ensuring an education for students with disabilities and parent participation.

Implications

Despite the data not supporting the hypotheses of this study, the descriptive statistics show there is work to be done in the preparation of school leaders in special education policies and procedures. School principals and assistant principals are responsible for the education of all students in their respective schools. While principal preparation programs at the Schools of Education across the State of Mississippi have made improvements to their educational leadership coursework in line with the PSEL standards and have met the accreditation requirements of CAEP, there is a deficit in coursework specific to special education. This deficit in their level of knowledge in special education policies and procedures leaves administrators at a disadvantage when they step into their role as the instructional leader of their schools.

Participants in this study identified on-the-job experiences and professional development trainings as the method by which they received their knowledge of special education policies and procedures. The majority of the sample population (44%) asserted

they received their knowledge about FAPE from academic coursework. Academic coursework received less than 25% of knowledge acquisition for the other five principles of IDEA 2004. This result illustrated the need for changes in principal preparation programs to enable future school leaders the opportunity to take coursework that will benefit their level of knowledge in special education.

These findings align with the results of previous studies regarding school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures. The findings of Jesteadt's (2012) study also revealed that the provision of procedural due process had the lowest percentage (40%) of correct responses (p. 105). Likewise, this study revealed that procedural due process received the lowest percentage (29%) of correct responses. Power (2007) concluded that the results of an overall score of 64% correct responses for the hypothetical scenarios posed in her study raised concern regarding Virginia principals' knowledge of special education. Hirth's (1988) study involving principals from Tennessee revealed an overall 72% correct response rate for questions regarding special education law and policies which Hirth asserted was not a sufficient degree of knowledge for practicing administrators (as cited in Power, 2007, p. 98). With an overall 50% correct response rate for the participating Mississippi principals and assistant principals, there is cause for concern.

The hypotheses involving demographic variables (i.e., gender, age, grade level of school, size of school (ADA), type of degree, type of community, years of experience as a principal, number of special education law courses and involvement in special education litigation) of Power's (2007) study were all rejected. Likewise, the results

involving demographic variables in this study did not support the hypotheses of this study.

The results of this study support the findings of similar research (Aspedon, 1992; Hirth, 1988; Jesteadt, 2012; McClard-Bertrand & Bratberg, 2007; Patterson & Marshall, 2000; Power, 2007; Valesky & Hirth, 1992; and Wakeman et al., 2006). School principals are not prepared for their role as special education leader and the responsibilities involving special education policies and procedures for their respective schools.

Limitations

Limitations, or elements to which the researcher has no control, of this study are typical of those associated with survey research. As survey research is voluntary, the response size of this survey was limited to the 32 participants who took time out of their day to assist in the researcher's quest to collect data. In addition, regarding the survey population, not every administrator may have access to the survey as he/she may not have been a member of MS ASA, been social media acquaintances with the researcher, or received the consent form with the survey link from their superintendents. This small sample size resulted in little statistical power in this study. Thus, this sample size was not large enough to provide generalizable conclusions.

Another limitation to the study was flaws in the survey instrument. A rating scale would have been more appropriate to determine where administrators would go for assistance involving a special education-related issue. A rating scale for methods of knowledge acquisition may have also aided in results that were more definitive. Also, participants may not have been familiar with the terminology related to the six provisions

156

of IDEA 2004 that were utilized in this study so a definition or explanation of the terminology for zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, LRE, FAPE, procedural due process, and parent participation may have allowed respondents to better respond to the method by which they purported to have received their knowledge.

Other study limitations included the possibility that the respondent had assistance in completing the survey and time constraints because of the necessary modification and deadline submissions.

Recommendations

While this study provided data concerning Mississippi K-12 school principals and assistant principals, this study was not generalizable due to a small sample size. Nevertheless, the researcher provides some recommendations based on the data from this study as well as on the researcher's personal knowledge and experience. Recommendations are divided into the following areas: school principals, principal preparation programs, and future research.

Recommendations for School Principals and Assistant Principals

School leaders should participate in professional development trainings that are specific to special education, especially concerning the law and policies/procedures of IDEA 2004. If given the opportunity, administrators should take special education coursework to improve their knowledge and understanding of students with disabilities. Coursework that would be most beneficial include special education law (especially in the areas of zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, LRE, FAPE, procedural due process, and parent participation), characteristics of exceptional children, instructional challenges of students with disabilities, and best academic and functional practices for

students receiving special education services. School principals should spend time in a special education classroom setting and interact with students with disabilities, as this would provide insight to the needs of the students as well as special education teachers. Conversing with special education teachers and special education administrators would be beneficial for school leaders to gain a better understanding of this special population and special education law, policies, and procedures.

Recommendations for University Principal Preparation Programs

Universities should require special education coursework in their administrator preparation programs. This coursework should be specific to special education law and policies and procedures, including zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, FAPE, due process, and parent participation. With knowledge about these six principles of IDEA 2004, school principals and assistant principals will be more prepared to step into their role as instructional leaders who promote learning for all students. Principal preparation programs should require field-based special education experiences within the coursework, which would provide future school administrators with opportunities to participate in IEP meetings, observe lessons in a special education classroom, and interact with students receiving special education services and their parents.

Recommendations for Future Research

Another study of this nature should be conducted in Mississippi in an effort to gain more responses from practicing administrators, which would provide generalizability for the study. Future research should look into the universities in which school administrators received their licensure. That data would be beneficial in

158

determining which universities in Mississippi provided more instruction in content for special education. Future research should examine the specific coursework and the amount of coursework in special education provided by each of the Mississippi universities during administrative coursework at all graduate degree levels (i.e., masters, specialist, and doctorate). Future research should investigate the availability of special education professional development opportunities available for school administrators with a focus on types of professional development and the content of the professional development trainings.

