ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:	EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MIDDLE SCHOOL INCLUSION IN ENGLISH CLASSES
	Gwendolyn J. Mason, Doctor of Education, 2014
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The inclusion of students with disabilities and the increasing demands in public education including the nation's changing economics, racial and ethnic diversity, complex social environments and increased accountability for student academic achievement have impacted the role of principal leadership. Today, principals face increasing demands to create an environment that supports the needs of all students (Burdette, 2010). Middle school principals in particular have the responsibility of addressing these new varied issues while leading in a variety of subject areas. This mixed-method study was designed to explore the perceptions of middle school principals, grade 6 English general education teachers and grade 6 special education teachers regarding the effective leadership practices of middle school principals' implementation of inclusion in grade 6 English classes.

The conceptual framework of Powell's (2004) School Leadership Survey and its five domains was used to collect the data in the quantitative phase of the study. These data were collected by survey responses from middle school principals, grade 6 general

education English teachers and grade 6 special education teachers. The quantitative phase of this study was conducted in 38 middle schools in a single school district in the mid-Atlantic United States.

The results of the quantitative study indicated that there were no statistically significant differences among the three groups: middle school principals, grade 6 general education English teachers and grade 6 special education teachers, whether in the early or later implementation phase. The means for the principals, although not statistically significantly different, were generally higher than those of the two groups of teachers. The grade 6 general education English teachers and the grade 6 special education teachers had very similar means on the effective leadership behavior and practices of the principals.

The qualitative aspect of this study found agreement among the middle school principals which was consistent with the quantitative findings of the study. The interview probes used in a focus group were based on information gathered in the quantitative part of the study and the review of the literature on inclusion.

The effective leadership behaviors and practices of the principal are essential for the inclusion of students with disabilities. Further research is recommended to gain deeper insight in the effective leadership practices of principals who include students with disabilities from the sole perspectives of general education teachers. In addition, future research should examine principal preparation programs and their impact on leading in the area of special education and inclusion.

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL

LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF

MIDDLE SCHOOL INCLUSION IN ENGLISH CLASSES

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my late mother, Mrs. Grace Branch Jackson, who was the *Wind Beneath My Wings*. Her exemplary attributes of strength, courage, tenacity and most importantly her unyielding faith in God enabled me to endure and persevere throughout this process. Although she did not live to see me complete this aspect of my life, on Friday, March 7, 2003, the last Friday she and I would talk, she knew that I had mailed my application to the University of Maryland on that day in order to pursue my lifelong dream of earning my doctoral degree. This dissertation is also dedicated to my sons, Gerald H. Mason, Jr. and Jared Christopher Mason. You have been a source of great joy to me since the day you were born. May my example inspire you to always pursue your dreams, remain steadfast and be of good courage. I also dedicate this dissertation to my aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Silver. You have been by my side unconditionally throughout my entire life. Aunt El, you have been my guardian angel.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my cousins: Joyce Branch Barnes, William Branch, LeGale Branch Buck and children, Dr. Bryon Branch and Barkley Orlando Williams for your love and encouragement. May this accomplishment reflect the rich legacy of the descendents of Otha and Lucinda Branch.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Today, principals face increasing demands to create a learning environment that supports the needs of all students (Burdette, 2010). In recent years, public education in the United States has seen an evolution in the responsibilities associated with today's principal (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Serby, 2010). School leaders are facing new and greater challenges, including increased accountability for student academic achievement; complex social environments that reflect the nation's changing economics, racial and ethnic diversity; and a constantly changing educational landscape with new technology and limited resources (Shelton, 2010). In the 1950s, in William Whyte's book, *The Organization Man*, the principal was defined as a middle manager, an overseer of buses, boilers and books. In the early 1970s a report issued by the United States Senate Committee on Equal Opportunity identified the principal as the single most influential person in a school as outlined below:

> In many ways the school principal is the most influential individual in any school. He is the person responsible for all activities that occur in and around the school building. It is the principal that sets the tone of the school, the climate for teaching, the level of professionalism and morale of teachers, and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become. The principal is the learning link between the community and the school, and the way he or she performs in this capacity largely determines the attitudes of parents and students about the school. If a school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centered place, if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost point to the principal's leadership as the key to the success. (p. 56)

1

In 2008, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) developed the comprehensive standards for school leaders for the purpose of providing standardization and guidance regarding effective instructional leaders. The ISLLC standards designed to provide the framework and guide for leadership are girded with the underlying tenet of promoting success for every student. These standards are important in an era of special education reform; principals must lead for all students to have equal access and the opportunity to be included and educated in the general education environment to the maximum extent appropriate.

In 2010 a team of leading researchers at the University of Minnesota and the University of Toronto conducted a survey regarding principal leadership. The study revealed there is an empirical link between school leadership and improved student achievement (Louis et al, 2010, p.37). According to the results of the study, leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that affect student learning in school (Louis, Leithwood, Whalstrom, & Anderson, 2010).

Principals can no longer simply function as building managers, tasked with adhering to district rules, carrying regulations and avoiding mistakes. Today, principals have to be (or become) leaders of learning who can develop a team delivering effective instruction (Wallace, 2011). Federal efforts such as *Race to the Top* are emphasizing the importance of effective principals in boosting teaching and learning (Wallace, 2011). The shift in the role of the principal from manager to instructional leader is significant and represents a dramatic change in the field of education. The principal remains the central source of leadership influence (Wallace, 2011). Effective school leadership is undoubtedly a catalyst to school reform (Shelton, 2011).

Middle School and Inclusive Practices

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA) reformed federal special education law by ending the traditional focus on a student's disability and

attending to the individual needs of students instead. No longer was the parallel system of education between students with disabilities and non-disabled peers acceptable.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) increased the principal's instructional leadership responsibilities by charging principals with responsibility for ensuring that students with disabilities receive academic and/or social instruction in the least restrictive environment (Lynch, 2012). As students move from elementary school to secondary school, the demands on their ability to learn subject matter increase dramatically (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Norland, Berkeley, McDuffie, Tornquist, & Connors, 2006). Therefore, middle school principals have responsibility for leading instruction in a wide variety of subjects (Cole, 1999; Kirkpatrick et al., 2001). As the middle school principal embarks upon the challenge of leading in a variety of subject areas, he/she faces the demands of implementing the regulatory statute which requires students with disabilities to have access to the general education environment to the maximum extent appropriate. Inclusion is defined as the education of students with disabilities in classrooms with non-disabled peers (McLaughlin, 1998, p 19). The mandate to provide more inclusive opportunities has generated public and political debate, particularly among principals and the parent community; subsequently this generates the need to examine the effective leadership characteristics of middle school principals who implement inclusive practices.

Inclusion is based upon the premise that school districts must ensure the provision of services for students with disabilities, including those with severe disabilities, in their neighborhood schools, with age-appropriate peers and the necessary supports and supplemental services. Inclusion is not just a place or a method of delivering instruction; it is a philosophy that undergirds the entire educational system (Wood 2006).

Inclusion should be part of the culture of a middle school, as is also true at other school levels. It defines how students, teachers, administrators, parents and others view the potential of children (National Association of State Boards of Education, 1990). The

3

goal of inclusion is to create an educational environment that embraces the philosophy that all children, including children with disabilities, have the right to be educated in their neighborhood school among typically developing peers.

Proponents of inclusive education believe the performance outcomes of students with disabilities will improve significantly in an inclusive environment because of access to the general education curriculum. This is based on the idea that the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education setting will result in the meaningful participation of these students in regular education classroom and programs (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, p. 73). As the nation moves toward inclusive practices, the role of the middle school principal as an instructional leader must be further examined to identify the characteristics of effective leadership that promote inclusive practices.

Statement of the Problem

The policies, practices and expectations associated with educating students with disabilities have changed significantly over the past 20 years, resulting in the need for the type of leadership that fully understands the philosophy of inclusive practices. Competing demands are putting pressure on schools to be both equitable and excellent at meeting the needs of all students (McLesky & Waldron, 2011). Research suggests, however, that most principals lack the formal training and field experience needed to lead local efforts to create a learning environment that emphasizes academic success for students with disabilities (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Katsiyannis, Conderman & Franks, 1996; Parker & Day, 1997). Evidence is beginning to emerge regarding the important role that the principal can play in the development of inclusive schools (Lynch, 2012). Although that evidence provides some sign into the principal's role in developing inclusive schools, little detailed information is available regarding how principals support schools as they become both effective and inclusive (Lynch, 2011). As a result, it is believed that the beliefs and attitudes of principals toward special education are key

4

factors in implementing inclusive services (Garrison-Wade, Sobel, Fulmer, & Connie, 2007). Subsequently, further research and an examination of the effective leadership characteristics can contribute significantly to the body of research about the qualities of leadership that are required to implement inclusive practices at the middle school level in the content subject area of English.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed method study was to use quantitative and qualitative methodology to compare the leadership behaviors and practices of middle school principals who promote inclusion for students with disabilities in grade 6 English classes. The study examined and compared the leadership behaviors and practices of middle school principals who implemented inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities during the initial and latter phases of the school system's plan to increase the percentage of students educated in their neighborhood middle school.

The researcher used Powell's (2004) five domains of effective leadership behaviors and practices (e.g., vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management) as the framework for examining and comparing effective leadership behaviors and practices of principals. Powell's work is discussed more fully in the section on conceptual framework. This mixed method study also examined and compared the perspective of grade 6 English general and special education inclusion teachers on the behaviors and practices of principals who implement inclusion. Due to the percentage of students with disabilities receiving access to special education services and supports to address reading and writing skills, the content area of English was selected for this study.

This study also used focus group interviews as a method to obtain information about principals' leadership behavior and practices that may not be available through

general quantitative research methods. The researcher prepared a series of probes to guide the focus group discussions.

The District-Wide Plan to Include Students with Disabilities in Moore County

During the 2006–2007 school year, the department of special education in a large urban school district examined its data regarding the percentage of students with disabilities included in general education classrooms. The data indicated that the vast majority of self-contained special education classrooms consisted of African American and Hispanic boys. Secondly, the percentage of students in self-contained classrooms exceeded state and federal targets. According to federal and state laws regarding the provision of services for students with disabilities, local school districts are required to ensure 80% of students with disabilities receive access to services in the general education environment. Failure to adhere to these federal and state requirements may adversely impact the funding a school district receives to provide services to students with disabilities.

The department of special education in collaboration with the executive leadership staff and the board of education of the district agreed to implement a plan to annually transition approximately 50 students with disabilities who were previously enrolled in self-contained elementary classrooms known as Learning Centers to their neighborhood middle schools for service in the general education environment to the maximum extent appropriate.

Middle school principals immediately expressed concerns regarding their capacity to ensure their staff could support these students. Questions were raised about the need for resources, professional development for general and special education teachers, collaboration and common planning time for staff, and most importantly, how to change the attitudes and mind sets of teachers and school-based administrators toward inclusion.

Many members in the community, including parents and political officials, were apprehensive about this plan. They expressed their concerns, fears and doubts about the ability of middle school principals to ensure that the needs of this select group of special education students would be met. Many of the middle school principals questioned their own capacity to address the needs of these students and recognized they needed support from central office staff to meet this new and progressive goal of the district. In response, the department of special education, in collaboration with the office of curriculum and instructional programs and the office of staff development, developed an extensive action plan outlining the need for mandatory professional development for all general and special education teachers required to instruct and assess students with disabilities in the general education environment who were formerly instructed in self-contained classes. The plan's extensive and detailed outline appeared to address the initial concerns of the community at large, but it clearly failed in one area. Prior to the implementation of this proposed plan, principals had not been required to attend any professional development activities, yet the expectation was clear that as instructional leaders, they would be responsible for ensuring the provision of services for students with disabilities typically educated in self-contained classrooms. If the school system was going to implement this initiative, the role of each middle school principal would be key. The school system had already embarked upon a middle school reform initiative, focusing on the role of the principal and the adolescent learner. Now the middle school principals were tasked with the responsibility of using their knowledge, skills and strong leadership to include students with disabilities.

The implementation of inclusive practices in middle schools in a large school district provided an opportunity to examine and compare the behaviors and practices of principals who implement inclusive practices. The literature review clearly delineates the position that the principal's role, which has evolved as an instructional leader over the past thirty years, is pivotal to ensure the delivery of inclusive services for students with

disabilities. The body of research on the influence of the principal in implementing inclusive practices is limited, but the body of research regarding the importance of the role of the principal as an instructional leader is extensive.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were intended to ascertain whether there are differences in the perceptions of principals, middle school grade 6 English and special education teachers, both early implementers and late implementers, on the five domains of effective behaviors and practices of leadership identified by Powell (e.g., vision, mission and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction, collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement and effective management). Specifically, the following research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1

From the perspective of principals of middle schools identified as implementing inclusion classes, are there differences in their perceptions about the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), between school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

Statistical Hypothesis 1

From the perspective of principals of middle schools identified as implementing inclusion classes, there are no statistically significant mean differences in their perceptions about the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), between school years

8

2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation).

Research Question 2

      From the perspective of grade 6 English general education teachers, are there differences in perceptions of leadership regarding the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

Statistical Hypothesis 2

      From the perspective of grade 6 English general education teachers, there are no statistically significant mean differences in perceptions of leadership regarding the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation).

Research Question 3

      From the perspective of grade 6 special education teachers, are there differences in perceptions about the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

Statistical Hypothesis 3

From the perspective of grade 6 special education teachers, there are no statistically significant mean differences in perceptions of leadership regarding the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation).

Research Question 4

What are the curriculum and instructional issues faced by middle school principals, grade 6 general education English teachers and grade 6 special education teachers responsible for providing leadership regarding the instruction of students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) compared to school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation).

Research Question 5

What are the professional development issues faced by middle school principals, grade 6 general education English teachers and grade 6 special education teachers responsible for providing leadership regarding the instruction of students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) compared to school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

This study was designed using a mixed-methods approach. This method brought into play both quantitative and qualitative research techniques, and allowed for triangulation of the data from multiple sources. Quantitative survey results were analyzed using a descriptive statistical method that identified the differences in the five domains of effective leadership as they related to the Powell study (2004). Differences between the

principals', English teachers', and special education teachers' opinions about their needs regarding the implementation and programming of inclusive practices for students with disabilities and the relationship of operating an effective inclusive school were also analyzed. Thirty-eight middle school principals were interviewed. Approximately 78 middle school grade 6 English coteaching teams were surveyed. The survey was designed to solicit responses easily.

The Potential Significance of the Study

This study was designed to fill the void in the literature by identifying the leadership behaviors and practices that will affect the implementation of inclusive practices for students with disabilities in middle school. The body of research on a principal's influence in implementing inclusive practices is limited, while the body of research regarding the importance of the role of the principal as an instructional leader is more extensive. Previous studies conducted by McLeod (2008) and Pamas (2006) examined the behaviors and practices of middle schools principals as it related to mathematics achievement (McLeod, 2008) and at-risk students in middle school (Pamas, 2006). Both researchers based their studies on the work of Powell (2004); however, it remains unclear if the leadership behaviors and practices identified will foster the implementation of inclusive practices in middle school.

This study contributed to the research on the middle school principal as an instructional leader. Most importantly, this study was an attempt to provide in-depth insight into the behaviors and practices of middle school principals who include students with disabilities.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study focused upon the role of the principal and the perspective that leadership behaviors and practices influence the attainment of

effective schools. Powell (2004) developed the conceptual framework regarding effective leadership behaviors and practices for principals based upon extensive research and conducting a case study. According to Powell, "an effective principal influences and impacts every aspect of the school" (p.5). Powell further states, "the behaviors and practices of the principal influence the key domain, the vision of the school. The school vision is crucial and is essential in guiding the school toward success" (p. 5). Powell identified five effective school leadership domains. Powell developed a survey and interview questions to assess the principal's leadership behaviors and practices in the five domains. The five domains of effective leadership behaviors and practices include: (a) vision, mission and culture; (b) curriculum and classroom instruction; (c) collaboration and shared leadership; (d) family and community involvement; and (e) effective management. According to Powell, "the principal is the key component of a successful school, and without a strong principal, who is able to deeply and profoundly influence all the areas listed above through behaviors and practices, a successful school is not possible or probable" (p. 5). Figure 1 and Table 1 outline the conceptual framework of Powell's model that was used in this study.