The descriptive data and item analyses in this study provided information and results, which coincide with previous research studies concurring that school principals are not prepared to be the educational leaders of all populations within their schools. A lack of preparation in special education law, policies, and procedures as well as special education acronyms and terminology is evident in the responses of Mississippi's school principals and assistant principals found in this study.

APPENDIX A IRB Approval Letter

Office *of* Research Integrity

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NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and 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 involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident submission on InfoEd IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 22-1533
PROJECT TITLE: A Study of Mississippi Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Policies and Procedures
SCHOOL/PROGRAM School of Education
RESEARCHERS: PI: Jodi Cameron-Polk
Investigators: Cameron-Polk, Jodi~Lee, David~
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved
CATEGORY: Expedited Category
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 08-Dec-2022 to 07-Dec-2023

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

Office *of*
Research Integrity

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Modification Institutional Review Board Approval

The University of Southern Mississippi's Office of Research Integrity has?received the notice of your modification for your submission *A Study of Mississippi Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Policies and Procedures* (IRB #:22-1533).

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and 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.
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PROJECT TITLE: A Study of Mississippi Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Policies and Procedures
SCHOOL/PROGRAM School of Education
RESEARCHERS: PI: Jodi Cameron-Polk
Investigators: Cameron-Polk, Jodi~Lee, David~
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved
CATEGORY: Expedited Category
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 14-Feb-2023 to 07-Dec-2023

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

161

APPENDIX C Permission to Use Survey Instrument

PGSD.MS   Jodi Cameron-Polk <jcameronpolk@pgsd.ms>

Request for Permission to Use Survey Instrument for Dissertation
4 messages

Jodi Cameron-Polk <jcameronpolk@pgsd.ms>   Wed, Apr 20, 2022 at 12:28 PM
To: lbryant7@fau.edu, M Mountford <mmountfo@fau.edu>, "ljesteadt@wakeupnarcolepsy.org"
<ljesteadt@wakeupnarcolepsy.org>

Dr. Jesteadt and Dr. Mountford,

Good afternoon. My name is Jodi Cameron-Polk. I am a doctoral student at the University of Southern Mississippi (email:
jodi.cameron@usm.edu). My dissertation is tentatively entitled "K-12 Principals and Special Education: A Study of
Mississippi Gulf Coast Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Laws and Procedures" under the direction of my
dissertation committee chaired by Dr. Lillian Hill. I am seeking your permission to reproduce and use your survey
instrument from your dissertation study entitled "Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Policies and Procedures:
Does it Matter in Leadership?" for my study under the following conditions:

- I will use this survey only for my research study.
- I will not sell or use it with any compensated or curriculum development activities.
- Although no changes are expected to be made to the survey, if modifications are necessary, I will send it to you for
  your approval before using it.

I appreciate your consideration in allowing me to use your survey as I seek to discover the knowledge that Mississippi
Gulf Coast principals have concerning special education laws and policies as it pertains to their individual schools and
students.

Please let me know if I have your permission to use your survey instrument in my study.

Sincerely,
Jodi Cameron-Polk
USM Doctoral Candidate
--
Jodi Cameron-Polk
Special Education, Behavior Modification Teacher
Lake Elementary School
4504 Willow Street
Pascagoula, MS 39567
228-938-6422
228-696-6618 (fax)

~ "Every child has a different learning style and pace. Each child is unique, not only capable of learning but also capable
of succeeding." - Robert John Meehan

Confidentiality Notice: *This communication may contain material protected by the Family Educational
Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA.) This communication and any documents or files transmitted with it are
confidential and are intended solely for the use of the Pascagoula-Gautier School District and the
individual or entity to which it is addressed. Any use, dissemination, forwarding, printing or copying of this
communication is strictly prohibited.*

Jodi Cameron-Polk <jcameronpolk@pgsd.ms>   Wed, Apr 20, 2022 at 1:16 PM
To: "info@wakeupnarcolepsy.org" <info@wakeupnarcolepsy.org>

Dear Ms. Dow,

Good afternoon. I attempted to contact her via the information that I was able to find via the internet; however I was
directed to contact you as I was advised via email that Lindsay Jesteadt is no longer working at Wake Up Narcolepsy

Would it be possible for you to forward this email and the one attached to Dr. Jesteadt to the contact information you may have for her? If not, can you please let me know so that I may attempt via additional methods.

Thank you so much for your time and assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,
Jodi Cameron-Polk
[Quoted text hidden]

---

lbryant7@fau.edu <lbryant7@fau.edu>   Wed, Apr 20, 2022 at 2:57 PM
To: Jodi Cameron-Polk <jcameronpolk@pgsd.ms>
Cc: M Mountford <mmountfo@fau.edu>, ljesteadt@wakeupnarcolepsy.org

Hello Jodi,

Yes, you have my permission. I wish you the very best as you move forward with your dissertation.

Best,
Lindsay Jesteadt

> On Apr 20, 2022, at 1:29 PM, Jodi Cameron-Polk <jcameronpolk@pgsd.ms> wrote:
>
>
> **EXTERNAL EMAIL** : Exercise caution when responding, opening links, or opening attachments.
>
> [Quoted text hidden]

Jodi Cameron-Polk <jcameronpolk@pgsd.ms>   Wed, Apr 20, 2022 at 3:30 PM
To: lbryant7@fau.edu

Thank you so much! I appreciate you and am excited to see the results my study reveals.