Powell's study concluded that principals' vision for school success impacts three domains: (1) vision, mission and culture; (2) curriculum and classroom instruction; and (3) collaboration and shared leadership. These domains, according to Powell, influence and impact the two remaining domains of family involvement and effective management on effective principals. McLeod (2008) replicated Powell's study and examined and analyzed the study's findings but applied it to middle schools principals. McLeod (2008) concluded that middle school principals with strong vision yielded better student achievement results than middle school principals for whom the school's vision was not clear. His findings in this area correlated with the results found by Powell. Pamas (2006) also replicated Powell's study and examined the behaviors and practices of middle school

principals. Pamas (2006) had similar findings and concluded that "the principal's vision is important to generate school success" (p. 86).

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│  Behaviors and Practices of │
│     School Principals       │
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│  Domains of the Principal – │
│  Principal's Personal Vision │
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│ Vision, Mission │   │ Family and Community │   │      Curriculum       │
│   & Culture    │   │    Involvement     │   │ Classroom Instruction │
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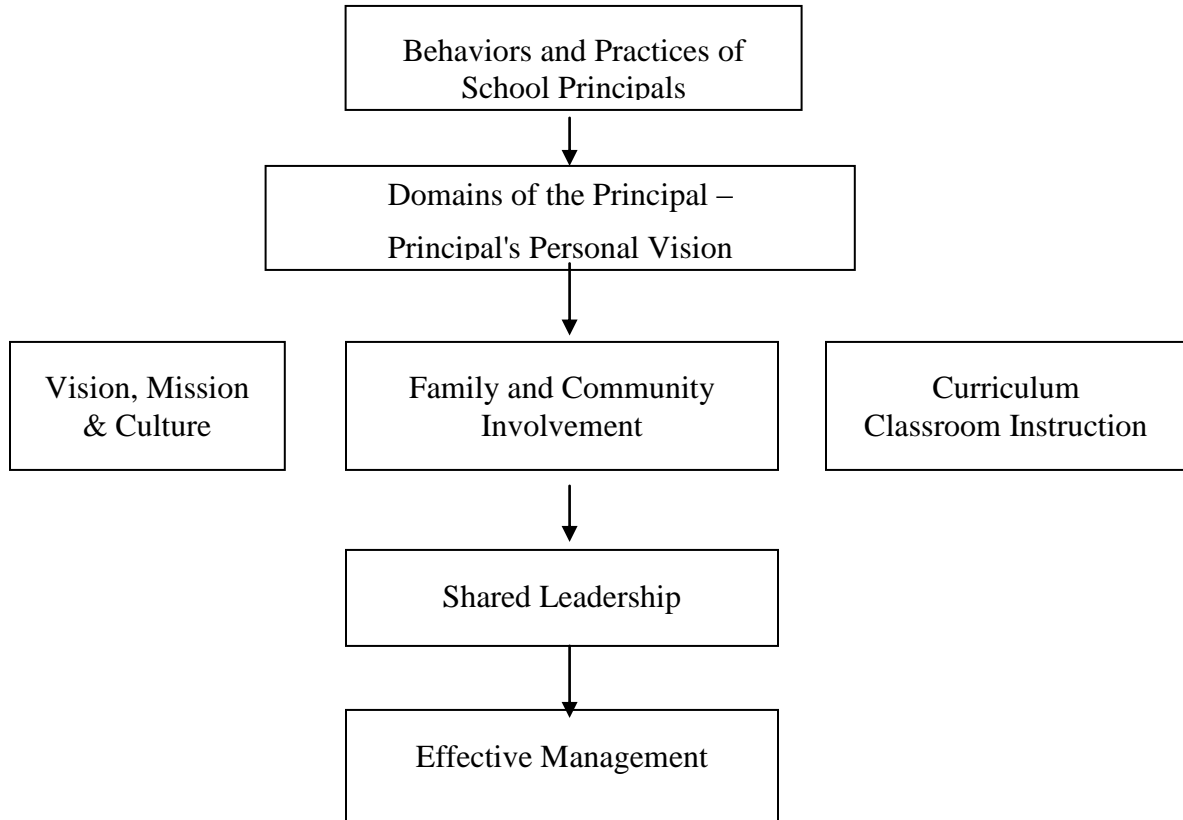
Figure 1. Powell's (2004) Conceptual Framework

Table 1

Domains and Examples of Principal Leadership Practices

Domains	Examples of Principals' Leadership Behaviors and Practices
Vision, Mission, Culture	- Provides a vision that's embraced by others - Makes student achievement a high priority/mission of the school - Treats staff as professionals - Treats all stakeholders with respect - Leads ethically - Highly visible throughout the school - Knows and calls students by name - Celebrates successes frequently and openly - Visits classrooms regularly - Provides a nurturing environment for students and teachers

Table 1 (continued)

Domains and Examples of Principal Leadership Practices

Domains	Examples of Principals' Leadership Practices
Curriculum and Classroom Instruction	- Teaches lessons in classrooms - Makes student learning a high priority - Knows curriculum and recognizes good teaching - Encourages and provides opportunities for staff development - Ensures special programs and resources are in place to meet the needs of all learners - Makes academic decisions on his/her own at times
Collaboration and Shared Leadership	- Elicits teacher input regarding academic decisions and the purchase of instructional resources - Involves staff in analyzing school data and developing the school's improvement plan - Ensures teacher participation in the hiring process of new teachers - Encourages and supports teacher leadership - Encourages teacher participation in the decision-making process
Family and Community Involvement	- Hires staff to reflect school's diversity - Makes all feel welcome, comfortable and appreciated (i.e., personally greets students and parents as they enter the school or assigns a staff member to do so) - Keeps parents informed about student expectations - Creates open lines of communication between home and school (i.e., sends home weekly newsletters, meets frequently with parents, provides translators as needed, etc.) - Encourages parental and community involvement (i.e., fosters partnerships with local businesses, encourages voluntarism, etc.) - Removes barriers to communication (i.e., newsletters in more than one language)
Effective Management	- Effectively manages school budget - Is resourceful (i.e., acquires funds via grants, businesses, central office, etc.) - Remains focused on instruction (i.e., delegates behavioral and social issues) - Implements an effective discipline plan - Ensures minimal classroom interruptions

The studies conducted by Nelson and Pamas using Powell's conceptual framework yielded information that has significance regarding understanding the importance of the principal's influence on effective schools, particularly schools serving at-risk students or schools that fail to achieve or meet state performance targets.

Although Powell's study examined the behaviors and practices of elementary principals; and Nelson (2008) and Pamas (2006), using Powell's conceptual framework, examined the behaviors and practices of middle school principals, neither study examined the impact principals' behaviors and practices have on leading and promoting inclusive practices in a middle school. This study using Powell's conceptual framework determined if the domains identified by Powell regarding effective leadership behaviors and practices as outlined in Table 1 promoted the implementation of inclusive practices in middle school.

<center>Definitions of Terms</center>

Co-teaching is defined as the instructional practice that involves two teachers sharing curriculum, planning, teaching and other classroom responsibilities equally. (NICHCY, 2007).

English Class – A course or individual class in the study of the English language, literature or composition (Online Free Dictionary, 2013).

General Education Environment - The general education classroom consists primarily of typically developing peers (J. Webster, 2010).

Inclusive Schools- Inclusive education is defined as the education of students with disabilities in classrooms with non-disabled peers (McLaughlin, 1998)

Middle School is defined as a secondary educational experience for adolescents in grades 6-8 (Wikipedia, 2013).

Self-Contained Classes/Environments – Located within a regular education school, a full day or mostly full day class or program for children with disabilities, usually composed of children in the same categorical grouping who cannot be educated appropriately in a regular classroom; characterized by highly individualized; closely supervised specially designed instruction (ed.com glossary, 2013).

<center>15</center>

Special Education is defined as a set of coordinated specialized instructional strategies and techniques designed to enable students with disabilities access to the curriculum (NICHCY, 2010).

Limitations

1. The findings of this study were limited by design due to the focus on middle schools in one county in the mid-Atlantic region.

2. The findings of this study were limited due to the fact that the school district is currently entering into its third year of implementation of the plan to include students with disabilities formerly served in self-contained settings. Changes in school-based principal assignments have also occurred since the first year the school's plan was implemented which may result in a range of needs identified by the principals.

3. The findings of this study were limited due to changes in teacher personnel. Teachers assigned to English coteaching classrooms may change annually due to professional or personal reasons.

4. The findings of this study were limited because the researcher is the director of special education in a large suburban school district that has the responsibility of working with middle school principals to increase inclusive practices countywide. To limit bias, the researcher sought the assistance of researchers with expertise to develop the survey and collect and analyze the data.

1.   The study was bound to leadership practices of middle school principals.

2.   The study concentrated on the leadership practices of middle school principals in a mid-Atlantic county. This study did not focus on elementary, high school or secondary non-public school principals.

3.   To limit bias, the researcher used multiple methods of collecting data and did not lead the focus groups.

The Organization of the Study

In Chapter I of this study, the context and an overview of the problem are introduced. The research and methodology framing how the problem was studied are described in Chapter II. The literature review highlights the research on the role of the principal and its impact on the delivery of special education instruction in an inclusive environment. The literature review illuminates the problems that principals face given the expectation that they must serve as the instructional leader for all students, including students with disabilities formerly served in self-contained classrooms. Chapter III outlined the mixed-method approach used. The schools and principals selected to participate in this study are identified; the description of the survey and data collection procedures are discussed. The remaining chapters, four and five, discuss the results of the study, provide an analysis of the data and discuss the implications for present and future local school districts moving toward more inclusive practices and effective leadership at the middle school level.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Leadership

For decades, principals have been recognized as important contributors to the effectiveness of schools (Rice, 2010). In an era of school accountability, reform and shared decision making and management of schools, leadership matters (Rice, 2010). Effective principals influence a variety of school outcomes, including student achievement, through their recruitment and motivation of quality teachers, their ability to identify and articulate school vision and goals, their effective allocation of resources, and their development of organizational structures to support instruction and learning (Horng, Kologrides, & Loeb, 2009, 1).

A principal must serve as an organizational leader and most importantly, is expected to be an instructional leader, meaning the principal must possess the knowledge and instructional skills to guide teaching and learning in a school (Rice, 2010). The significance of the role of the principal as an instructional leader who is accountable for ensuring effective teaching and learning practices that promote academic achievement for all students, including students with disabilities, demands further examination.

As a result of research on this topic, *House Bill 627, The Instructional Leader Act of 2012* was enacted by the United States House of Representatives and defines instructional leadership as the means to help teachers teach and students learn. The influence of this bill and the research regarding the role of the principal as an instructional leader are linked to the current reform effort *Race to the Top,* which requires principals to ensure all students graduate from high school career and college ready in the 21st century. It is evident that in an era of accountability, the role of the principal as an instructional leader is pivotal to ensure school success.

Since 2000, The Wallace Foundation has suggested the five key responsibilities the principal as an instructional leader must possess:

- Shaping a vision of academic success for all students, one based on high standards.
- Creating a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail.
- Cultivating leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their part in the realizing of the school vision.
- Improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn at their utmost.
- Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement.

The role of the principal as an instructional leader is further validated by the results of a study conducted by researchers at the University of Minnesota and the University of Toronto. According to this study, "there is an empirical link between school leadership and improved student achievement" (The Wallace Foundation, 2012). The University of Minnesota and the University of Toronto study provides credible evidence that links the role of the principal as an instructional leader who promotes student achievement. The question remains, what are the effective leadership practices and behaviors that contribute to teaching and learning strategies that promote inclusion for students with disabilities?

Recently, the concept of distributed leadership has also been at the forefront of school literature (Angelle, 2010). Distributed leadership is "the sharing, the spreading and the distributing of leadership work across individuals and roles across the school organization" (Smylie, Mayrowetz, Murphy, & Seashore Louis, 2007, p. 470). Distributed leadership correlates with the third key responsibility of a principal as an instructional leader as referenced in the *Wallace Foundation Report* (DATE).

In response to these new responsibilities, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) created a new set of standards for principals. The consortium, consisting of national educational organizations including the National Association of Secondary Principals, revised the standards in 2008. The standards recommend principals have knowledge of

- Principles of effective leadership

- Curriculum design, implementation, evaluation, refinement

- Principles related to implementing a strategic plan

- Information sources, data collection and data analysis strategies

- How to inspire others and the vision that all children can learn at high levels. (Grossman, 2011)

Although research indicates that the principal is an instructional leader, educational leadership remains a complex topic and continues to require examination. Educational leadership is not easily defined (Roddy, 2012). Educational leadership is a relationship between educational leaders, instructional staff and students intended to:

- Create opportunities for the exploration and sharing of knowledge

- Influence real changes about the value of life-long learning. (Roddy, 2010)

Questions about what specific form of leadership is best to bring about change to the educational environment has been studied and researched over time. One of the theories regarding leadership is transformational leadership. The theory of transformational leadership was first proposed by James McGregor Burns in 1978. Burns focused on transformational leadership from a political and business perspective.

Leithwood and his colleagues created the most complete model of educational transformational leadership. A collaborative effort by Leithwood and others to define transformational leadership eventually evolved into an interpretation of three categories and nine practices of transformational leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). The first category, setting direction, is evident in a leader's ability to demonstrate competencies in

the three practices of building a vision, developing specific goals and priorities and conveying Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2006). The second category, developing people, includes the three practices of providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized supports, and modeling desirable professional practices and values (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005: Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2006). The final category created by Leithwood and his colleagues is redesigning the organization. It includes three practices of developing a collaborative school culture, creating structures which foster participation in school decisions, and creating, productive community relationships (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2006).

In 1999, Leithwood linked instructional leadership to transformational leadership because "it aspires, more generally, to increase members' efforts on behalf of the organization, as well as develop more skilled practice" (p. 19). Over the past 20 years, instructional leadership is the term most frequently used to describe the role of the principal to the academic environment (Wallace 2012).

The Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) (2012) serves as the guide for school leaders and districts in Canada. It embodies current research regarding school and district leadership over the past six years. OLF (2012) defines leadership as the exercise of influence on organizational vision and goals. Leadership is successful when it makes significant and positive contributions to the progress of the organization, and is ethical (supportive and facilitative rather than persuasive, manipulative or coercive). According to the OLF 2012, report, leaders have the capacity to:

- Build a shared vision
- Identify specific, shared short and long term goals
- Create high expectations

School leaders are pivotal to the development of excellent teaching, excellent schools and ultimately enhanced student achievement and well-being (OLF, 2012).

As the research affirms the importance of the role of the principal toward excellent teaching, excellent schools and enhanced student achievement; research in the area of the role of the principal in promoting effective practices for students with disabilities is paramount. Principals today are responsible for enhancing student achievement for all students, including students with disabilities, by promoting inclusive practices and access to the general education environment. The vision of principals is also supported in the work by Supovitz, Sirnides, and May (2010) who believe that one of the most important roles for a principal is to focus on the mission, vision, and goals of a school organization.

Further study about the role of the principal as an effective instructional leader was conducted by Powell in 2006. Powell examined the effective practices and characteristics of principals who lead in at-risk schools. The vision of the principal is paramount and primary (Powell, 2006, p. 125). The vision of the principal impacts the domain of Vision, Mission, and Culture and the domain of Family Involvement and Curriculum and Classroom instruction equally. These data suggest that neither domain dominates the other or is more important. They must work together for school success (Powell, 2006). The conceptual framework of this study is based upon the findings by Powell.

Middle School and School Leadership

Middle school is defined as the bridge between elementary and high school that serves students between the ages of 11 and 16. Middle grades education is grounded in the vision and hope that schools will be staffed by collaborative administrators and educators who understand the culture and learning structures best suited to meet the needs of this age group (National Middle School Association (NMSA), 2010).

The Association for Middle Level Education, formerly the National Middle School Association, completed a position paper entitled, *This We Believe: Key to*

Educating Young Adolescents (2010). The paper has an overarching framework of four essential attributes that connect with 16 research-based characteristics of successful middle schools. The essential attributes that a middle school must possess in order to effectively educate this population of students are:

- Developmentally responsive
- Challenging
- Empowering
- Equitable

This We Believe: Key to Educating Young Adolescents (2010) organized the 16 effective characteristics of successful middle schools into three areas: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; Leadership and Organization; and Culture and Concept. The category of Leadership and Organization as it relates to the role of the principal, according to this position paper, must demonstrate the following behaviors and practices:

- A shared vision developed by all stakeholders guides every decision
- Commitment to and are knowledgeable about the age group, education research and best practices
- Demonstrate courage and collaboration
- Provide on-going professional development reflects best educational practices
- Ensure organization structures foster purposeful learning and meaningful relationships

Despite research on middle school level education in general, only two national studies exist on the middle school leader (Gale, 2011). The National Association of Secondary Principals (NASSP, 2006, p. 7) concluded that middle school principals arrive to the position with little or no prior administrative expertise on the middle level issues. Prior to the NASSP study, Valentine and colleagues (2004) examined and compared 1,400 principals in NASSP to 98 NASSP principals in highly successful schools. The

study revealed that approximately twice as many highly successful principals had majored in middle level education at the master's, specialist, or doctoral level. Principals in highly effective schools were identified as more knowledgeable about middle school practices.