Jodi
[Quoted text hidden]

APPENDIX D Permission to Conduct Research through MS ASA

PGSD.MS   **Jodi Cameron-Polk <jcameronpolk@pgsd.ms>**

Fw: Question Concerning Graduate Study Involving MS Principals
3 messages

Jodi Cameron-Polk <Jodi.Cameron@usm.edu>   Thu, Oct 27, 2022 at 4:25 PM
To: Jodi Cameron-Polk <jcameronpolk@pgsd.ms>

> **From:** Jodi Cameron-Polk <Jodi.Cameron@usm.edu>
> **Sent:** Wednesday, July 6, 2022 2:39 PM
> **To:** MS ASA <msasa1317@gmail.com>; mcgeheeronnie@outlook.com <mcgeheeronnie@outlook.com>
> **Cc:** Lilian Hill <Lilian.Hill@usm.edu>
> **Subject:** Re: Question Concerning Graduate Study Involving MS Principals
>
> Thank you so much!!! I appreciate you!!! I will get this to you soon!
>
> Jodi

> **From:** MS ASA <msasa1317@gmail.com>
> **Sent:** Wednesday, July 6, 2022 2:29 PM
> **To:** Jodi Cameron-Polk <Jodi.Cameron@usm.edu>; mcgeheeronnie@outlook.com
> <mcgeheeronnie@outlook.com>
> **Cc:** Lilian Hill <Lilian.Hill@usm.edu>
> **Subject:** Re: Question Concerning Graduate Study Involving MS Principals
>
> Good afternoon, Jodi!
>
> We would be happy to assist you! If you email your cover letter and survey link when you are ready to distribute to the principals, we would be glad to send it to our members.
>
> Thank you
>
> Ginger

> **From:** Jodi Cameron-Polk <Jodi.Cameron@usm.edu>
> **Date:** Wednesday, July 6, 2022 at 9:55 AM
> **To:** Ronnie McGehee <mcgeheeronnie@outlook.com>, "msasa1317@gmail.com"
> <msasa1317@gmail.com>
> **Cc:** Lilian Hill <Lilian.Hill@usm.edu>
> **Subject:** Re: Question Concerning Graduate Study Involving MS Principals
>
> Good morning, Dr. McGehee and Ms. Lowhorn. I fear my original email got buried in your inbox, so I am resending it.

164

Thank you for your assistance and/or advice in this matter. Have a wonderful day!

Jodi Polk

From: Jodi Cameron-Polk
Sent: Friday, July 1, 2022 4:59 PM
To: mcgeheeronnie@outlook.com <mcgeheeronnie@outlook.com>; msasa1317@gmail.com <msasa1317@gmail.com>
Cc: Lilian Hill <Lilian.Hill@usm.edu>
Subject: Question Concerning Graduate Study Involving MS Principals

Good afternoon, Dr. McGehee and Ms. Lowhorn. I hope you are doing well.

My name is Jodi Cameron-Polk. I am a doctoral student at the University of Southern Mississippi. My dissertation committee, under the direction of Dr. Lilian Hill, has approved my study which is entitled, "K-12 Principals and Special Education: A Study of Mississippi Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Policies and Procedures."

The purpose of my study is to establish the level of knowledge practicing K-12 school principals in Mississippi have pertaining to special education laws and policies regarding the six principles of IDEA 2004 (zero reject, nondiscriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, individualized free appropriate education, due process, and parent participation) using a quantitative survey, in which participants will remain anonymous.

To ensure that I reach all practicing K-12 Mississippi public school principals and assistant principals, would it be possible for me to (1) obtain a list of principals and their emails for the sole purpose of distribution of my online survey link OR (2) email you my cover letter and survey link when I am ready to distribute it for you to forward to the principals?

If you are unable to share this information with me or forward my survey instrument, would you be able to point me in the direction of someone who may be able to assist me in my research study?

Thank you so much for your time and assistance! I look forward to your response. Have a wonderful and safe 4th of July weekend!

Jodi Cameron-Polk

Graduate Student, USM

APPENDIX E Email Sent to MS ASA Members

Dear Mississippi K-12 School Principals and Assistant Principals,

My name is Jodi Cameron-Polk. I am seeking your help in collecting data for my research by asking you to complete a survey which should take between 15-20 minutes. As a doctoral student in educational administration at the University of Southern Mississippi, I am conducting research to complete my dissertation. This is the last requirement I must fulfill before obtaining my degree. I am conducting a study to examine the knowledge Mississippi K-12 public school principals have in special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles (zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, free appropriate public education, due process, and parent participation) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, and by which method (i.e., university coursework, administrative professional development trainings, on-the-job experiences, or self-taught research) they acquired the knowledge. This study has been approved by the Internal Review Board (Protocol Number 22-1533) at the University of Southern Mississippi. The content and substance of the survey is confidential and anonymous. No personal information will be assessed. This study offers minimal risk or no more risk than that encountered when using the internet and the time and possible inconvenience of participating in the survey study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may discontinue the survey at any time without penalty or prejudice. **This survey should be completed by current Mississippi K-12 public school principals and assistant principals.** Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Please click on the link to complete the survey.

Link: https://forms.gle/e3qWghA4t8fp666d9

Sincerely,

Jodi Cameron-Polk

APPENDIX F Social Media Recruitment Post Text

Educator friends, I need your help! If you are currently employed in a Mississippi K-12 public elementary, middle, or high school as the building principal or assistant principal, please consider completing the following survey.

Everyone, please share! I need as many responses as possible for my dissertation.

Thank you so much!

Attention Mississippi K-12 School Principals and Assistant Principals

I am seeking your help in collecting data for my research by asking you to complete a survey which should take between 15-20 minutes.

As a doctoral student in educational administration at the University of Southern Mississippi, I am conducting research to complete my dissertation. This is the last requirement I must fulfill before obtaining my degree. I am conducting a study to examine the knowledge Mississippi K-12 public school principals have in special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles (zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, free appropriate public education, due process, and parent participation) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, and by which method (i.e., university coursework, administrative professional development trainings, on-the-job experiences, or self-taught research) they acquired the knowledge. This study has been approved by the Internal Review Board (Protocol Number 22-1533) at the University of Southern Mississippi. The content and substance of the survey is confidential and anonymous. No personal information will be assessed. This study offers minimal risk or no more risk than that

encountered when using the internet and the time and possible inconvenience of

participating in the survey study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary,

and you may discontinue the survey at any time without penalty or prejudice. This survey

should be completed by current Mississippi K-12 public school principals and assistant

principals. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Please click on the link provided in this post to complete the survey.