Clark and Clark (2008) examined the role of the middle school leadership through the lens of accountability. They outlined three areas linked to the accountability of middle grade leaders:

- Personal and Professional - Principals are accountable for increasing their knowledge about middle level practices and issues
- Ethnical Accountability - Knowledge about effective leadership practices specific to developmentally appropriate programming for adolescents
- Political Accountability - Middle school leaders recognize and address the expectations of stakeholders, but are not restricted to state and district mandates

It is clear that the body of literature regarding principal leadership also emphasizes the increased level of accountability for all students to ensure improved student performance and achievement.

Given the limited research regarding the middle school level leader, and the increasing body of research that supports the role of the principal as an instructional leader who is accountable for the success for all students, it is clear that the examination of the leadership behaviors and practices of middle principals is paramount.

Middle School Inclusive Practices and School Leadership

The movement toward inclusive practices on a national level represents a paradigm shift and impacts the role, responsibilities and influence a principal has on educating students with disabilities. In 1975, *The Education of All Handicapped Children Act*, *Public Law 94-14* mandated the right of students with disabilities to be educated by

the public school system. Today across North America, school district data reveal a growing number of children with disabilities who are fully and successfully participating as members of the general education elementary, middle and secondary classrooms (Villa & Thousand, 2005).

The shift toward inclusive practices began in concept in 1986 when Madeline Will, who served as the Assistant Secretary of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, conducted an analysis of the national data, which indicated that pulling exceptional students out of the mainstream classrooms was not effectively meeting the educational needs of students with disabilities. In 1986, Will proposed the merger of regular and special education initiatives to facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classrooms. In 1994, the Council for Exceptional Children conducted a forum entitled *Working Forum on Inclusive Schools*. Ten national organizations defined the characteristics of an inclusive school. The organizations concluded that schools that promote inclusive practices have the following distinct characteristics:

- A sense of community
- Visionary Leadership
- High Standards
- Collaborative Partnerships
- Changing Roles
- Array of Services
- Partnership with parents
- Flexible learning environments
- Strategies based on research
- New forms of accountability
- Access
- Continuing professional development.

In just a generation, expectations of principals concerning placement decisions have changed from placements in self-contained classrooms to resource rooms, to mainstreamed strategies, to full inclusion. Principals leading schools from a self-contained classroom to an inclusionary model must understand that change is cyclical (Bovalino, 2008).

During the 1994-1995 school year, the National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion conducted a study to identify the factors that contributed to successful inclusive schools. Similar to the Council for Exceptional Children, both organizations agree that the principal must be a visionary leader who collaborates, focuses on assessment, provides supports to staff and students, provides funding, and ensures effective parent engagement.

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) (2004), previously referred to as *The Education of All Handicapped Children Act*, mandates that all children, including children with disabilities, have access to the general education environment to the maximum extent appropriate and requires school systems to improve the performance outcomes of students with disabilities comparable to their non-disabled peers. The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) (2001), a sweeping reform of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), created additional provisions to ensure that children, especially those with the greatest learning needs, are not neglected in standards-driven learning environments. The NCLB Act served as the catalyst for the guidance provided in IDEA by mandating that students with disabilities have access to the general education environment to the maximum extent appropriate. Under the Obama administration, the nation is responding to the educational reform initiative *Race to the Top,* which states all children, including students with disabilities, must be prepared for the 21st century by being career and college ready. With the current trend of inclusion in the K-12 academic setting comes the challenge of how to implement such a method. This responsibility lies heavily on the school administrators (Hudgins, 2012).

As school districts increasingly ensure students with disabilities are educated in their neighborhood schools, the role of the principal as an instructional leader is pivotal. The most comprehensive study conducted to date by DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003) regarding the role of the middle school principal in implementing inclusive practices is cited by Hugkins (2012). According to DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003), there are five instructional leadership priorities of effective principals: (a) defining and communicating an effective educational message; (b) managing curriculum and instruction; (c) supporting and supervising teaching; (d) monitoring student progress and; (e) promoting a learning climate" (p. 8). These leaders see themselves as stewardesses and coaches in the development of a school culture of inclusion (DiPaola & Walter-Thomas, 2003, p. 7). DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003), state further that principals who focus on instructional issues, demonstrate administrative support for special education, and provide high quality professional development for teachers produce enhanced outcomes for students with disabilities and others at risk for school failure.

Supovitz, Sirinides, and May (2010) believed that one of the most important roles for a principal was to focus on the mission, vision and goals of a school organization. The research is clear that principals as instructional leaders are essential to ensure the implementation of inclusive practices in schools; however, they report the need for additional knowledge and skills to help them develop and implement appropriate programs and support systems for these students. There is a gap in the literature when it comes to the voice of the current administrator and their candid insights, struggles, success and opinions about inclusive environments. Knowledge of such administrator accounts could enhance awareness about the best ideal practices of inclusion (Hudgins, 2012).

Fullan, over a decade ago, stated, "The implementation of inclusive practices, or any new program, relies heavily on the school site administration" (2001). Leadership in an era of special education reform requires a principal who fully understands the

complexities involved in creating a climate and environment that address the needs of all learners. Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey and Liebert (2006) maintained that the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education is a complex and demanding reform. Given the complexity of including students with disabilities, inclusion is often misunderstood and sometimes resisted by teachers and not fully understood or supported by school administrators (DiPaola & Thomas, 2003).

This challenge was compounded in 2004 when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandated and reinforced the concept that students with disabilities must have access to the general education environment to the maximum extent appropriate. To achieve the intended goals and outcomes of this mandate, the duality of the role of the principal as an instructional leader and manager requires a principal skilled in the dimensions of effective leadership (Powell, 2006). Administrators who clearly understand the needs of students with disabilities and the instructional challenges that educators who work with students with disabilities face are better prepared to provide appropriate support. The background, training and experience of the secondary school principal may play a factor in the rate of student inclusion in general education classrooms (Bentolilia, 2010).

The ultimate argument for the implementation of an inclusion program is one from the standpoint of social justice. Theoharis (2007) defines social justice leadership as when "principals make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice and vision" (p. 223). Theoharis (2007) believes that no school can be equitable if any of its subgroups are marginalized. In 2007, Theoharis implemented a study to examine how principals implemented and sustained the principles of social justice in their schools. According to his findings, principals implemented social justice strategies because they strongly believed it was the right and moral thing to do, beyond the fact that the right to be included is in the parameters of social justice (Grogen

& Andrews, 2002). When the inclusion of students with disabilities is viewed through the lens of social justice, then inclusion should be implemented because it is the morally correct thing to do. Social justice in schools can never be realized if any group is marginalized by the system, and educating students with disabilities in segregated classrooms creates a marginalized class (Theoharis, 2007). Implementing programs such as inclusion is a radical change to the current management style and requires a new type of instructional leader (Fullan, 2001; Shellard, 2003).

Recognizing the importance of principals implementing inclusion from a social justice perspective does not preclude its challenges. At the middle school level, designing and implementing quality inclusion has proved challenging. Planning time, concerns about caseload, inadequate preparation, and meager professional development have loomed as barriers to complete access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities. The complexity of schooling at the secondary level has serious impediments to inclusion. There are wide-ranging demands on time, particularly for students with disabilities, given the need for learning various important skills (Kozik, Cooney, Vinciguerra, Gradel, & Black, 2009. p.78).

However, researchers concur that inclusion needs to be integrated school-wide (Matzen, 2010). Although middle school students are experiencing upheaval of their socio-emotional, physical, and academic lives, educators must accept responsibility to meet all of the needs for all children (National Middle School Association, 2010).

This shift in how and where to serve students with disabilities has resulted in the need for principals as instructional leaders to examine their beliefs regarding teaching and learning. Most importantly, principals as instructional leaders must possess effective leadership characteristics by demonstrating knowledge about the change process in an era of special education reform.

The Relationship of the Literature Review to This Study

This literature review examined the behaviors and practices of effective leaders. The array of literature reviewed also provided a historical perspective about the role of the principal and how it has evolved over the past fifty years from manager to instructional leader amidst changes in reform initiatives, federal and state mandates, accountability, changing demographics and socio-economic conditions. This extensive review of the literature revealed that there are several gaps in the research related to middle school leadership and the behaviors and practices of middle school leaders regarding the implementation inclusive practices.

The Association for Middle Level Education, formerly NSMA (2010) acknowledges the lack of extensive research regarding middle school leaders. Only two such national studies exist, resulting in the need for further examination regarding the behaviors and practices of middle school principals and their influence regarding school success. Secondly, the body of literature that examines the behaviors and practices of middle school leaders who implement inclusive practices is limited.

This study proposed filling in the gap by providing empirical evidence that would inform school systems, middle school leaders and institutions of higher learning about the behaviors and practices middle school leaders must possess to promote the success inclusive of students with disabilities. Given this context, this study examined the relationship between middle school principal practices and inclusion for students with disabilities.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The movement toward inclusive practices for students with disabilities requires principals to ensure the implementation of equitable instructional practices to improve access to the general education environment to the maximum extent appropriate. Instructional change requires school leadership. Middle school principals have responsibility for leading instruction in a wide variety of specific subjects. Principals can play a key role as leaders to promote high-quality inclusive practices. Research shows that their understanding of inclusive instruction, and their ideas about how they can support it, is significantly influenced by their own thoughts about teaching and learning. The role of the principal as an instructional leader is instrumental in ensuring students with disabilities gain meaningful access to the general education environment. The culture and climate of a school toward inclusive practices is shaped by the vision and philosophy of its principal. To create an inclusive school environment, the principal as an instructional leader must ensure the climate of acceptance for all students, including students with disabilities.

Overview of Research Methods

For this research study, data were collected using a mixed-method approach to include both qualitative and quantitative methods. The data used for this study were collected through the use of surveys and focus groups to answer the research questions.

A survey based upon Powell's study was used to identify and measure the effective leadership characteristics of middle school principals who effectively promote and implement inclusive practices. Middle school principals, middle school grade 6 general education English teachers and special education teachers responsible for implementing inclusive practices in a co-taught classroom were surveyed.

The qualitative portion of this study was conducted by collecting data from three focus groups by interviewing the participants. The focus groups consisted of 38 middle school principals, 38 middle school English grade 6 general education and 38 special education teachers responsible for co-teaching in a grade 6 general education English class. These groups were asked to share their perceptions of the principal's leadership regarding inclusion of students with disabilities.

Research Design

The design used in the study was a mixed-method procedure in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The researcher used the static-group comparison strategy, one of the most common mixed method designs that utilize three different groups in an attempt to confirm, cross validate, or corroborate findings within a single study, and where data collection is concurrent, happening in one phase of the research study (Creswell, 2003). Creswell states:

> This traditional mixed methods model is advantageous because it is familiar to most researchers and results in well-validated and substantiated findings. In addition, the concurrent data collection results in a shorter data collections time period as compared to one of the sequential approaches (p. 217). This traditional mixed methods model was selected based upon research. According to Palmquist (2003), "surveys can be useful when a researcher wants to collect data on phenomena that cannot be directly observed" (p 4). A survey will be used for this study to measure school leadership practices and behaviors from the perspective of middle school principals, general education grade 6 English teachers, and grade 6 special education teachers. Focus groups will be used to gather data using a qualitative method. According to Creswell (2003), in order to describe a person's stories, behavior, organizational functioning, or

interactional relationships, the use of qualitative analysis is warranted. The focus group interviews of principals, general education grade 6 English teachers and special education grade 6 teachers will be the source of data to obtain information about leadership behaviors and practices regarding the success implementation of inclusive practices.

Campbell and Stanley (1963), in their article *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research on teaching*, said that eight sources of internal validity are of concern in all designs. They said that in terms of static-group comparison, the design controls for the following threats to internal validity: history, testing, instrumentation, and regression. It does not control for selection, mortality, and interaction of selection and maturation. They are uncertain whether it controls for maturation itself. This design does not control for one threat to external validity, interaction of selection and x. The other three—interaction of testing and x, reactive rearrangements, and multiple x interference—are not relevant. This formative study was primarily concerned with internal generalizability to the school district in which it was conducted. Therefore, the threats to external validity were of less concern. In terms of internal validity, Campbell and Stanley said that it does not control for selection. The researcher believed that it might do so, because all of the candidates for this study came from very similar backgrounds, i.e., they are middle school English teachers, special education teachers, and principals.

The main purpose of this mixed method study was to use quantitative methodology to study principals leading special education students from self-contained classrooms to an inclusionary model. The researcher used Powell's (2004) five domains of effective leadership: Vision, Mission, and Culture; Curriculum and Classroom Instruction; Collaboration and Shared Leadership; Family and Community Involvement; and Effective Management.

33

This study also utilized qualitative methodology (focus group interviews) as a non-directive method to obtain information about principals' leadership behavior and practices that may not be available through general quantitative research methods. The researcher prepared a series of probes to guide the focus group discussions.

Study Setting

Moore County* has a population of 971,600 and a landmass of 495.52 square miles. Moore County is a diverse and affluent community in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. It serves the largest number of English language learners within the state, representing more than 164 countries speaking 184 languages. African Americans represent the largest minority group, comprising 17.5% of the population. Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin represent 16.1% of the county's population. This population has been the fastest-growing population within the district. Enrollment in this district has increased by 41,000 students over the past 20 years, with a substantial increase between 2008 and 2012. Current enrollment is estimated at 149,000.

The Board of Education (BOE) serves as the county's educational policymakers. The constituents of Moore County elect seven county residents for a four-year term. High school students elect the student member who serves on the BOE. The BOE is responsible for the fiscal oversight of local, state, and federal funds to ensure the provision of services for all students. It also monitors the school system's strategic plan and the work of the superintendent of schools. All procurement actions, grant applications and school construction projects fall under the auspices of this authoritative body.

Moore County consists of 200 schools. It has the highest graduation rate for large school systems in the United States. The average SAT score for the class of 2012 was 1651, highest in Moore County history. Moore County serves 17,000 students with disabilities. This represents the second highest number of students with disabilities in the

state. It serves the largest number of prekindergarten students with disabilities in the state. Sixty-seven percent of its school-aged students, ages 6-21, are served in the general education environment. The school system is organized into six regions. There are two rural regions, one urban and three suburban regions in the county.

Research Questions and Statistical Hypotheses

The implementation of inclusive practices in middle schools in a large district provides an opportunity to examine, describe and analyze the role of the principal and the preparation required to lead for effective change. The literature review clearly delineates the position that the principal's role, which has evolved as an instructional leader over the past thirty years, is pivotal to ensure the delivery of inclusive services for students with disabilities. The body of research on the influence of the principal in implementing inclusive practices is limited, but the body of research regarding the importance of the role of the principal as an instructional leader is extensive.

The research questions for this study were intended to ascertain whether there are differences in the perceptions of middle school principals, grade 6 English teachers and grade 6 special education teachers regarding the key components of effective leadership identified by Fullan (moral purpose; understanding the change process; relationship building; knowledge of creation; and sharing and coherence) as they relate to creating an educational climate that promotes inclusive practices during a four-year period. Specifically, this research attempted to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1

From the perspective of principals of middle schools identified as implementing inclusion classes, are there differences in their perceptions about the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and

effective management), between school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

Statistical Hypothesis 1

From the perspective of principals of middle schools identified as implementing inclusion classes, there are no statistically significant mean differences in their perceptions about the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), between school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation).

Research Question 2

From the perspective of grade 6 English general education teachers, are there differences in perceptions of leadership regarding the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

Statistical Hypothesis 2

From the perspective of grade 6 English general education teachers, there are no statistically significant mean differences in perceptions of leadership regarding the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation).

Research Question 3

From the perspective of grade 6 special education teachers, are there differences in perceptions about the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

Statistical Hypothesis 3

From the perspective of grade 6 special education teachers, there are no statistically significant mean differences in perceptions of leadership regarding the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation).