Sincerely,

Jodi Cameron-Polk

APPENDIX G Email to Superintendents for Permission to Conduct Research with

Separate Email for Potential Participants

Dear Superintendent [Insert Name]:

My name is Jodi Cameron-Polk. I am a doctoral student at the University of Southern
Mississippi conducting research to complete my dissertation entitled "K-12 Principals
and Special Education: A Study of Mississippi Principals' Knowledge of Special
Education Policies and Procedures" under the direction of Dr. Lilian Hill. This study has
been approved by the Internal Review Board (Protocol Number 22-1533) at the
University of Southern Mississippi.

This study utilizes a quantitative survey data tool. The content and substance of the
survey is confidential and anonymous. No personal information will be collected.
Participation in this study is completely voluntary and may be discontinued at any time
without penalty or prejudice. This study offers minimal risk or no more risk than that
encountered when using the internet and the time (approximately 10-15 minutes) and
possible inconvenience of participating in the survey study. The survey should be
completed by current Mississippi K-12 public school principals and assistant principals.
I am seeking your assistance in collecting survey data for my research. **If you would not
mind assisting in the collection of the survey data, please forward the following to
your current principals and assistant principals in your district.**

For any questions or concerns, please contact me at Jodi.Cameron@usm.edu.

I appreciate your time and consideration in helping me obtain the necessary data to complete my study.

Sincerely,

Jodi Cameron-Polk

Attention Mississippi K-12 School Principals and Assistant Principals:

My name is Jodi Cameron-Polk. I am seeking your help in collecting data for my research by asking you to complete a survey which should take between 10-15 minutes. As a doctoral student in educational administration at the University of Southern Mississippi, I am conducting research to complete my dissertation. This is the last requirement I must fulfill before obtaining my degree. I am conducting a study to examine the knowledge Mississippi K-12 public school principals have in special education policies and procedures for each of the six principles (zero reject, non-discriminatory evaluation, least restrictive environment, free appropriate public education, due process, and parent participation) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, and by which method (i.e., university coursework, administrative professional development trainings, on-the-job experiences, or self-taught research) they acquired the knowledge. This study has been approved by the Internal Review Board (Protocol Number 22-1533) at the University of Southern Mississippi. The content and substance of the survey is confidential and anonymous. No personal information will be assessed. This study offers minimal risk or no more risk than that encountered when using the internet and the time and possible inconvenience of participating in the survey study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary,

and you may discontinue the survey at any time without penalty or prejudice. This survey

should be completed by current Mississippi K-12 public school principals and assistant

principals. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Please click on the link provided in this post to complete the survey.

https://forms.gle/bofFRisEj9uzwRJ1A

Sincerely,

Jodi Cameron-Polk

APPENDIX H - The University of Southern Mississippi Course Outline

Table 19

The University of Southern Mississippi Educational Leadership and Administration

Course Outline

Degree	Courses
M.Ed.	EDA 602 - Foundations of School Leadership
	EDA 603 - Leading Diverse School Populations
	EDA 604 - Intro to Leadership for Organizational Effectiveness
	EDA 605 - Intro to Instructional Leadership
	EDA 606 - Advanced Leadership for Organizational Effectiveness
	EDA 607 - Advanced Instructional Leadership
	EDA 608 - Socio-Political Issues and Educational Leadership
	EDA 609 - Transformational Leadership
	EDA 636 - Administrative Internship
	EDA 661 - Practitioner as P-12 Researcher
Ed.S.	EDA 600 - Introduction to Educational Leadership
	EDA 616 - Legal Considerations for School Leadership
	EDA 620 - Instructional Leadership: Supervision and Professional Development
	EDA 628 - Contextual Dimensions of the Principalship
	EDA 651 - Principal as Resource Manager
	EDA 704 - School Community Relations
	EDA 708 - Developing and Managing Human Resources

Table 19 Continued

Degree	Courses
	EDA 730 - Media Skills for Successful School-Community Relations
	EDA 736 - Practicum in Educational Administration OR EDA 738 - Practicum in Supervision
	REF 601 - Educational Research: Interpretation and Applications
	REF 602 - Introduction to Educational Statistics
	REF 632 - Assessing Student Outcomes
Ed.D.	EDA 628 - Contextual Dimensions of the Principalship OR EDA 755 - The Superintendency
	EDA 700 - Public School Finance
	EDA 702 - Administrative Approaches to Technology
	EDA 706 - Education Facilities Development and Management
	EDA 710 - School Law
	EDA 722 - Introduction to P-12 Education Policy
	EDA 736 - Practicum in Educational Administration OR EDA 738 - Practicum in Supervision
	EDA 740 - Advanced Instructional Supervision
	EDA 780 - Educational Leadership Seminar
	EDA 794 - Capstone in Educational Leadership (Students must take course 4 times for a total of 12 hours.)
	EDA 800 - Seminar: Theories in Educational Organization and Administration
	REF 601 - Educational Research: Interpretation and Applications

Table 19 Continued

Degree	Courses
	REF 602 - Introduction to Educational Statistics
	REF 736 - Survey Research
	REF 770 - Program Evaluation
Ph.D.	EDA 628 - Contextual Dimensions of the Principalship OR EDA 755 - The Superintendency
	EDA 700 - Public School Finance
	EDA 702 - Administrative Approaches to Technology
	EDA 706 - Education Facilities Development and Management
	EDA 710 - School Law
	EDA 720 - Advanced Curriculum Development
	EDA 722 - Introduction to P-12 Education Policy
	EDA 736 - Practicum in Educational Administration OR EDA 738 - Practicum in Supervision
	EDA 740 - Advanced Instructional Supervision
	EDA 780 - Educational Leadership Seminar
	EDA 800 - Seminar: Theories in Educational Organization and Administration
	EDA 898 - Dissertation (Total of 12 hours) REF 601 - Educational Research: Interpretation and Applications
	REF 602 - Introduction to Educational Statistics
	REF 730 - Qualitative Research in the Social Sciences I
	REF 736 - Survey Research