Research Question 4

What are the curriculum and instructional issues faced by middle school principals, grade 6 general education English teachers and grade 6 special education teachers responsible for providing leadership regarding the instruction of students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) compared to school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

Research Question 5

What are the professional development issues faced by middle school principals, grade 6 general education English teachers and grade 6 special education teachers

responsible for providing leadership regarding the instruction of students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) compared to school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

Procedures

Following the approval of the dissertation proposal by the research committee and the University's Human Subjects Review Board, the researcher requested permission from the school system's research division to conduct the study. Thirty-eight middle schools were selected from the Moore County* School System—19 schools that were early implementers of inclusion in grade 6 English classes and 19 schools that were late implementers of inclusion in grade 6 English classes.

Schools were selected to participate in this study based on early or late adoption of inclusive practices. The selected schools were in two categories: (a) those that adopted inclusion practices in 2007-2008 and 2008-2009; and (b) those that adopted inclusion practices in 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. Recognizing the need to reform the implementation of special education services in Moore County, in 2006 BOE officials agreed to implement more inclusive practices for students formerly served in a more restrictive setting in regionally located middle schools. In response to the decision to proceed with the plan to phase out these regionally located programs, county and community officials requested that the school district design and implement required professional development for general and special education teachers responsible for inclusive programs serving students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

Although the role of the principal was recognized by the county as key in the implementation of this mandate, Moore County did not require mandatory professional development for the middle school principals who would be responsible for the daily implementation of this mandate. For the past four years, Moore County has trained all county general and special education teachers responsible for the implementation of

inclusive practices. Principals were encouraged to attend these training sessions and about half of the principals did so in 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementers). The other half attended sessions in 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (late implementers). In response to the feedback received from special education co-teaching teams regarding the implementation of the plan to provide more inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities, a partnership with an area university was formed to provide additional specialized professional development opportunities to middle school co-teaching teams and to principals on strategies for effective co-teaching practices, Universal Design for Learning and differentiated instruction.

Moore County has 38 middle schools. Each middle school has one co-teaching grade 6 English team, consisting of one general education teacher and one special education teacher. Thirty-eight principals, 66 grade 6 English teachers, and 66 grade 6 special education teachers were expected to provide an adequate sample size for the quantitative survey search portion of this study.

Four principals, four sixth grade English teachers, and four sixth grade special education teachers from each of the two school groups were purposely chosen for the focus group interviews. Three focus groups were formed—one for principals, one for English teachers, and one for special education teachers. The focus groups were formed by selecting two principals from the early implementation years of inclusive practices, and two other principals from the later years. The co-teaching teams were formed using the same criteria.

Instrumentation

The survey developed by Powell (2004) was used to conduct the study. Powell (2004) developed a conceptual framework regarding effective principal practices and leadership behaviors based on the review of literature and her case study findings. Powell's survey instrument was designed to measure the extent to which principals

39

exhibit behaviors in the following five domains: vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management.

In developing the survey, Powell (2004) began with 110 questions which were examined and assessed by 13 doctoral students at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University to establish validity. The validation process resulted in the elimination of questions based on "appropriate domain, importance, and understandability." Powell's final instrument contained 76 questions. For this study, the validity of the instrument was reviewed by middle school principals; grade 6 English teachers, and special education teachers working in a public school district in schools other than where the study was conducted.

Of the 60 questions on the survey, 13 were questions addressing the school vision, mission and culture domain; 13 were questions regarding the curriculum and classroom instruction domain; 13 were questions for the family and community involvement domain; 9 were questions focused upon collaboration and shared leadership; and 12 were questions related to effective management.

The reliability of Powell's original instrument was verified by two researchers, Felder (2006) and McLeod (2008). Both computed Cronbach alphas for each of the five domains. For domain 1, Felder's was .92 and McLeod's was .89. For domain 2, the scores were .77 and .87, respectively. For domain 3, they were .87 and .83. For domain 4, they were .79 and .80, and for domain 5, they were .76 and .83. The Cronbach alphas on the five domains of the survey used in this study were calculated after the survey was administered and were based on the data gathered.

Data Collection

Following the approval of the dissertation proposal by the research committee and the University's Human Subjects Review Board, the researcher requested permission

from the school system's research division to conduct the study. After written consent to conduct the study was obtained from the school system, an initial request for participation (Appendix A) was mailed to all identified subjects. This information, which included an invitation to respond to the survey and a consent form, was sent to 38 principals, 33 grade 6 English teachers, and 33 special education teachers. Subjects were asked to sign the informed consent form prior to responding to the survey. The survey (Appendix B) was mailed to all respondents.

The sample of middle school principals, grade 6 English teachers, and special education teachers representing both groups of schools was asked to participate in a focus group discussion. An initial request for participation and a consent form (Appendix C) was mailed to all identified subjects. This information was sent to 4 principals, 4 grade 6 English teachers, and 4 special education teachers to invite them to participate in focus groups. Subjects were asked to sign the informed consent form prior to agreeing to respond to the focus group questions. The focus group questions were structured and designed to ensure the key principles of engagement and exploration to ensure further insight in the leadership behaviors and practices of effective leaders who implement inclusive services. The questions focused on Vision, Mission and Culture; Curriculum and Classroom Instruction; Collaboration and Shared Leadership; Family and Community Involvement; and Effective Management.

The discussions were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. Focus group interviews were arranged at a time and location convenient to participants and were conducted by an educational consultant. Each focus group was planned to last for one hour. The responses were coded, based upon the questions they addressed and the variables of the individual respondents in the groups. Focus group data were analyzed by the researcher and sorted by topics, clusters, and patterns.

Data Analysis

This study used quantitative and qualitative research methods. As Chappelle (2001) shared, "in social and behavioral research how to combine qualitative and quantitative thinking is a way that helps provide relevant insights and solve social problems" (p.23). Quantitative methods were used by the researcher to answer research questions 1 through 3. The survey data were analyzed by computing Cronbach alphas to establish inter-item reliability. Correlations were computed for responses of principals, grade 6 English teachers, and special education teachers. Independent t-tests of principals, grade 6 English teachers, and special education teachers were also computed between the two groups (early adoption and late adoption). Analysis of variance was computed within the two groups of schools, looking for differences between the principals, the grade 6 English teachers, and the special education teachers in their views of the principal.

Qualitative methods were used to answer research questions 4 and 5. A focus group interview is defined as a "carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest" (Krueger, 1988, p. 18). Another definition of this qualitative research method is a "technique used to obtain data about feelings and opinions of small groups of participants about a given problem, experience, service or other phenomenon" (Basch, 1987, p.414).

The primary source for qualitative data collection was through focus group interviews because this method allows for (a) the opportunity to collect data through group interaction, (b) the ability to explore topics and generate hypotheses, (c) the ease of data collection, and (d) the researcher's moderate control of the focus groups as compared to other forms of qualitative research (Livesey, 2002; Morgan, 1988). Krueger (1988) states two other advantages—high face validity and speedy results. The primary limitations of focus group interviews are that data are sometimes difficult to analyze (Krueger, 1988) and that conclusions are not applicable to the population (Basch, 1987).

Historically, focus group interviews developed out of a need felt by social scientists in the late 1930s. They began examining the value of non-directive individual interviewing as an improved source of information. Traditional methods of gathering information relied heavily upon a process that gave excessive influence to the interviewer and limited the respondent through predetermined, closed-ended questions. During the 1940s the military used focus group strategies to improve morale. In the 1950s, Merton, Fisk and Kendall formalized the procedures used in focus group interviews in their work entitled *The Focused Interview* (in Krueger, 1988).

The most frequent use of focus group interviews for the last 30 years has been in the area of marketing research (Hartman, 2004). This has been due, in large part, to the belief that focus group interviews explain, at a reasonable cost to the interviewer, how people regard an experience, idea, or event. Recently, the procedure has gained renewed popularity among social scientists, evaluators, planners, and educators. This study used focus group interviews because it best suited the purpose of the study regarding middle school principal leadership practices, in general, and middle school in particular.

The research design that was used for this study included principals; grade 6 English teachers, and special education teachers. The size of the focus group was determined by two considerations, according to Merton, Fiske, and Kendal (1990):

It should not be so large as to be unwieldy or to preclude adequate participation by most members nor should it be so small that it fails to provide substantially greater coverage than that of an interview with one individual. (p. 137)

Keeping the two considerations in mind, the size of a focus group will range from a minimum of not less than two members to the maximum of twelve as recommended above (Basch, 1987; Krueger, 1988; Morgan, 1988).

The focus groups included principals, grade 6 English teachers, and special education teachers. "Mixing participants from different groups naturally leads to a

(better) comparison of the discussion than separate groups" (Morgan, 1988, p.4). Prior to beginning the focus group, a number of questions were developed to provide the structure for focus group discussion. The guidelines recommended by Krueger (1988) for question formation were followed in the creation of a matrix of probes. Basch's (1987) recommendation that the general research questions should lead the way for designing specific question paths was followed.

For purposes of this study, several measures were taken to ensure the validity of the focus group procedures. While validity can be assessed several ways, this researcher chose face validity which is described by Krueger (1988):

> Typically, focus groups have high face validity, which is due in part to the
> believability of comments from participants. People open up in focus
> groups and share insights that may not be available from individual
> interviews, questionnaires, or other data sources. (p.42)

Face validity will have been achieved in this study if the research questions have been answered by the data obtained through the chosen procedures. The context of this study lends itself to one of the research designs for focus group interviews suggested by Krueger (1988). He states:

> Focus groups can be used alone, independent of other procedures. They
> are helpful when insights, perceptions, and explanations are more
> important than actual numbers. (p.40)

To ensure that the question paths developed by this researcher have face validity, the questions were reviewed by principals, sixth grade English teachers, and sixth grade special education teachers who work in another county not involved in the study. The review of the questions generated suggestions for change and resulted in approval of the final draft. The researcher then pilot tested the questions through a series of focus group interviews on a sample group of participants. Merriam (1998) recommended that "pilot testing is crucial for trying

44

out questions" thus allowing for refinement. The results were compared for accuracy in obtaining desired information and for consistency of responses.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Since the early 1990s state mandates to provide inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities have largely shaped how school systems educate this population. Moreover, these mandates have had significant implications for the role of the principal as an instructional leader. The leader is expected to be the "chief learning officer," who is responsible for developing and supporting a school culture focused on teaching and learning (Green, 2010). The principal as an instructional leader must ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, have access to instructional practices that enable them to demonstrate the attainment of academic outcomes.

As principals embark upon an era of educational reform linked to Race to the Top and the demands of the Common Core State Standards, greater emphasis is placed on all students achieving higher academic outcomes. For students with disabilities, the requirement is the same, resulting in the need to ensure students have access to inclusive opportunities that prepare them for college and career readiness. The principal as an instructional leader is charged with the responsibility of enabling students with disabilities to achieve this goal. Therefore, given the increasing demands of federal and state mandates for all students, understanding the leadership practices of principals who include students with disabilities is critical.

Chapter IV presents the results of the data analysis. This mixed-method study was designed to examine and investigate if there are differences in the leadership practices of middle school principals who included students with disabilities in grade 6 English co-taught classes during the early implementation phase, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years, compared to the later implementation phase, 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years. The conceptual framework of this study was based upon the premise that there are

key leadership behaviors and practices that influence the implementation of inclusive practices in middle school.

The first phase of this study focused on quantitative research. Thirty-eight middle schools were selected to participate in the study. Nineteen middle schools were identified as early implementers and 19 were identified as later implementers of inclusion for grade 6 students with disabilities in co-taught English classes. During the fall of 2013, middle school principals, grade 6 general education English co-teachers and grade 6 special education English co-teachers were surveyed using the Leadership Behaviors and Practices Survey developed by Powell (2004). The study constructed by Dr. Powell was based upon the results of a comprehensive literature review in the area of principal leadership and her findings from a case study.

The second phase of the research study focused on qualitative methodology. The data collected included focus groups with principals that included early implementers of inclusion for grade 6 English special education students as well as later implementers. The two groups of principals shared their perceptions regarding their leadership behaviors and practices while trying to include grade 6 students with disabilities in English class.

Procedures

The data collection process included the administration of a survey to middle school principals, grade 6 English general education teachers, and special education teachers responsible for co-teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive environment. The data collection process also included a focus group consisting of middle school principals from early implementation schools and later implementation schools.

A cover letter and consent form and a copy of the Leadership Behaviors and Practices Survey, as well as a self-addressed, stamped envelope, were mailed to all of the

participants in October, 2013 with an invitation to complete the survey and return it to the researcher. The cover letter included the purpose of the study and provided background information regarding the survey instrument. The researcher maintained a log of the surveys returned. When fewer surveys were returned than the researcher initially hoped to receive, the researcher decided to email each principal, general education teacher, and special education teacher to solicit more responses. That request produced additional surveys. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Response Rates of Middle School Principals, Grade 6 Special Education Teachers, and Grade 6 General Education Teachers for Early Implementers and Late Implementers

Surveys	Responses and Percentage		
Early Implementers	Sent	Received	Percentage
Number of Surveys to Principals	19	12	63%
Number of Surveys to General Education Teachers	19	10	54%
Number of Surveys to Special Education Teachers	19	19	100%
Number of Usable Surveys	57	41	72%
Late Implementers	Sent	Received	Percentage
Number of Surveys to Principals	19	10	53%
Number of Surveys to General Education Teachers	19	4	22%
Number of Surveys to Special Education Teachers	19	9	47%
Number of Usable Surveys	57	23	41%

Reliability

Cronbach alphas were used to compute reliability of the survey. Cronbach alphas measure inter-item reliability and consistency of the survey instrument. They are used when no pretest-posttest reliability measures are available. These results were compared

to the results of Powell (2004), McLeod (2006), and Cassell (2012) and are presented in Table 3. The Cronbach alphas were similar to those of Powell, McLeod, and Cassell. According to Gall, Borg, and Gall (2006),

> If a scale has a high alpha coefficient [typically, .60 or higher, with the highest possible coefficient being 1.00], it means that individuals who respond in a certain way to one item on the scale are likely to respond in the same way to the other items on that scale. (p. 196)

The data in Table 3 show that the survey has a total reliability score of .95 for Powell, .93 for McLeod, .94 for Cassell, and .94 for Mason, indicating strong inter-item reliability. The Cronbach alphas shown in Table 3 for Powell are consistently higher than those of McLeod, Cassell, and the current study. The reason may be that the number of statements used by the three more recent studies was fewer than those on the Powell survey. It also may be the result of a more diverse group of educators who were asked to respond to the survey.

The data displayed in Table 3 show that most of the Cronbach alphas computed were well above .80, indicating that the survey was generally reliable at a high level. The lowest Cronbach alpha in this study was found under effective management, with an alpha score of only .81. This may suggest that the series of questions under effective management be reviewed in future research.

Table 3

Cronbach Alphas for Powell Study, McLeod Study, Cassell Study, and Mason Study

Domain	No. of Items	Alpha Score – Powell (2004)	No. of Items	Alpha Score – McLeod (2006)	Alpha Score – Cassell (2012)	Alpha Score – Mason (2014)
Domain 1: Vision, Mission, & Culture	16	.88	13	.89	.90	.89
Domain 2: Curriculum & Classroom Instruction	22	.79	13	.87	.81	.82
Domain 3: Collaboration & Shared Leadership	9	.85	9	.83	.85	.84
Domain 4: Family & Community Involvement	16	.86	13	.80	.82	.83
Domain 5: Effective Management	13	.80	12	.83	.80	.81
Total Instrument	76	.95	60	.93	.94	.94

Correlation Coefficients

The researcher next computed Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficients to describe the magnitude of the relationship between the five different domains for principals, Grade 6 general education teachers and special education teachers classified as early implementers or late implementers. A correlation coefficient can range from -1.00 to +1.00. The results are displayed in Tables 4 through 9. In interpreting these data, the researcher used an established set of criteria to make judgments about the significance of the correlations (Gliner, Morgan, & Leech, 2009). If a correlation was between 0.0 and .30, it was considered to be weak; if it were between .31 and .70 it was considered modest; and if it were .71 or above, it was considered to be strong (Gliner, Morgan, &

50

Leech, 2009). The .05 level was used to identify those correlations that were statistically significant.

The data presented in Table 4 show that for principals who were early implementers, all of the correlations were statistically significant at the .05 level or lower. In general, the correlations are in the modest to strong range, between .56 and .87. This is particularly true for Domain 2, curriculum and classroom instruction, and Domain 3, collaboration and shared leadership. The highest correlation, .87, is between Domain 1, vision, mission, and culture, and Domain 2, curriculum and classroom instruction. The lowest correlation, .56, was between Domain 3 and Domain 5, effective management.