Table 19 Continued

Degree	Courses
	REF 761 - Quantitative Analysis I
	REF 791 - Field Problems in Educational Research (6 hrs. required)
	REF 889 - The Dissertation Process
	Advisor Approved Electives (6 hrs. required)

Note: Adapted from The University of Southern Mississippi Online Graduate Catalogs

https://catalog.usm.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=30&poid=15604

https://catalog.usm.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=30&poid=15605

https://catalog.usm.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=30&poid=15606

https://catalog.usm.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=30&poid=15607

APPENDIX I - The University of Mississippi Course Outline

Table 20

The University of Mississippi Educational Leadership and Administration Course Outline

Degree	Courses
M.Ed.	Edld 641 - Law and Ethics in Education
	Edld 642 - Managing Operations for Learning OR Edld 675 - Policy, Integrity, Ethics, Legal, and Political Issues
	Edld 671 -Leading Quality Instruction
	Edrs 673 - Data Led Curriculum and Assessment OR Edld 673 - Organization and Management
	Edld 674 - Developing Quality Teaching
	Edld 676 - Leading Change in Educational Org. OR Edld672 - Common Ground: School and Community
Ed.S.	Edld 641 - Law and Ethics in Education
	Edld 642 - Managing Operations for Learning OR Edld 675 - Policy, Integrity, Ethics, Legal, and Political Issues
	Edld 671 - Leading Quality Instruction
	Edrs 673 - Data Led Curriculum and Assessment OR Edld 673 - Organization and Management
	Edld 674 - Developing Quality Teaching
	Edld 676 - Leading Change in Educational Org. OR Edld 672 - Common Ground: School and Community
	Edld 656 - Administrative Internship
Ed.D.	Edci 703 - Seminar on the Learner and Learning
	Edci 757 - Improvement Science

Table 20 Continued

Degree	Courses
	Edfd 713 - Education and Society
	Edrs 700 - Models of Inquiry & Literature Review
	Edrs 701 - Statistics II
	Edrs 704 - Qualitative Research
	Edrs 705 - Education Research II
	Specialization Courses (Total of 12 hours) - Candidates will work closely with their academic advisers to select specialized courses in their area of specialization that align with the candidates' professional and academic goals.
	Dissertation in Practice (Total of 15 hours)
Ph.D.	Edfd 609 - Cultural Context in Education
	Edld 630 - Organization-Environment Interaction
	Edld 694 - Human Resource Development
	Edld 700 - Administrative Theory
	Edld 721 - Leadership and Management
	Edld 730 - Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Leadership
	Edld 750 - Organizational Improvement
	Edld 756 - Internship (required)
	Edrs 601 - Educational Statistics I
	Edrs 701 - Educational Statistics II
	Edrs 605 - Educational Research I
	Edrs 705 - Advanced Quantitative Research Methods OR Edrs 706 - Applied Qualitative Research Methods

Table 20 Continued

Degree	Courses
	Edrs 704 - Qualitative Research
	Approved Electives (Total of 15 hours outside the leadership emphasis, with 9 hours outside the School of Education)
	K-12 administration courses (Total of 21 hours)
	Dissertation (Total of 18 hours)
	Comprehensive Examination

Note: Adapted from The University of Mississippi Online Graduate Catalogs

https://catalog.olemiss.edu/education/leadership-counselor-education/m-ed-ed-ldr

https://catalog.olemiss.edu/education/leadership-counselor-education/ed-s-ldrship

https://catalog.olemiss.edu/education/teacher-education/edd-educ/edd-tchr-ed

https://catalog.olemiss.edu/education/leadership-counselor-education/phd-educ/phd-ed-k-12

APPENDIX J - Mississippi State University Course Outline

Table 21

Mississippi State University Educational Leadership and Administration Course Outline

Degree	Courses
M.Ed.	EDL 8413 - School Legal and Ethical Perspectives
	EDL 8423 - School Leadership
	EDL 8433 - Using Data for School Improvement
	EDL 8513 - School Leadership Internship I
	EDL 8523 - Educating Diverse Learners
	EDL 8613 - School Leadership Internship II
	EDL 8623 - Leading Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
	EDL 8713 - School Business and Facilities
	EDL 8723 - Leadership for Positive School Culture
	EDL 8633 - Human Resources Leadership for Schools
	Comprehensive Examination
	Take School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA) and submit results to program
Ed.S. - holding M.Ed. with no admin. license	EDL 8413 - School Legal and Ethical Perspectives
	EDL 8423 - School Leadership
	EDL 8433 - Using Data for School Improvement
	EDL 8513 - School Leadership Internship I
	EDL 8523 - Educating Diverse Learners

Table 21 Continued

Degree	Courses
	EDL 8613 - School Leadership Internship II
	EDL 8623 - Leading Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
	EDL 8633 - Human Resources Leadership for Schools
	EDL 8713 - School Business and Facilities
	EDL 8723 - Leadership for Positive School Culture
	EPY 6214 - Educational and Psychological Statistics
	EDL 7000 - Directed Individual Study in Educational Leadership
	Comprehensive Examination
	Take School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA) and submit results to program
Ed.S. - holding M.Ed. and admin. license	EPY 6214 - Educational and Psychological Statistics
	EDL 7000 - Directed Individual Study in Educational Leadership
	Graduate-level coursework with at least 15 hours at the 8000-level
	Comprehensive Examination
Ed.D.	EDA 8163 - Public School Finance 3
	EDA 8223 - Seminar in Administration
	EDA 8423 - Law and Ethics in Educational Leadership
	EDA 8433 - The Superintendency
	EDA 8443 - Politics and Policy in Educational Leadership
	EDA 8453 - Instructional Leadership