Table 4

Correlation Coefficients for Domains 1 – 5 for Principals – Early Implementers

	Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5
DOMAIN 1	1.00 (12)	.87 (12) P=.001***	.69 (12) P=.013*	.74 (12) P=.001***	.80 (12) P=.01**
DOMAIN 2		1.00 (12)	.74 (12) P=.01**	.77 (12) P=.01**	.65 (12) P=.05*
DOMAIN 3			1.00 (12)	.66 (12) P=.01**	.56 (12) P=.06
DOMAIN 4				1.00 (12)	.77 (12) P=.01**
DOMAIN 5					1.00 (12)

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***
Domain 1 – Vision, Mission and Culture; Domain 2 –Curriculum and Classroom Instruction; Domain 3 – Collaboration and Shared Leadership; Domain 4 – Family and Community Involvement; Domain 5 – Effective Management

Data displayed in Table 5 show correlations for principals as late implementers. All of the correlations were statistically significant at the .01 level or lower. Domain 1 had a very high relationship to the four other domains. All of the correlations were .83 or higher, indicating a strong relationship. The highest correlation was between Domain 2,

curriculum and classroom instruction, and Domain 5, effective management. The lowest correlation, .75, between Domains 2 and 4, was still in the strong range.

Looking at the correlations in Tables 4 and 5, the researcher was impressed with the fact that all of the correlation coefficients for late implementers were higher than those for early implementers. This may reflect the fact that later implementers had longer periods of time to learn how to lead in implementing inclusive education.

Table 5

Correlation Coefficients for Domains 1 – 5 for Principals – Late Implementers

	Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5
DOMAIN 1	1.00 (10)	.91 (10) P=.001***	.86 (10) P=.001***	.83 (10) P=.01**	.95 (10) P=.001***
DOMAIN 2		1.00 (10)	.79 (10) P=.01**	.75 (10) P=.01**	.97 (10) P=.001***
DOMAIN 3			1.00 (10)	.89 (10) P=.001***	.79 (10) P=.01**
DOMAIN 4				1.00 (10)	.77 (10) P=.01**
DOMAIN 5					1.00 (10)

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***
Domain 1 – Vision, Mission and Culture; Domain 2 –Curriculum and Classroom Instruction; Domain 3 – Collaboration and Shared Leadership; Domain 4 – Family and Community Involvement; Domain 5 – Effective Management

In Table 6, the correlation coefficients showed a much lower degree of agreement between the different domains for grade 6 special education teachers than was true for the principals. The strongest set of correlations was found between Domain 1 and Domains 2-5. They were all in the modest range and three of the four were statistically significant. The correlation for Domains 2 and 4 was .44 and was not statistically significant. The lowest correlation, .16, was between Domain 2 and Domain 3 and was not statistically significant.

Table 6

Correlation Coefficients for Domains 1 – 5 for Grade 6 Special Education Teachers –
Early Implementers

	Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5
DOMAIN 1	1.00 (19)	.62 (19) P=.01**	.69 (19) P=.001***	.44 (19) P=.06	.69 (19) P=.001***
DOMAIN 2		1.00 (19)	.16 (19) P=.52	.22 (19) P=.37	.41 (19) P=.07
DOMAIN 3			1.00 (19)	.44 (19) P=.06	.66 (19) P=.01**
DOMAIN 4				1.00 (19)	.41 (19) P=.08
DOMAIN 5					1.00 (19)

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***
Domain 1 – Vision, Mission and Culture; Domain 2 –Curriculum and Classroom Instruction; Domain 3 –
Collaboration and Shared Leadership; Domain 4 – Family and Community Involvement; Domain 5 –
Effective Management

The correlations presented in Table 7 indicate that for grade 6 special education

teachers who were late implementers, most of the correlations were in the modest range

and were not statistically significant. One of the reasons may be that only nine grade 6

special education teachers who were late implementers returned the surveys, while all of

the early implementers returned their surveys, perhaps indicating their high level of

interest in inclusive education.

Table 7

Correlation Coefficients for Domains 1 – 5 for Grade 6 Special Education Teachers –
Late Implementers

	Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5
DOMAIN 1	1.00 (9)	.63 (9) P=.07	.54 (9) P=.13	.54 (9) P=.13	.90 (9) P=.001***
DOMAIN 2		1.00 (9)	.52 (9) P=.15	.67 (9) P=.05*	.48 (9) P=.19
DOMAIN 3			1.00 (9)	.48 (9) P=.19	.72 (9) P=.05*
DOMAIN 4				1.00 (9)	.32 (9) P=.40
DOMAIN 5					1.00 (9)

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***
Domain 1 – Vision, Mission and Culture; Domain 2 –Curriculum and Classroom Instruction; Domain 3 –
Collaboration and Shared Leadership; Domain 4 – Family and Community Involvement; Domain 5 –
Effective Management

The correlation coefficients presented in Table 8, general education early

implementers, showed that seven of the 10 correlations were in the modest range and

most were not statistically significant. The highest correlation was between Domain 1,

vision, mission, and culture, and Domain 5, effective management. The lowest

correlation, .21, was between Domain 2, curriculum and classroom instruction, and

Domain 5, effective management. This is a weak correlation. In general, the correlations

in Table 8 for these early implementers were lower than those for the principals and

special education teachers. One reason may be that only 10 out of 19 teachers responded

to the survey.

Table 8

Correlation Coefficients for Domains 1 – 5 for Grade 6 Grade 6 General Education Teachers – Early Implementers

	Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5
DOMAIN 1	1.00 (10)	.46 (10) P=.17	.66 (10) P=.05*	.44 (10) P=.20	.75 (10) P=.01**
DOMAIN 2		1.00 (10)	.60 (10) P=.07	.47 (10) P=.17	.21 (10) P=.56
DOMAIN 3			1.00 (10)	.75 (10) P=.01**	.73 (10) P=.05*
DOMAIN 4				1.00 (10)	.58 (10) P=.08
DOMAIN 5					1.00 (10)

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***
Domain 1 – Vision, Mission and Culture; Domain 2 –Curriculum and Classroom Instruction; Domain 3 – Collaboration and Shared Leadership; Domain 4 – Family and Community Involvement; Domain 5 – Effective Management

The correlation coefficients displayed in Table 9 for grade 6 general education teachers who were late implementers were mixed in terms of the strength of the correlations. None of them were statistically significant. The fact that only four out of 19 respondents returned the survey may have influenced the calculation of the correlation coefficients. Therefore, most of the correlations presented in Table 9 were of doubtful value. The highest correlation was between Domain 1, vision, mission, and culture, and Domain 3, collaboration and shared leadership. However, even that single correlation was not statistically significant.

Table 9

Correlation Coefficients for Domains 1 – 5 for Grade 6 General Education Teachers –
Late Implementers

	Domain 1	Domain 2	Domain 3	Domain 4	Domain 5
DOMAIN 1	1.00 (4)	.86 (4) P=.14	.94 (4) P=.06	.01 (4) P=.98	.58 (4) P=.42
DOMAIN 2		1.00 (4)	.67 (4) P=.33	.19 (4) P=.80	.21 (4) P=.79
DOMAIN 3			1.00 (4)	.34 (4) P=.66	.83 (4) P=.17
DOMAIN 4				1.00 (4)	.78 (4) P=.22
DOMAIN 5					1.00 (4)

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***
Domain 1 – Vision, Mission and Culture; Domain 2 –Curriculum and Classroom Instruction; Domain 3 –
Collaboration and Shared Leadership; Domain 4 – Family and Community Involvement; Domain 5 –
Effective Management

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were intended to ascertain whether there are

differences in the perceptions of principals, middle school grade 6 English teachers and

special education teachers, both early implementers and late implementers, on the five

domains of effective behaviors and practices of leadership identified by Powell (e.g.,

vision, mission and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction, collaboration and

shared leadership; family and community involvement and effective management).

Research Question 1

From the perspective of principals of middle schools identified as implementing

inclusion classes, are there differences in their perceptions about the five leadership

domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom

instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and

effective management), between school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early

implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

Statistical Hypothesis 1

 From the perspective of principals of middle schools identified as implementing

inclusion classes, there are no statistically significant mean differences in their

perceptions about the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and

culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership;

family and community involvement; and effective management), between school years

2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-

2011 (later implementation).

 To answer Research Question 1, the researcher computed a series of five

independent t-tests. The results of those calculations are presented in Tables 10 through

14. These data show that the statistical hypothesis of no statistically significant difference

between principals who were early and late implementers was accepted.

Table 10

*Independent t-Test on Vision, Mission, and Culture Between Middle School Principals
(Early Implementers and Late Implementers)*

<u>Principals' Vision, Mission, and Culture – Domain 1</u>

	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	D.F.	2-Tail Sig.
Early Implemen.	12	3.36	.41			
				.202	20	.842
Late Implemen.	10	3.33	.35			

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***

Table 11

Independent t-Test on Curriculum and Classroom Instruction Between Middle School Principals (Early Implementers and Late Implementers)

Principals' Curriculum and Classroom Instruction – Domain 2

	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	D.F.	2-Tail Sig.
Early Implemen.	12	3.33	.40			
				.534	20	.599
Late Implemen.	10	3.25	.34			

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***

Table 12

Independent t-Test on Collaboration and Shared Leadership Between Middle School Principals (Early Implementers and Late Implementers)

Principals' Collaboration and Shared Leadership – Domain 3

	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	D.F.	2-Tail Sig.
Early Implemen.	12	3.36	.37			
				.186	20	.854
Late Implemen.	10	3.33	.36			

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***

Table 13

Independent t-Test on Family and Community Involvement Between Middle School Principals (Early Implementers and Late Implementers)

Principals' Family and Community Involvement – Domain 4

	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	D.F.	2-Tail Sig.
Early Implemen.	12	2.95	.31			
				.579	20	.569
Late Implemen.	10	2.84	.57			

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***

Table 14

Independent t-Test on Effective Management Between Middle School Principals (Early Implementers and Late Implementers)

<u>Principals' Effective Management – Domain 5</u>

	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	D.F.	2-Tail Sig.
Early Implemen.	12	3.40	.28			
				.35	20	.731
Late Implemen.	10	3.44	.26			

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***

Research Question 2

From the perspective of grade 6 English general education teachers, are there differences in perceptions of leadership regarding the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

Statistical Hypothesis 2

From the perspective of grade 6 English general education teachers, there are no statistically significant mean differences in perceptions of leadership regarding the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation).

To answer Research Question 2, the researcher computed five independent t-tests. The results of those calculations are presented in Tables 15 through 19. These data show

that the statistical hypothesis of no statistically significant difference between grade 6 general education teachers who were early and late implementers was accepted.

Table 15

Independent t-Test on Vision, Mission, and Culture Between Grade 6 General Education Teachers (Early Implementers and Late Implementers)

General Education Teachers' Vision, Mission, and Culture – Domain 1

	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	D.F.	2-Tail Sig.
Early Implemen.	10	3.33	.33			
				1.22	12	.244
Late Implemen.	4	3.09	.35			

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***

Table 16

Independent t-Test on Curriculum and Classroom Instruction Between Grade 6 General Education Teachers (Early Implementers and Late Implementers)

General Education Teachers' Curriculum and Classroom Instruction – Domain 2

	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	D.F.	2-Tail Sig.
Early Implemen.	10	3.43	.36			
				.287	12	.779
Late Implemen.	4	3.49	.17			

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***

Table 17

Independent t-Test on Collaboration and Shared Leadership Between Grade 6 General Education Teachers (Early Implementers and Late Implementers)

General Education Teachers' Collaboration and Shared Leadership – Domain 3

	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	D.F.	2-Tail Sig.
Early Implemen.	10	3.02	.34			
				.534	12	.603
Late Implemen.	4	2.91	.32			

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***

Table 18

Independent t-Test on Family and Community Involvement Between Grade 6 General Education Teachers (Early Implementers and Late Implementers)

General Education Teachers' Family and Community Involvement – Domain 4

	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	D.F.	2-Tail Sig.
Early Implemen.	10	2.93	.33			
				.388	12	.705
Late Implemen.	4	2.84	.56			

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***

Table 19

Independent t-Test on Effective Management Between Grade 6 General Education Teachers (Early Implementers and Late Implementers)

General Education Teachers' Effective Management – Domain 5

	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	D.F.	2-Tail Sig.
Early Implemen.	10	3.21	.28			
				1.12	12	.285
Late Implemen.	4	3.01	.35			

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***

Research Question 3

From the perspective of grade 6 special education teachers, are there differences in perceptions about the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

Statistical Hypothesis 3

From the perspective of grade 6 special education teachers, there are no statistically significant mean differences in perceptions of leadership regarding the five

leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation).

To answer Research Question 3, five independent t-tests were computed. The results of those calculations are presented in Tables 20 through 24. These data show that the statistical hypothesis of no statistically significant difference between grade 6 special education teachers who were early and late implementers was accepted.

Table 20

Independent t-Test on Vision, Mission, and Culture Between Grade 6 Special Education Teachers (Early Implementers and Late Implementers)

Special Education Teachers' Vision, Mission, and Culture – Domain 1

	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	D.F.	2-Tail Sig.
Early Implemen.	19	3.15	.31			
				.09	26	.928
Late Implemen.	9	3.14	.35			

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***

Table 21

Independent t-Test on Curriculum and Classroom Instruction Between Grade 6 Special Education Teachers (Early Implementers and Late Implementers)

Special Education Teachers' Curriculum and Classroom Instruction – Domain 2

	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	D.F.	2-Tail Sig.
Early Implemen.	19	3.41	.28			
				.219	26	.829
Late Implemen.	9	3.38	.31			

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***

Table 22

Independent t-Test on Collaboration and Shared Leadership Between Grade 6 Special Education Teachers (Early Implementers and Late Implementers)

Special Education Teachers' Collaboration and Shared Leadership – Domain 3

	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	D.F.	2-Tail Sig.
Early Implemen.	19	2.73	.43			
				.168	26	.105
Late Implemen.	9	3.01	.37			

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***

Table 23

Independent t-Test on Family and Community Involvement Between Grade 6 Special Education Teachers (Early Implementers and Late Implementers)

Special Education Teachers' Family and Community Involvement – Domain 4

	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	D.F.	2-Tail Sig.
Early Implemen.	19	2.84	.31			
				.374	26	.712
Late Implemen.	9	2.80	.32			

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***

Table 24

Independent t-Test on Effective Management Between   Grade 6 Special Education Teachers (Early Implementers and Late Implementers)

Special Education Teachers' Effective Management – Domain 5

	No. of Cases	Mean	S.D.	t-Value	D.F.	2-Tail Sig.
Early Implemen.	19	3.11	.33			
				.480	26	.635
Late Implemen.	9	3.05	.29			

P = < .05*; <.01**; <.001***

Overview of the Qualitative Design

For the qualitative segment of this study, one focus group was formed in November 2013, consisting of three middle school principals responsible for implementing inclusion in grade 6 English classes during the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years; and three middle school principals responsible for implementing inclusion during the 2009-2010 and 2010–2011 school years. The focus group was designed to generate additional information and insight regarding the perspectives of middle school principals who were early and later implementers of inclusion and to discuss their beliefs about the effective leadership characteristics and behaviors of leaders who implement inclusion for Grade 6 middle school students.

The focus group participants took part in a structured and guided discussion designed to primarily address Research Question 4, as well as provide additional information regarding Research Questions 1-3.

Research Question 4

What are the curriculum and instructional issues faced by middle school principals, grade 6 general education English teachers, and grade 6 special education teachers responsible for providing leadership regarding the instruction of students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) compared to school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

Research Question 5

What are the professional development issues faced by middle school principals, grade 6 general education English teachers and grade 6 special education teachers responsible for providing leadership regarding the instruction of students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) compared to school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

A purposefully designed sample of principals was selected for the focus group discussion. A request for participation was mailed to 12 middle school principals. Six middle school principals who were early implementers of inclusion and six middle school principal who were later implementers of inclusion were invited to participate in the focus group discussion. A total of six middle school principals, three early implementers and three later implementers, responded and participated in the focus group discussion. In Table 25 the response rates are displayed.

Table 25

Focus Group Participation Rates

	No. of Schools Invited	No. of Schools Participating	Response Rate
Early Middle School Principal Implementers	6	3	50%
Later Middle School Principal Implementers	6	3	50%

A Focus Group Discussion Guide was developed using Powell's domains as the framework to generate and elicit comprehensive and detailed descriptions regarding the leadership behaviors and practices of principals. The Discussion Guide is found in Appendix D. It includes open-ended questions regarding principal leadership and probes related to challenges, expectations, professional development, curriculum and instruction, concerns from teacher groups and the parent community. The Discussion Guide consists of the recommendations of Yin (1984) and Merriam (1988) by including open-ended questions and probes. The guide was designed by an educational consultant and researcher who conducts focus groups for large school systems. The co-facilitator for the focus group session was an educational consultant with expertise in the field of special

education. A co-facilitator for this study was utilized to reduce and eliminate the risk of bias results since the lead facilitator was the Director for Special Education.