Table 21 Continued

Degree	Courses
	EDA 8453 - Technology and Communication in Educational Leadership
	EDA 8283 - Educational Leadership
	EDA 8353 - Applications of Theory to Educational Administration
	EDA 8413 - Human Resources Administration in Education
	EDA elective
	EDA elective
	EDA 8473 - Introduction to Research in Educational Leadership
	EDA 8493 - Action Research
	EDA 8483 - Survey Research
	EDA 8563 - Program Evaluation
	EDA 8623 - Doctoral Capstone 1
	EDA 8633 - Doctoral Capstone 2
	EDA 8643 - Doctoral Capstone 3
Ph.D.	**Leading and Managing in Educational Environments**
	EDA 8163 - Public School Finance
	EDA/HED 8223 - Seminar in Administration 1
	EDA/HED 8283 - Educational Leadership 1
	EDA/HED 8353 - Applications of Theory to Educational Administration 1
	EDA 8413 - Human Resources Administration in Education

Table 21 Continued

Degree	Courses
	EDA 8423 - Law and Ethics in Educational Leadership
	EDA 8433 - The Superintendency
	EDA 8443 - Politics and Policy in Educational Leadership
	EDA 8453 - Instructional Leadership
	EDA 8463 - Technology and Communication in Educational Leadership
	Applied Research - Select a minimum of five (5) courses from the following:
	EPY 6214 - Educational and Psychological Statistics
	EPY 8214 - Int Educational and Psychological Statistics
	EPY 9213 - Multi Analysis in Educational Research
	EPY 9263 - Applied Research Seminar
	EDF 9373 - Educational Research Design
	EDF 9463 - Qualitative Data Collection in Education
	EDF 9473 - Qualitative Data Analysis and Presentation in Education
	EDA 8473 - Introduction to Research in Educational Leadership
	Dissertation Research
	EDA 9000 - Dissertation Research /Dissertation in Educational Leadership (hours and credits to be arranged; minimum of 20 hours required)
	Additional courses if needed
	EDA 8210 - Internship in Supervision and Administration

Table 21 Continued

Degree	Courses
	EDA 8323 - Educational Facilities Design
	EDA 8190 - Workshop in Educational Leadership

Note: Adapted from Mississippi State University Online Graduate Catalogs

https://www.educationalleadership.msstate.edu/academic-programs/school-administration/master-science-educational-leadership-school-administration/

https://www.educationalleadership.msstate.edu/academic-programs/school-administration/educational-specialist-education-school-administration/

https://www.educationalleadership.msstate.edu/academic-programs/school-administration/doctor-education-educational-leadership/

https://www.educationalleadership.msstate.edu/academic-programs/school-administration/doctor-philosophy-educational-leadership-p12-school-leadership/

Table 22

Jackson State University Educational Leadership and Administration Course Outline

Degree	Courses
M.Ed.	EDAD 512 - Introduction to School Leadership Theories and Practice
	EDAD 513 - School-Based Program Evaluation and Improvement
	EDAD 514 - Leading Change to Support School Improvement
	EDAD 515 - Legal Issues for School Leaders
	EDAD 516 - Leading and Managing Human Resource
	EDAD 517 - Responsibility and Accountability for School Finance
	EDAD 524 - Internship
	EDAD 519 - Instructional Leadership and Professional Development
	EDAD 522 - Equity and Culturally Responsive Leadership
	EDAD 523 - Building Community Partnerships
	EDAD 586 - Strengthening Literacy for Educational Leaders
Ed.S.	EDFL 601 - Advanced Research and Statistics
	SPED 603 - Psychoeducational Aspects of Exceptional Children
	EDAD 686 - Strengthening Literacy for School and District Leaders
	EDAD 603 - Leadership in Organizational Change and Human Resources
	EDAD 604 - Organization of Effective Professional Development
	EDAD 609 - Administration of School Finance

Table 22 Continued

Degree	Courses
	EDAD 611 - Theories in Administration
	EDAD 615 - Legal Issues in Educational Administration
	EDAD 626 - School Superintendency
	EDAD 697 - Internship/Mentorship
	EDAD 699 - Research in Instructional Leadership and Curriculum
Ph.D.	EDAD 700 - Research Writing for Educational Leaders
	EDAD 701 - Implementation of Organizational Change
	EDAD 702 - Equity and Culturally Responsive Leadership
	EDAD 703 - Educational Policy Analysis
	EDAD 704 - Applications of Educational Leadership Theories
	EDAD 705 - Educational Government and Corporation Partnerships
	EDAD 715 - Legal Issues in Educational Administration
	EDAD 720 - Leadership and Professional Development
	EDAD 723 - Accountability for School and District Finance
	EDAD 726 - District Superintendency
	EDAD 786 - Strengthening Literacy for School and District Leaders
	EDAD 798 - Internship/Mentorship
	EDAD 710 - Advanced Statistical Concepts and Computer Analysis
	EDAD 711 - Studies and Practicum Educational Assessments
	EDAD 712 - Qualitative Research Designs and Methods in Education

Table 22 Continued

Degree	Courses
	EDAD 713 - Information Management Systems for Educational Leaders
	EDAD 714 - Experimental Design in Education
	EDFL 732 - Nonparametric Methods in Statistics
	600 or 700 Level Course Electives (Total of 6 hours required)
	Dissertation (Total of 12-15 hours required)