The focus group discussion was audiotaped and the data collected were categorized and charted in the following three areas: *Most Important, Important, and Less Important*. Each of these areas provided a framework which allowed the principals to prioritize, organize and categorize their beliefs about principal leadership as it related to Powell's five domains of effective leadership behaviors. The focus group discussion generated deep and insightful comments regarding the perspectives of middle school principals and the effective behaviors and practices that promote inclusion. The discussion yielded responses to the research question. Table 26 reflects the questions used in the focus group discussion.

Table 26

Focus Group Discussion Questions

Focus Area(s)	Question/Probes
School Vision	You are all at schools that include special education students in the general education classrooms. How is your overall vision for your school affected by reality? Just in general, what are some of the things you think about as a school leader when you think about how to help students succeed?
School Vision Collaboration and Shared Leadership Instructional Monitoring Family and Community Involvement	When you first heard that your school would have/would be receiving transfers from the Learning Center program, what were your expectations? What did you think your challenges would be? (probes: Professional development? Curriculum and Instruction? Concerns for specific groups, such as parents?

Table 26 (continued)

Focus Group Discussion Questions

Focus Area(s)	Question/Probes
Collaboration and Shared Leadership Instructional Monitoring Family and Community Involvement	You have joined a team to mentor a middle school that will be accepting students from a learning center starting next school year. Work with your team to design a mentoring plan. Please be sure to include the following areas: • Best ways to work with teachers to enable students with disabilities to access the English 6 curriculum in an inclusive environment. • Involving families of students with disabilities, and the community around including them. • Professional development ideas/needs • The role of school administrators in the inclusion of students with disabilities in general classes.

All of the focus group discussions were audio taped and transcribed. The qualitative data regarding effective leadership behaviors and practices were collected and transcribed and the responses below are a result of the activities conducted during the focus group session.

Vision

The first focus group activity question focused on vision. An analysis of the responses from the first focus group question activity regarding vision generated themes linked to the concepts of equitable practices and high expectations for all students. One principal shared

The school is a family and everyone must be lifted up. The principal must

be explicit about meeting the needs of all students.

Another principal stated,

Including students with disabilities did not change my vision. My vision is

always explicitly clear. All students must be expected to achieve. We

67

must ensure that we are the champion for all children including students

with disabilities. We must ensure that all students have access to high

quality instruction and that the supports and services they need are

provided each day.

A third principal and early implementer of inclusion reported,

These are our kids. They belong to us and the community that we serve.

We must ensure that we create an environment where all students are

accepted and expected to achieve at high levels. A school that promotes

inclusive practices embraces all students and expects all students to have

access to a high quality education.

Collectively, the early and later implementers of inclusion shared the same

perspectives regarding the importance of vision as a leadership behavior. The principals

agreed that high expectations for all students promote a school that embraces each and

every student, including students with disabilities.

Collaboration and Shared Leadership, Instructional Monitoring, Family and Community Involvement

The principals shared an array of perspectives around the topic of collaboration

and shared leadership. An analysis of their comments generated themes linked to their

expectations and the challenges related to including students with disabilities.

One principal from the an early implementation school stated,

Being a support to my teachers and helping them to understand that

including students with disabilities could work was key.

Another earlier implementation middle school principal stated,

I knew it would be challenging for some teachers. Helping teachers with

their belief systems and ensuring each of them that with support and

resources they would be able to successfully include students with

disabilities was paramount.

Both early and later implementation school principals stated,

We had to ensure that our teachers had access to the professional

development that was mandated by the school system. The school system

offered professional development on co-teaching practices and

instructional strategies to support students with a range of disabilities and

academic needs. We had to build and design structures within our

school's master schedule to ensure that the special education and general

education teachers collaborated, planned and consulted with each other

weekly. The school-based staff development teacher and central office

experts in special education were made available to support their ability

to effectively plan and deliver instruction. We knew the successful

inclusion of students with disabilities was dependent on building teacher

capacity and coordinating supports and resources necessary to help each

teacher. We had to help these teachers meet the needs of students in a way

they have not been asked to instruct students before.

A later implementation school principal reported,

Convincing not only teachers but parents that their children would be

appropriately served in a general education environment was a challenge.

This was one of the inherit challenges with the plan to include students

with disabilities. Although some parents wanted their children to be

served in their neighborhood schools, they feared that their needs could

not be met in an inclusive environment. I had to tell my parents that this

was the right thing to do, but I also had to show them that their children's

needs were being addressed. Parents were invited to come into my school

to see their child during instruction in order to learn more about how they

were being served. The parents in my opinion were considered our most

valued partners because of their knowledge and insight regarding the

needs of their children.

An earlier implementation school principal reported,

As a principal, I had to work with my teachers to address the stigma

associated with students previously served in self-contained classes.

There was a belief system that existed among some teachers that these

students could not learn and would not benefit from inclusive practices.

Using a problem-solving process by creating an environment that

included teacher input, access to professional development related to co-

teaching and instructional practices was key. I ensured the provision of

appropriate supports and services and ongoing collaboration and

consultation, to enable these teachers to see that these students could

benefit from the inclusive practices.

A later principal implementer stated,

We had to build a circle of support for our teachers, students and parents.

Each principal, whether an early implementer or later implementer of inclusion

for the Grade 6 English middle school students, utilized effective leadership practices in

the areas of collaboration and shared leadership. According to the principals, permitting

teachers to provide input, to collaborate and participate in problem-solving discussions

regarding effective instructional practices resulted in the implementation of inclusive

classrooms. The principal's leadership practices ensured that the teachers had access to

professional development, resources and instructional monitoring to support their efforts

to serve students with disabilities. Each principal provided opportunities for ongoing

collaboration which fostered teacher input and ultimately fostered a supportive inclusive

environment.

Collaboration and Shared Leadership, Instructional Monitoring, Family and Community Involvement, Effective Management

The third activity was designed to generate additional feedback from the focus group on the practices and behaviors principals would recommend for a new middle school principal responsible for implementation inclusion. The group was asked to design a plan to mentor a new principal in preparation for implementing inclusion during the upcoming school year.

The focus group principals worked in teams consisting of two principals. Each of the three groups consisted of an early implementation school principal and a later implementation school principal. The following discussion generated very similar beliefs, strategies, practices and recommendations regarding leadership behavior that they would recommend to a principal.

An early implementation middle school principal in group I stated,

I would inform a new middle school principal responsible for implementing that as a principal, the principal's vision should not change because of the need to include students with disabilities. A principal must always maintain a vision that that embraces all students. There should be high expectation for all students. We must always ask ourselves…. How are we accommodating for students with disabilities? How are we differentiating instruction to ensure we address the needs of all students?

A later implementation middle school principal in Group 2 reported,

As a new principal, you must be a champion for all students. You must ensure that your school celebrates the successes of all students. A leader must look through the lens of the teacher and parent in order to be an effective leader. This will foster a deeper understanding regarding how to support the needs of both stakeholders.

Group III principals reported,

The principal must ensure the allocation of resources and supports in order to lead effectively. By ensuring the allocation of appropriate resources and supports, this will enable the teachers to have access to what they need to effectively enable students with disabilities to receive meaningful benefit from the inclusive classroom and the general education curriculum. A principal must carefully consider the structure and design of the school's overview program in order to meet the needs of staff members by ensuring opportunities to collaborate and plan, while making certain students are placed in classes with the necessary supports and services.

The concluding activity required the principals to discuss, prioritize and categorize the effective management behaviors and practices of principals in order to gain insight into what they felt were the most important to least important practices that promote effective management. The table below reflects three distinct columns which indicate how the principals prioritized and categorized each of the leadership behaviors and practices statements.

Table 27

Most Important, Important and Less Important

Most Important	Important	Less Important
The principal hires staff to reflect the school's diversity.	The principal elicits input regarding academic decisions.	The principal teaches lessons in the classrooms.
The principal ensures the delivery of inclusive services for students with disabilities.	The principal encourages and provides opportunities for staff development.	The principal keeps parents informed about student expectations.
The principal makes student achievement a high priority/mission of the school.	The principal implements effective discipline plan.	
The principal makes student learning a high priority.	The principal removes barriers to communication (i.e., newsletters in multiple languages.	
The principal ensures special programs and resources are in place to meet the needs of all learners.	The principal makes all feel welcome and comfortable.	
The principal encourages teacher participation in the decision-making process.	The principal knows and calls students by name.	
The principal provides a nurturing environment for students and teachers.		

Table 27 (continued)

Most Important, Important and Less Important

Most Important	Important	Less Important
The principal treats all stakeholders with respect. The principal ensures minimal classroom interruptions. The principal visits classrooms regularly. The principal involves staff in analyzing school data. The principal is highly visible throughout the school. The principal remains focused on instruction (i.e., delegates' behavioral issues. The principal celebrates successes.		

An analysis of the charting activity reveals that there are major themes and agreement among the earlier implementers and the later implementers of inclusion for Grade 6 special education students regarding effective leadership behaviors and practices. An analysis of how the principals prioritized and categorized the statements seems to correlate with Powell's framework on effective leadership behaviors and practices.

Table 28 further delineates the analysis of the themes and the statements generated by the focus group which correlate with Powell's framework:

Table 28

Focus Group Themes

Focus Group Areas	Themes
Vision	1. The principal ensures he hires staff to reflect the school's diversity.
	2. The principal ensures the delivery of inclusive services for students with disabilities.
	3. The principal makes student achievement a high priority/mission of the school
	4. The principal makes student learning a high priority for the school.
	5. The principal ensures special programs and resources are in place to meet the needs of all learners.
	6. The principal encourages teacher participation in the decision-making process.
	7. The principal provides a nurturing environment for students and teachers
	8. The principal treats all stakeholders with respect.
Instructional Monitoring	1. The principal ensures special programs and resources are in place to meet the needs of all learners.
	2. The principal ensures minimal classroom interruptions
	3. The principal visits classrooms regularly.
	4. The principals involve staff in analyzing student and school data.
	5. The principal is highly visible throughout the school.
	6. The principal remains focused on instruction (i.e., delegates' behavioral issues)

75

Table 28 (continued)

Focus Group Themes

Focus Group Areas	Themes
Collaboration and Shared Leadership	1. The principal elicits teacher input regarding academic decisions.
	2. The principal encourages and provides opportunities for staff development.
	3. The principal implements an effective discipline plan.
Family and Community Involvement	1. The principal removes barriers to communication. (i.e., newsletters in multiple languages)
	2. The principal makes all feel welcome and comfortable
	3. The principal knows and calls all students by name.
	4. The principal keeps parents informed about student expectations.

An analysis of the focus group responses indicates that the early middle school principal implementers of inclusion, 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 school years, compared to the later implementers of inclusion during school years 2009–2010 and 2010–2011 identified the same set of leadership behaviors and practices that ensure the effective implementation of inclusion in Grade 6 English classes. This analysis reveals that Powell's five domains of effective leadership practices apply not only to principals responsive for serving students in at-risk schools, but also as the basis for effective leadership practices for special education. One significant comment made during the focus group session revealed that principals from both implementation years reported that the success they experienced also came from the expertise of central office support. The county-wide required professional development provided for Grade 6 English co-

teaching teams was also a significant factor, as it provided teachers with the knowledge and strategies needed to effectively co-teach.

Without the external resources and supports, the principals did not believe they would have been successful implementers of inclusion. Based upon this focus group activity, vision, mission and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement and effective management are the key domains linked to the effective middle school principal leadership behaviors and practices that promote inclusion.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is composed four sections: research summary, findings of the study, conclusions and recommendations. The research summary provides the conceptual framework of the key issues that led to this study. The conceptual framework of this study includes the purpose, problem statement, research questions and methodology. An analysis of the data as a result of this study is found in the findings section. As a result of the findings, the researcher included conclusions and recommendations that may be considered to advance additional research in the area of principal leadership and inclusive practices for students with disabilities. This study examined effective leadership practices of middle school principals who implemented inclusion in grade 6 English classes: those who implemented inclusion during the early implementation phase, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years; and those who implemented inclusion during the later implementation phase, 2010 and 2011 school years. The effective leadership behaviors and practices were studied from the perspective of middle school principals, grade 6 general and special education teachers from each phase of implementation. The researcher used Powell's (2004) five domains of effective principal leadership practices: vision, mission and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management, as the mechanism to examine the perspective of principal leadership.

This researcher also used qualitative methodology (focus group interviews), an interpretative framework to solicit and obtain information about principals' leadership behavior and the effective practices that the quantitative methodology may not generate. The researcher used a discussion guide and prepared a series of activities and questions to guide the focus group discussion. The researcher audiotaped, transcribed and analyzed the focus group interviews, to determine the existence of themes and patterns in the

qualitative data. The transcripts did not identify the names of the individuals who participated in the focus group interviews.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed prior to the implementation of this study to provide the structure for the data collection and analysis process.

Research Question 1

From the perspective of principals of middle schools identified as implementing inclusion classes, are there differences in their perceptions about the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), between school years 2007-2008 & 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 & 2010–2011 (later implementation)?

Statistical Hypothesis 1

From the perspective of principals of middle schools identified as implementing inclusion classes, there are no statistically significant mean differences in their perceptions about the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), between school years 2007-2008 and 2008–2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation).

Research Question 2

From the perspective of grade 6 English general education teachers, are there differences in perceptions of leadership regarding the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction;

collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-20ll (later implementation)?

Statistical Hypothesis 2

From the perspective of grade 6 English general education teachers, there are no statistically significant mean differences in perceptions of leadership regarding the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 and (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation).

Research Question 3

From the perspective of grade 6 special education teachers, are there differences in perceptions about the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, and culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008 -2009 (early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

Statistical Hypothesis 3

From the perspective of grade 6 special education teachers, there are no statistically significant mean differences in perceptions of leadership regarding the five leadership domains identified by Powell (vision, mission, culture; curriculum and classroom instruction; collaboration and shared leadership; family and community involvement; and effective management), in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009

(early implementation) and school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation).

Research Question 4

What are the curriculum and instructional issues faced by middle school principals, grade 6 general education English teachers and grade 6 special education teachers responsible for providing leadership regarding the instruction of students with disabilities in inclusion classroom in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 (early implementation) compared to school years 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (later implementation)?

Research Question 5

What are the professional development issues faced by middle school principals, grade 6 general education English teachers and grade 6 special education teachers responsible for providing leadership regarding the instruction of students with disabilities in inclusion classrooms in school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2008 (early implementation) compared to school years 2009-2010 and 2010–2011 (later implementation)?

Summary of Quantitative Survey Findings

The survey findings yielded information that indicated that Powell's Leadership instrument had a high level of reliability based upon the Cronbach alphas on the five domains.

Finding #1: The researcher found that the response rate of usable surveys for the early implementers was 72% as compared to the response rate for the later implementers of 41%. This difference represents a response rate difference of 31%.

Finding #2: The researcher found that the instrument had a strong inter-item reliability across all five domains tested.

Finding #3: The researcher determined that the correlation coefficients for principals as early implementers of inclusion were in the modest range, between .30 and .69. All correlations were statistically significant at the .05 level or lower. Correlations describe the magnitude of the relationship between the five different domains in the survey.

Finding #4: The correlation coefficients for principals as late implementers of inclusion were in the strong range of .75 and .83 or higher. The correlation coefficients for late implementers were higher than those for early implementers. All of the correlations were statistically significant from the .0 at the .001 level.

Finding #5: An independent t-Test on the differences in perception between middle school principals identified as early implementers and later implementers of inclusion classes yielded no statistically significant differences in their perceptions about the five leadership domains.

Finding #6: An independent t-Test of grade 6 general education English teachers on the differences in perceptions of leadership regarding the five leadership domains in schools that were early implementers of inclusion or later implementers confirmed no statistically significant difference across the five domains.

Finding #7: An independent t-Test of grade 6 special education teachers on the differences in perceptions of leadership regarding the five leadership domains in schools that were early implementers of inclusion or later implementers confirmed no statistically significant differences across the five domains.

Additional Analyses

It is significant to note that the correlation coefficients were significantly higher for the late implementers rather than for the early implementers. The low participation rate for the general education grade 6 English teachers as stated in chapter 4 may suggest the need for further study to yield more conclusive findings regarding the perceptions of

general educators and the role of effective leadership practices for middle school principals who include students with disabilities.

Conclusions Based on Quantitative Results

The researcher identified 38 middle schools to study, 19 of which were early implementers of inclusion and 19 which were later implementers of inclusion. The response rate for principals was 58%; for grade 6 special education teachers was 73%; and for grade 6 English general education teachers, it was 38%. The researcher concluded that this was an acceptable rate given that opportunities to participate in the study were offered twice over a period of two months.

The reliability of the content of the survey was documented by Powell and other researchers including McLeod (2008) and Cassell (2012). The researcher computed Cronbach alphas to determine the inter-item reliability of the survey. The researcher obtained a total reliability score of .94, indicating strong inter-item reliability. The lowest Cronbach alpha in this study was found under the effective management domain, with an alpha score of .81. The highest Cronbach alpha score .89 was in vision, mission and culture.

The researcher computed correlation coefficients between the five different domains for principals, Grade 6 general education teachers and special education teachers classified as early implementers or late implementers. The correlation coefficients for the principals who were early implementers were statistically significant at the .05 level or lower. In general the correlations for the principals who were early implementers are in the modest to strong range .56 and .87. The correlation coefficients for the principals who were later implementers of inclusion were statistically significant at the .01 level or lower. For principals who were later implementers of inclusion, all of the correlations were in the strong range .83 or higher, exceeding the range of the early implementers. The researcher concluded that for both early and later implementers, domains 1, 2, 4 and

5 indicate strong correlations between both principal implementation groups. Doman 3, Collaboration and Shared Leadership, fell in the modest range for the early implementation group as opposed to the strong range for the later implementation group. This may be attributed to a number of factors, including professional development and support provided by central office special education staff members on strategies to promote collaboration and shared leadership practices that facilitates the implementation of inclusion,

The correlation coefficients for the grade 6 special education teachers who were early implementers are in the modest range, .41 and .69. The correlation coefficients for grade 6 special education teachers who were later implementers are in the modest to strong range of .32 and .90.

The researcher concluded that the statistical difference between the grade 6 special education teachers who were early and later implementers may be attributed to the response rate of the survey. One hundred present of the early implementers returned their surveys. Only nine grade 6 special education teachers who were later implementers returned the survey. The researcher concluded that there was also less agreement among the grade 6 special education teachers as compared to the principals regarding the five domains of effective leadership practices.

The correlation coefficients for the grade 6 general education teachers who were early implementers were in the weak to modest range, .30 and .70, with the exception of domains 1 and 5, which were in the strong range. The results of this analysis indicate that the correlations for this group of teachers were lower than the principal and special education teacher results. Only 10 out of 19 grade 6 general education teachers responded to the survey. The correlation coefficients for the grade 6 general education teachers who were later implementers yielded doubtful results, due to the low response rate from this group of teachers. Only 4 out of 19 grade 6 general education teachers who were later implementers returned the survey. The highest correlations existed between Domain 1

and Domain 3. This single correlation was not statistically significant. The researcher concluded that due to the low rate of return, further study regarding the perceptions of general education teachers about the effective leadership practices of middle school principals for students with disabilities is needed. The role of the general education teacher according to theory and practice is vitally important in order to achieve the goal of improving the performance outcomes of students with disabilities. The content knowledge and expertise that grade 6 general education teachers possess enhances the quality of instruction and ultimately influences the educational outcomes for students in collaboration with support from special education teachers

The researcher concluded from these findings that there were no differences in the belief systems of middle school principals regarding the effective leadership practices, whether an early or later implementer of inclusion in grade 6 English classes. The researcher also determined that with regard to domain 1, vision, mission, and culture, a positive correlation exists among both groups of principals. The researcher further concluded that among both groups of principals, they strongly believed in the vital importance of effective leadership as it relates to domain 2, curriculum and classroom instruction; domain 3, collaboration and shared leadership; and domain 4, family and community involvement. The early implementers of inclusion, domain 1, generated the strongest positive correlation, affirming their belief that vision, mission and culture represents the key leadership practice. For the later implementers of inclusion, domain 2 generated the strongest positive correlation. The later implementers of inclusion strongly believe in the importance of the principal as an instructional leader.

The researcher concluded that among the grade 6 special education teachers who were early implementers, there was a lower degree of agreement regarding domains, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 as compared to the principals who were early implementers. The grade 6 special education teachers who were early implementers believed that mission, vision and culture, collaboration and shared leadership and effective management are key leadership

practices that contribute to the successful implementation of inclusion. The grade 6 special education teachers who were later implementers had a very low response rate, resulting in this researcher's inability to draw strong conclusions about their perceptions regarding effective leadership practices. It is the opinion of this researcher that this topic may not have been of interest to this group.

The researcher determined that the grade 6 general education teachers who were early implementers believed that vision, mission and culture and effective management are the key leadership practices that promote inclusion. The perceptions of grade 6 general education teachers who were late implementers must be viewed cautiously due to the low survey response rate. This low response rate may be attributed to a lack on interest in this subject matter.

The researcher has concluded that vision, mission and culture is the area of strongest agreement regarding an effective leadership behavior among the three groups, whether an early or later implementer of inclusion.

<center>Summary of Focus Group Findings</center>

The researcher arrived at the following findings based upon the focus group discussion:

Finding #1: Both early and later implementers of inclusion for students with disabilities agreed that the vision of the school sets the tone and influences the school's mission and culture. Both groups agreed that the role and vision of the principal is key to ensure the implementation of effective inclusive practices.

Finding #2: Early and later implementers of inclusion for students with disabilities agreed that the success that a principal experiences regarding the implementation of inclusive practices is extremely dependent upon the consultative support and expertise of the central office special education staff members. Both groups of principals agreed that teachers and administrators need ongoing technical support to address domain 2, curriculum and classroom instruction.

Finding #3: The focus group participants agreed that the selection of teachers to provide inclusive opportunities is important. The early and later implementers concluded that it was important to identify the teachers on their staff who embraced the philosophy of inclusive practices and could effectively co-teach with another teacher.

Finding #4: Both early and late implementers agreed that family and community involvement was very important. The focus group participants agreed that ongoing communication that assures parents understand the benefits of inclusion and most importantly evidence that the needs of their children are being addressed is vitally important.

Conclusions Based on Qualitative Results

An analysis of the focus group interviews by the researcher concluded that the principals from the early and later implementation periods identified the vision, mission and culture as one of the key domains or factors that influences the success of a leader. Principals from both periods felt strongly that it is the principal who sets the tone and is instrumental in influencing the vision of the school, its mission and culture. The principals from both implementation periods felt that the vision of the school should be the same for all groups of learners   According to the interview; principals must expect all students to be successful regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or disability. One principal from the early implementation period commented, "*It should not matter nor should there be a difference in the vision of the school because of the goal to implement inclusion. All of the students in our schools belong to us. We are responsible for ensuring that they have access to a high-quality education.*"

The focus group interview process also concluded that if principals are going to successfully implement inclusion, they must ensure that the special and general education teachers who are selected to co-teach embrace the philosophy of inclusion. Each principal indicated that in order to successfully implement inclusion, the principal must

87

engage in shared leadership practices. From the perspective of the middle school principals who encouraged their teachers to volunteer as co-teaching teams, this fostered a sense of decision-making and collaboration which led to input regarding the development of the master schedule, the selection of students for each class, assistance with professional development, and the resources and supports needed to successfully instruct students with disabilities in a general education classroom.

The focus group interview also concluded that a key behavior or leadership practice is the role of the principal as an instructional leader who monitors the implementation of curriculum and instructional practices that promote positive outcomes for students. To ensure students with disabilities are successfully included, it was the opinion of the middle school principals from both periods of implementation that monitoring the instructional program is key. Finally, family and community involvement is fostered by the principal who ensures there is ongoing communication between school and the community. This leadership behavior contributes significantly to the success of a school, sends a message regarding the importance of the relationship between the school and community, and embraces all of its members.

From the comments generated, there was no difference regarding the perspectives of the two groups of middle school principals. Both groups agreed that the five domains of leadership as defined by Powell are key.

<center>Recommendations for Practice</center>

The inclusion of students with disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate as defined by IDEA and further compounded by the educational reform initiative *Race to the Top* forces school systems nationwide to carefully examine the leadership practices of principals in their schools. Principals face increasing demands to create learning environments that meet the needs of all students (Angelle, 2009). Understanding the perspective of middle school principals regarding effective leadership practices that

promote inclusion will enhance the ability of school systems throughout the United States to ensure principals are educated in the five domains as identified by Powell. The specific ramifications of this study include:

Recommendation #1

School systems must ensure from a macro and micro level that ongoing professional learning is embedded in the district's goals to build the principal's capacity regarding the key domains of effective leadership, particularly in the field of special education. This recommendation is based on the premise that most principals lack training, expertise or knowledge regarding the leadership behaviors and practices needed to successfully administer special education services (Angelle, 2009).

Recommendation #2

Principals must foster an environment that embraces collaboration and shared leadership by structuring collaborative teams in which members share in learning goals (Curry & Killion, 2009). This practice will give general and special education teachers the opportunity to learn together, resulting in the transference and evidence of effective practices being implemented in the classroom that ultimately improve outcomes for students. This process will also promote opportunities for teachers to actively participate in shaping the vision, mission and culture of the school.

Recommendation #3

Central office support from the Department of Special Education and the Department of Curriculum must collaborate to consistently provide principals with appropriate professional learning opportunities, resources, instructional strategies, and support to enable them to effectively and successfully promote inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities. Special education personnel play a critical role in the beginning stages of a principal's career for inclusive leadership (Bilton, 2009).

Recommendation #4

Principals must have access to supports and resources to assist general education teachers with the goal of promoting an inclusive classroom. General education teachers, similar to principals, lack coursework or training in the field of special education. Enabling students to access the general education curriculum is one of the key areas identified by general education teachers as being an area where support and professional learning opportunities continue to be a need.

Recommendation #5

Based on the survey data, special education teachers also report the need to have professional development in the area of curriculum in order to support students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom. The demands and rigor of the curriculum aligned to the Common Core State Standards may be a factor that contributes to this need. In an effort to support the special education teachers in this area, central office departments must support principals by providing macro and micro level professional learning opportunities in the academic subject areas of greatest need.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study provides a deeper analysis into the effective leadership behaviors, practices, and characteristics of principals who promote inclusion. Although the data provides details into the behaviors of principals who implemented inclusion, it raises other questions regarding inclusion and whether or not principals who demonstrated those effective leadership practices improved the performance outcomes of the students with disabilities. The goal of the principal as an instructional leader is to achieve improved performance outcomes for all students. As a result, areas for further study are recommended below:

1. It is recommended that this study be replicated but broadened to measure the performance outcomes and improvement of students with disabilities

in reading in middle schools where principals embrace the five domains of effective leadership practices.

2.   It is recommended that this study be replicated but include the perspective of principals, general education teachers and parents of students with disabilities whose children are included to verify if they agree that the domains identified by Powell regarding the effective leadership practices and behaviors promote the successful implementation of inclusive classrooms and schools.

3.   It is recommended that this study be replicated to compare the leadership behaviors and practices of principals who participated in administration preparation programs that included coursework in the field of special education compared to those who did not receive prior coursework and training in special education.

Appendix A

Recruitment Letters and Consent Forms

Recruitment Letter and Consent Form – Middle School Principal (Survey)

November 4, 2013

Dear Principal:

As a doctoral student at the University of Maryland, I am currently involved in the dissertation segment of my program. I have designed a quantitative and qualitative research study. The purpose of my study is to examine the effective leadership practices of middle school principals who successfully promote inclusion in Grade 6 English cotaught classes.

I am inviting you to participate in a study of The Relationship between Effective Leadership Practices and the Implementation of Middle School Inclusion in English Cotaught Classes. You will be asked to respond to the Middle School Leadership Survey. The survey asks you to give your perceptions about school leadership practices. The survey also asks you about your background and experience. Participation in the survey should take approximately 30 minutes.

Your responses are confidential. All identifying information will be removed and survey data will be maintained in secure files and will be accessible only to me. Reports and other communications related to the study will not identify respondents by name, nor will they identify any schools. Study results will be available in a summary report, which will be given to Montgomery County Public Schools.

If you are willing to complete the survey and background information, please sign the survey consent form below and complete the survey instrument. Please mail the survey and consent form in the self-addressed stamped envelope by Monday, November 18, 2013.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact me by calling 301-279-3135 (work) or you may send me an e-mail at Gwendolyn_J_Mason@mcpsmd.org. You may also contact Dr. Carol Parham, chairperson of my committee, by directly calling the University of Maryland at 301-405-3580.

Thank you for your participation.

_____
Gwendolyn J. Mason

_____
Signature

_____
School Name

Recruitment Letter and Consent Form – Grade 6 General Education Teacher (Survey)

December 15, 2013

Dear General Education Grade 6 English Teacher:

As a doctoral student at the University of Maryland, I am currently involved in the dissertation segment of my program. I have designed a quantitative and qualitative research study. The purpose of my study is to examine the effective leadership practices of middle school principals who successfully promote inclusion in Grade 6 English co-taught classes.

I am inviting you to participate in a study of The Relationship between Effective Leadership Practices and the Implementation of Middle School Inclusion in English Co-taught Classes. You will be asked to respond to the Middle School Leadership Survey. The survey asks you to give your perceptions about school leadership practices. The survey also asks you about your background and experience. Participation in the survey should take approximately 30 minutes.

Your responses are confidential. All identifying information will be removed and survey data will be maintained in secure files and will be accessible only to me. Reports and other communications related to the study will not identify respondents by name, nor will they identify any schools. Study results will be available in a summary report, which will be given to Montgomery County Public Schools.

If you are willing to complete the survey and background information, please sign the survey consent form below and complete the survey instrument. Please mail the survey and consent form in the self-addressed stamped envelope by Monday, January 13, 2014.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact me by calling 301-279-3135 (work) or you may send me an e-mail at Gwendolyn_J_Mason@mcpsmd.org. You may also contact Dr. Carol Parham, chairperson of my committee, by directly calling the University of Maryland at 301-405-3580.

Thank you for your participation.

_____
Gwendolyn J. Mason

_____
Signature

_____
School Name

Recruitment Letter and Consent Form – Grade 6 Special Education Teacher (Survey)

December 15, 2013

Dear Special Education Grade 6 English Teacher:

As a doctoral student at the University of Maryland, I am currently involved in the dissertation segment of my program. I have designed a quantitative and qualitative research study. The purpose of my study is to examine the effective leadership practices of middle school principals who successfully promote inclusion in Grade 6 English co-taught classes.

I am inviting you to participate in a study of The Relationship between Effective Leadership Practices and the Implementation of Middle School Inclusion in English Co-taught Classes. You will be asked to respond to the Middle School Leadership Survey. The survey asks you to give your perceptions about school leadership practices. The survey also asks you about your background and experience. Participation in the survey should take approximately 30 minutes.

Your responses are confidential. All identifying information will be removed and survey data will be maintained in secure files and will be accessible only to me. Reports and other communications related to the study will not identify respondents by name, nor will they identify any schools. Study results will be available in a summary report, which will be given to Montgomery County Public Schools.

If you are willing to complete the survey and background information, please sign the survey consent form below and complete the survey instrument. Please mail the survey and consent form in the self-addressed stamped envelope by Monday, January 13, 2014.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact me by calling 301-279-3135 (work) or you may send me an e-mail at Gwendolyn_J_Mason@mcpsmd.org. You may also contact Dr. Carol Parham, chairperson of my committee, by directly calling the University of Maryland at 301-405-3580.

Thank you for your participation.

_____
Gwendolyn J. Mason

_____
Signature

_____
School Name

Appendix B

Surveys

Middle School Leadership Survey

Middle School Principals

Using this 60-item survey instrument, you are asked to indicate your perspective about your leadership behaviors and practices. Please use the following scale in answering these items.

12	3	4	
Strongly DisagreeDisagree		Agree	Strongly Agree

Please be discriminating! The results will be more helpful if you think about each item as it pertains to your leadership behaviors and practices only. Please answer all questions and complete the five background questions as well. Thank you for your time and input. Please use the attached Scantron sheet to record your answers.