Note: Adapted from Jackson State University Online Graduate Catalogs

https://www.jsums.edu/eduleadership/files/2021/05/JSU-Masters-Curriculum-Sheet.pdf

https://www.jsums.edu/eduleadership/files/2021/05/JSU-Curriculum-Sheet-EDS-2020.pdf

https://www.jsums.edu/eduleadership/files/2021/05/JSU-Curriculum-Sheet-PHD.pdf

APPENDIX L - Delta State University Course Outline

Table 23

Delta State University Educational Leadership and Administration Course Outline

Degree	Courses
M.Ed.	EPY 601 - Psychology of Learning
	ELR 605 - Methods of Research and Stats
	CUR 608 - Historical Foundations
	EDL 601 - Foundations I
	EDL 602 - Foundations II
	EDL 603 - Foundations III
	EDL 620 - Application of Practice I
	EDL 624 - Application of Practice II
	EDL 628 - Application of Practice III
	EDL 656 - School Leadership Internship
Ed.S. with no administrator license	CUR 701 - Philosophy of Education
	ELR 701 - Research for Educational Practitioners
	AED 725 - District Level Leadership Roles and Functions
	EDL 701 - Foundations I
	EDL 702 - Foundations II
	EDL 703 - Foundations III
	EDL 720 - Application of Practice I
	EDL 724 - Application of Practice II

Table 23 Continued

Degree	Courses
	EDL 728 - Application of Practice III
	EDL 656 - School Leadership Internship
Ed.S. with administrator license	CUR 701 Philosophy of Education
	AED 701 Introduction to Educational Leadership
	AED 702 The Role of the Principal
	AED 704 Resource Management
	SUP 731 Supervision Roles in Instruction
	AED 636 - Practicum I in School Administration OR AED 736 - Practicum II in School Administration
	ELR 701 - Research for Educational Practitioners
	CUR 703 - Dynamic Leadership for Curriculum and Assessment
	AED 721 - Leadership for Continuous Improvement
	AED 725 - District Level Leadership Roles and Functions
Ed.D.	**Prerequisites**
	ELR 605 - Methods of Educational Research and Statistics
	EPY 601 - Educational Psychology
	Approved Ed. Leadership coursework from M.Ed. and Ed.S. degrees and electives (Total of 63 hours required)
	Doctoral Core
	ELR 702 - Educational Research Design
	ELR 804 - Adv. Stats. For Educational Research

Table 23 Continued

Degree	Courses
	ELR 805 - Educational Research Writing
	ELR 888 - Dissertation Seminar
	AED 830 - Leadership Theory and Application
	SUP 831 - Supervisory Techniques
	CUR 812 - Comprehensive Assessment and Data Analysis
	CUR 820/833 - Practicum in Leadership
	CUR 834 - Doctoral Seminar
	ELR 890 - Dissertation Hours (Total of 12 hours required)

Note: Adapted from Delta State University Online Graduate Catalogs

https://www.deltastate.edu/education-and-human-sciences/teacher-education-research-leadership/master-education-educational-administration-supervision/

https://www.deltastate.edu/MSDocs/Teacher%20Education/M.Ed-EAS-POS-5.20.19-Version-2.pdf.pdf

https://www.deltastate.edu/education-and-human-sciences/teacher-education-research-leadership/education-specialist-educational-administration-supervision/

https://www.deltastate.edu/MSDocs/Teacher%20Education/POS-EdS-EASinitial-5.20.19.pdf.pdf

https://www.deltastate.edu/MSDocs/Teacher%20Education/ed-s-leadership-program-of-study-career-track-with-486-license-18-19-8-5.20.19.pdf.pdf

https://www.deltastate.edu/education-and-human-sciences/teacher-education-research-leadership/doctor-education-professional-studies/

Table 24

Mississippi College Educational Leadership and Administration Course Outline

Degree	Courses
M.Ed.	EDU 6517 - Introduction to Administrator Preparation
	EDU 6518 - Personal/Interpersonal Dimension of Leadership
	EDU 65261 - Instructional Dimension of Leadership - Part I
	EDU 65262 - Instructional Dimension of Leadership - Part II
	EDU 6527 - Organizational Dimension of Educational Leadership
	EDU 6532 - Resource Dimension of Leadership
	EDU 6533 - Information Management Dimension of Leadership
	EDU 6534 - Political Dimension of Leadership
	EDU 65361 - Focused Internship - Part I
	EDU 65362 - Focused Internship - Part II
	EDU 6553 - School Law
Ed.S.	EDU 7499 - Intro to Ed Leadership in the ED Specialist Program
	EDU 6505 - Engaged Learning
	EDU 6520 - Basics of Effective Leadership
	EDU 6521 - Organizational School and Community Effectiveness
	EDU 7500 - Directed Research Project Continuation for Advanced Educational Research Applications
	EDU 7501 - Advanced Educational Research Applications
	EDU 7530 - Issues and Concepts of Personnel Management

Table 24 Continued

Degree	Courses
	EDU 7531 - Seminar in Current Educational Leadership Dilemmas
	EDU 7540 - Basics of School Finance and Fiscal Control of Schools
	EDU 7541 - Legal Structures & Legal Issues Pertaining to School Operations
	EDU 75254 - Internship in Legal Issues
	EDU 7545 - Statistical Methods and Testing
	EDU 7561 - Data-Driven Decision-Making
	EDU 75258 - Internship in Data-Driven Decisions
	EDU 7550 - Central Office Roles and Functions
	EDU 75255 - Central Office Roles and Functions Practicum
	EDU 7527 - Leadership Models and Applications
	EDU 75251 - Personnel Management Practicum
Ed.D.	EDU 6505 - Engaged Learning
	EDU 6520 - Basics of Effective Leadership
	EDU 6521 - Organizational School and Community Effectiveness
	EDU 7530 - Issues and Concepts of Personnel Management
	EDU 7531 - Seminar in Current Educational Leadership Dilemmas
	EDU 7540 - Basics of School Finance and Fiscal Control of Schools
	EDU 7541 - Legal Structures & Legal Issues Pertaining to School Operations
	EDU 7601 - Comparative Philosophies of Education

Table 24 Continued

Degree	Courses
	EDU 7561 - Data-Driven Decision-Making
	EDU 8120 - Faith, Ethics, and Social Issues in Educational Leadership
	EDU 8125 - Multiculturalism and Diversity
	EDU 813 - Instructional Supervision
	EDU 8135 - Curriculum Planning and School Improvement
	PSY 6505 - Intermediate Statistics
	EDU 7501 - Advanced Educational Research Applications
	EDU 7606 - Advanced Statistics
	EDU 7710 - Qualitative and Quantitative Research Designs in Education
	EDU 8880 - Dissertation (Minimum of 12 hours)

Note: Adapted from Mississippi College Online Graduate Catalogs

https://www.mc.edu/academics/departments/education/graduate-programs/master-education/educational-leadership-med

https://www.mc.edu/academics/departments/education/graduate-programs/education-specialist

https://www.mc.edu/academics/departments/education/graduate-programs/doctor-of-education

Table 25

William Carey University Educational Leadership and Administration Course Outline

Degree	Courses
M.Ed.	**Landscape or Trimester One**
	EDL 601 - Organizational Leadership
	EDL 602 - Roles of the Principal
	Landscape or Trimester Two
	EDL 604 - Data-Driven Instruction
	EDL 617 - Human and Student Diversity
	EDL 635 - Practicum and Internship
	Landscape or Trimester Three
	EDL 605 - Human Resources Management
	EDL 607 - Instructional Leadership
	EDL 635 - Practicum and Internship (II)
	Landscape or Trimester Four
	EDL 606 - Judicial and Ethics Considerations
	EDL 608 - Best Practices
	EDL 635 - Practicum and Internship (III)
	Landscape or Trimester Five
	EDL 609 - School Site Business Management
	EDL 688 - School Community Climates

Table 25 Continued

Degree	Courses
Ed.S.	**Landscape or Trimester One**
	EDL 601 - Organizational Leadership
	EDL 602 - Roles of the Principal
	Landscape or Trimester Two
	EDL 604 - Data-Driven Instruction
	EDL 617 - Human and Student Diversity
	EDL 635 - Practicum and Internship
	Landscape or Trimester Three
	EDL 605 - Human Resources Management
	RSH 702 - APA Style for Professional Writing
	EDL 635 - Practicum and Internship (II)
	Landscape or Trimester Four
	EDL 606 - Judicial and Ethics Considerations
	EDL 789 - Educational Unit Self-Study through Assessment Inquiry Research
	EDL 635 - Practicum and Internship (III)
	Landscape or Trimester Five
	EDL 609 - School Site Business Management
	EDL 688 - School Community Climates

Table 25 Continued

Degree	Courses
Ed.D.	**Trimester 1**
	EDL 732 - Effective Data Analysis for Instructional and Performance Improvement Using Technology Tools
	EDL 801 - Professional Educational Development for Professional Educators
	Trimester 2
	EDL 830 - Developing the Culture of Learning
	EDL 826 - Advanced Applied Research (Developing Your Design)
	Trimester 3
	EDL 834 - Using Conflict Resolution and Mediation
	EDL 811 - Research in Educational Administration I
	EDL 840 - Applied Doctoral Research
	EDL 9000 - Comprehensive Exam
	Trimester 4
	RSH 740 - Survey Design, Descriptive Statistics, and Evaluation
	EDL 812 - Research in Educational Administration II
	EDL 840 - Applied Doctoral Research
	Trimester 5
	EDL 813 - Research in Educational Administration III
	EDL 840 - Applied Doctoral Research
	Trimester 6
	EDL 814 - Research in Educational Administration IV

Table 25 Continued

Degree	Courses
	Trimester 7
	EDL 815 - Research in Educational Administration V
	EDL 840 - Applied Doctoral Research
	Trimester 8
	EDL 832 - Developing Advocacy for the School and Community
Ed.D. Pathway to P-12	**Trimester 1**
	EDL 602 - Roles of the Principal
	EDL 609 - School Site Business Management
	Trimester 2
	EDL 732 - Effective Data Analysis for Instructional and Performance Improvement Using Technology Tools
	EDL 801 - Professional Educational Development for Professional Educators
	EDL 605 - Human Resources Management
	Trimester 3
	EDL 830 - Developing the Culture of Learning
	EDL 826 - Advanced Applied Research (Developing Your Design)
	EDL 606 - Judicial and Ethics Considerations
	Trimester 4
	EDL 834 - Using Conflict Resolution and Mediation
	EDL 811 - Research in Educational Administration I

Table 25 Continued

Degree	Courses
	EDL 840 - Applied Doctoral Research
	EDL 9000 - Comprehensive Exam
	Trimester 5
	RSH 740 - Survey Design, Descriptive Statistics, and Evaluation
	EDL 812 - Research in Educational Administration II
	EDL 840 Applied Doctoral Research
	Trimester 6
	EDL 813 - Research in Educational Administration III
	EDL 840 - Applied Doctoral Research
	Trimester 7
	EDL 814 - Research in Educational Administration IV
	Trimester 8
	EDL 815 - Research in Educational Administration V
	EDL 840 - Applied Doctoral Research
	Trimester 9
	EDL 832 - Developing Advocacy for the School and Community

Note: Adapted from William Carey University Online Graduate Catalogs

http://catalog.wmcarey.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=7&poid=442&returnto=128

http://catalog.wmcarey.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=7&poid=447&returnto=128

http://catalog.wmcarey.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=9&poid=624&returnto=177

http://catalog.wmcarey.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=7&poid=481&returnto=128

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