Survey Questions	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
1. Curriculum needs determine the type and frequency of staff development	1	2	3	4
2. The principal and staff together develop the school plan.	1	2	3	4
3. Teachers provide instruction using the instructional model (warm-up, guided practice, independent practice, and closure)	1	2	3	4
4. The school staff embraces the vision of the principal for school success.	1	2	3	4
5. Teachers facilitate interactive student discussions about concepts and process.	1	2	3	4
6. Teachers use assessment data to plan instruction.	1	2	3	4
7. The principal, not the district, makes hiring decisions.	1	2	3	4
8. The principal supports the discipline plan.	1	2	3	4
9. Teachers address the individual needs of students.	1	2	3	4
10. Outside organizations support the school monetarily.	1	2	3	4

Survey Questions	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
11. Teachers know what resources to use for students' social and educational needs.	1	2	3	4
12. Family members feel comfortable in the school.	1	2	3	4
13. The principal provides teachers with enough supplies, books, and materials to deliver instruction.	1	2	3	4
14. There is a feeling of respect among and between staff members and students.	1	2	3	4
15. Teachers focus on the state standards when teaching the curriculum.	1	2	3	4
16. The teachers are encouraged to give the principal input on the purchase of resources.	1	2	3	4
17. Most parents attend conferences concerning student progress.	1	2	3	4
18. Parents are seen frequently in the school.	1	2	3	4
19. Family members are encouraged to come to school.	1	2	3	4
20. Teachers in this school believe all children can learn.	1	2	3	4
21. Successes are celebrated frequently by the principal and teachers.	1	2	3	4
22. Leadership in the school is shared between the principal and teachers.	1	2	3	4
23. The internet is used for communication between school and home.	1	2	3	4
24. Students in this school understand and follow the discipline plan for behavior.	1	2	3	4
25. The school vision sets the stage for how the staff proceeds with instruction.	1	2	3	4

Survey Questions	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
26. After-school programs are well attended by parents.	1	2	3	4
27. The principal is seen frequently throughout the building.	1	2	3	4
28. Teachers are encouraged to participate in decision-making.	1	2	3	4
29. Community members volunteer at the school.	1	2	3	4
30. The principal understands good instruction.	1	2	3	4
31. Teachers frequently assess students on state standards.	1	2	3	4
32. The staff makes decisions with the principal concerning teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4
33. The principal manages funds to ensure the school has the best resources to teach the students.	1	2	3	4
34. There are uninterrupted blocks of time for instruction.	1	2	3	4
35. The teachers plan the program in collaboration with the principal.	1	2	3	4
36. The culture of the school is conducive to learning.	1	2	3	4
37. The school develops a plan to ensure all students are successful.	1	2	3	4
38. Teachers maintain a high level of student engagement.	1	2	3	4
39. The principal visits classrooms frequently.	1	2	3	4
40. Teachers in the school work for the success of all students.	1	2	3	4
41. The principal keeps the teacher-student ratio low.	1	2	3	4
42. The principal makes some academic decisions without the input of teachers.	1	2	3	4

Survey Questions	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
43. Members of civic or social organizations volunteer in the school.	1	2	3	4
44. Teachers are leaders in the school.	1	2	3	4
45. The school forms partnerships with businesses.	1	2	3	4
46. The principal uses a variety of funding sources to sustain programs at the school.	1	2	3	4
47. The principal knows the names of the students.	1	2	3	4
48. The school is the center of the community.	1	2	3	4
49. Teachers help students make connections to prior knowledge.	1	2	3	4
50. Most people in our school believe the principal is an ethical leader.	1	2	3	4
51. Teachers differentiate instruction to meet students' needs.	1	2	3	4
52. There is a parent liaison to assist parents.	1	2	3	4
53. Most teachers participate in staff development.	1	2	3	4
54. The discipline plan for student behavior is effective.	1	2	3	4
55. A nurse on staff addresses the medical needs of students.	1	2	3	4
56. Teachers in our school are free to be risk-takers.	1	2	3	4
57. The staff participates in the hiring process.	1	2	3	4
58. The curriculum is the focus of classroom instruction.	1	2	3	4
59. Teachers are honest with parents concerning student progress.	1	2	3	4
60. Instructional time is protected from interruptions.	1	2	3	4

Please provide the following background information:

61. Are you: A) Male____   B) Female_____

62. How many years have you been in education, including the years at your current school?

1	2	3	4	5
0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+

63. How many years have you been principal at this school?

1	2	3	4	5
0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+

64. Indicate your educational level

1	2	3	4
BA/BS	MA	MA+30	Doctorate

65. To what age group do you belong?

1	2	3	4
22-30	31-40	41-50	51+

Middle School Leadership Survey

Grade 6 English General Education Teachers

Using this 60-item survey instrument, you are asked to indicate your perspective about your principal's leadership behaviors and practices. Please use the following scale in answering these items.

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

<u>Please be discriminating!</u> The results will be more helpful if you think about each item as it pertains to your leadership behaviors and practices only. Please answer all questions and complete the five background questions as well. Thank you for your time and input. Please use the attached Scantron sheet to record your answers.

Survey Questions	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
1. Curriculum needs determine the type and frequency of staff development	1	2	3	4
2. The principal and staff together develop the school plan.	1	2	3	4
3. Teachers provide instruction using the instructional model (warm-up, guided practice, independent practice, and closure)	1	2	3	4
4. The school staff embraces the vision of the principal for school success.	1	2	3	4
5. Teachers facilitate interactive student discussions about concepts and process.	1	2	3	4
6. Teachers use assessment data to plan instruction.	1	2	3	4
7. The principal, not the district, makes hiring decisions.	1	2	3	4
8. The principal supports the discipline plan.	1	2	3	4
9. Teachers address the individual needs of students.	1	2	3	4
10. Outside organizations support the school monetarily.	1	2	3	4

Survey Questions	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
11. Teachers know what resources to use for students' social and educational needs.	1	2	3	4
12. Family members feel comfortable in the school.	1	2	3	4
13. The principal provides teachers with enough supplies, books, and materials to deliver instruction.	1	2	3	4
14. There is a feeling of respect among and between staff members and students.	1	2	3	4
15. Teachers focus on the state standards when teaching the curriculum.	1	2	3	4
16. The teachers are encouraged to give the principal input on the purchase of resources.	1	2	3	4
17. Most parents attend conferences concerning student progress.	1	2	3	4
18. Parents are seen frequently in the school.	1	2	3	4
19. Family members are encouraged to come to school.	1	2	3	4
20. Teachers in this school believe all children can learn.	1	2	3	4
21. Successes are celebrated frequently by the principal and teachers.	1	2	3	4
22. Leadership in the school is shared between the principal and teachers.	1	2	3	4
23. The internet is used for communication between school and home.	1	2	3	4
24. Students in this school understand and follow the discipline plan for behavior.	1	2	3	4
25. The school vision sets the stage for how the staff proceeds with instruction.	1	2	3	4

Survey Questions	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
26. After-school programs are well attended by parents.	1	2	3	4
27. The principal is seen frequently throughout the building.	1	2	3	4
28. Teachers are encouraged to participate in decision-making.	1	2	3	4
29. Community members volunteer at the school.	1	2	3	4
30. The principal understands good instruction.	1	2	3	4
31. Teachers frequently assess students on state standards.	1	2	3	4
32. The staff makes decisions with the principal concerning teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4
33. The principal manages funds to ensure the school has the best resources to teach the students.	1	2	3	4
34. There are uninterrupted blocks of time for instruction.	1	2	3	4
35. The teachers plan the program in collaboration with the principal.	1	2	3	4
36. The culture of the school is conducive to learning.	1	2	3	4
37. The school develops a plan to ensure all students are successful.	1	2	3	4
38. Teachers maintain a high level of student engagement.	1	2	3	4
39. The principal visits classrooms frequently.	1	2	3	4
40. Teachers in the school work for the success of all students.	1	2	3	4
41. The principal keeps the teacher-student ratio low.	1	2	3	4
42. The principal makes some academic decisions without the input of teachers.	1	2	3	4

Survey Questions	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
43. Members of civic or social organizations volunteer in the school.	1	2	3	4
44. Teachers are leaders in the school.	1	2	3	4
45. The school forms partnerships with businesses.	1	2	3	4
46. The principal uses a variety of funding sources to sustain programs at the school.	1	2	3	4
47. The principal knows the names of the students.	1	2	3	4
48. The school is the center of the community.	1	2	3	4
49. Teachers help students make connections to prior knowledge.	1	2	3	4
50. Most people in our school believe the principal is an ethical leader.	1	2	3	4
51. Teachers differentiate instruction to meet students' needs.	1	2	3	4
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53. Most teachers participate in staff development.	1	2	3	4
54. The discipline plan for student behavior is effective.	1	2	3	4
55. A nurse on staff addresses the medical needs of students.	1	2	3	4
56. Teachers in our school are free to be risk-takers.	1	2	3	4
57. The staff participates in the hiring process.	1	2	3	4
58. The curriculum is the focus of classroom instruction.	1	2	3	4
59. Teachers are honest with parents concerning student progress.	1	2	3	4
60. Instructional time is protected from interruptions.	1	2	3	4

Please provide the following background information:

61.   Are you: A) Male____   B) Female____

62.   How many years have you been in education, including the years at your current school?

1	2	3	4	5
0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+

63.   How many years have you been principal at this school?

1	2	3	4	5
0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+

64.   Indicate your educational level

1	2	3	4
BA/BS	MA	MA+30	Doctorate

65.   To what age group do you belong?

1	2	3	4
22-30	31-40	41-50	51+

Middle School Leadership Survey

Grade 6 Special Education Teachers

Using this 60-item survey instrument, you are asked to indicate your perspective about your principal's leadership behaviors and practices. Please use the following scale in answering these items.

1 2	3	4	
Strongly Disagree Disagree		Agree	Strongly Agree

Please be discriminating! The results will be more helpful if you think about each item as it pertains to your leadership behaviors and practices only. Please answer all questions and complete the five background questions as well. Thank you for your time and input. Please use the attached Scantron sheet to record your answers.

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4. The school staff embraces the vision of the principal for school success.	1	2	3	4
5. Teachers facilitate interactive student discussions about concepts and process.	1	2	3	4
6. Teachers use assessment data to plan instruction.	1	2	3	4
7. The principal, not the district, makes hiring decisions.	1	2	3	4
8. The principal supports the discipline plan.	1	2	3	4
9. Teachers address the individual needs of students.	1	2	3	4
10. Outside organizations support the school monetarily.	1	2	3	4

Survey Questions	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
11. Teachers know what resources to use for students' social and educational needs.	1	2	3	4
12. Family members feel comfortable in the school.	1	2	3	4
13. The principal provides teachers with enough supplies, books, and materials to deliver instruction.	1	2	3	4
14. There is a feeling of respect among and between staff members and students.	1	2	3	4
15. Teachers focus on the state standards when teaching the curriculum.	1	2	3	4
16. The teachers are encouraged to give the principal input on the purchase of resources.	1	2	3	4
17. Most parents attend conferences concerning student progress.	1	2	3	4
18. Parents are seen frequently in the school.	1	2	3	4
19. Family members are encouraged to come to school.	1	2	3	4
20. Teachers in this school believe all children can learn.	1	2	3	4
21. Successes are celebrated frequently by the principal and teachers.	1	2	3	4
22. Leadership in the school is shared between the principal and teachers.	1	2	3	4
23. The internet is used for communication between school and home.	1	2	3	4
24. Students in this school understand and follow the discipline plan for behavior.	1	2	3	4
25. The school vision sets the stage for how the staff proceeds with instruction.	1	2	3	4

Survey Questions	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
26. After-school programs are well attended by parents.	1	2	3	4
27. The principal is seen frequently throughout the building.	1	2	3	4
28. Teachers are encouraged to participate in decision-making.	1	2	3	4
29. Community members volunteer at the school.	1	2	3	4
30. The principal understands good instruction.	1	2	3	4
31. Teachers frequently assess students on state standards.	1	2	3	4
32. The staff makes decisions with the principal concerning teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4
33. The principal manages funds to ensure the school has the best resources to teach the students.	1	2	3	4
34. There are uninterrupted blocks of time for instruction.	1	2	3	4
35. The teachers plan the program in collaboration with the principal.	1	2	3	4
36. The culture of the school is conducive to learning.	1	2	3	4
37. The school develops a plan to ensure all students are successful.	1	2	3	4
38. Teachers maintain a high level of student engagement.	1	2	3	4
39. The principal visits classrooms frequently.	1	2	3	4
40. Teachers in the school work for the success of all students.	1	2	3	4
41. The principal keeps the teacher-student ratio low.	1	2	3	4
42. The principal makes some academic decisions without the input of teachers.	1	2	3	4

Survey Questions	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
43. Members of civic or social organizations volunteer in the school.	1	2	3	4
44. Teachers are leaders in the school.	1	2	3	4
45. The school forms partnerships with businesses.	1	2	3	4
46. The principal uses a variety of funding sources to sustain programs at the school.	1	2	3	4
47. The principal knows the names of the students.	1	2	3	4
48. The school is the center of the community.	1	2	3	4
49. Teachers help students make connections to prior knowledge.	1	2	3	4
50. Most people in our school believe the principal is an ethical leader.	1	2	3	4
51. Teachers differentiate instruction to meet students' needs.	1	2	3	4
52. There is a parent liaison to assist parents.	1	2	3	4
53. Most teachers participate in staff development.	1	2	3	4
54. The discipline plan for student behavior is effective.	1	2	3	4
55. A nurse on staff addresses the medical needs of students.	1	2	3	4
56. Teachers in our school are free to be risk-takers.	1	2	3	4
57. The staff participates in the hiring process.	1	2	3	4
58. The curriculum is the focus of classroom instruction.	1	2	3	4
59. Teachers are honest with parents concerning student progress.	1	2	3	4
60. Instructional time is protected from interruptions.	1	2	3	4

Please provide the following background information:

61. Are you: A) Male____   B) Female____

62. How many years have you been in education, including the years at your current school?

1	2	3	4	5
0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+

63. How many years have you been principal at this school?

1	2	3	4	5
0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+

64. Indicate your educational level

1	2	3	4
BA/BS	MA	MA+30	Doctorate

65. To what age group do you belong?

1	2	3	4
22-30	31-40	41-50	51+

Appendix C

Request to Principals for Focus Group Participation

Recruitment Letter and Consent Form—Middle School Principal (Focus Group)

October 30, 2013

Dear Principal:

I am a doctoral student at the University of Maryland. I am currently involved in the dissertation segment of my program. I have designed a quantitative and qualitative research study. The purpose of my study is to examine the effective leadership practices of middle school principals who successfully promote inclusion in Grade 6 English cotaught classes.

I am inviting you to participate in a Focus Group discussion on The Relationship between Effective Leadership Practices and the Implementation of Middle School Inclusion in English Cotaught Classes. You will be joined by a group of 10–12 current and former middle school principals who have had the responsibility of promoting inclusive practices. Participation in the focus group is voluntary and shall be conducted for 90 minutes. The focus group session will be held on Tuesday, November 19, 2013, from 5:30–7:00 p.m. at the Carver Educational Services Center, Room 120. Refreshments will be served.

Reports and other communications related to the study will not identify participants by name, nor will they identify any schools. Study results will be available in a summary report, which will be given to Montgomery County Public Schools.

 If you are willing to participate in the focus group, please sign the consent form below and mail the form in the self-addressed stamped envelope by Monday, November 11, 2013.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact me by calling 301-279-3135 (work) or you may send me an e-mail at Gwendolyn_J_Mason@mcpsmd.org. You may also contact Dr. Carol Parham, chairperson of my committee, by directly calling the University of Maryland at 301-405-3580.

Thank you for your participation.

_____
Gwendolyn J. Mason

_____
Signature

_____
School Name

Appendix D

Discussion Guide

Vision

What is your vision for your school and how does it influence your school's culture as it relates to including students with disabilities in the general education environment?

Collaboration and Shared Leadership

Describe collaboration and shared leadership in school. Please cite specific examples.

Principals' Family and Community Involvement

In what ways do you try to foster and community involvement for students with disabilities and their families?

Instructional Monitoring

What do you do to ensure that general and special education teachers responsible for teaching Grade 6 English inclusion classes are using best practices to enable students with disabilities to experience success with the curriculum?

As the instructional leader for your school, what are the curricular and instructional challenges faced by you each day in your effort to effectively lead for inclusion of middle school students

Mason Focus Group
November 2013

Discussion Guide
Middle School Principals Including Students with Disabilities

TIME	SEGMENT	CONTENT
5 min	Welcome	Introductions, why we are here, Ground Rules (taping, notes, talk one at a time), Draw cards for teams
10 min	Cart Sort Exercise	(Exercise described on back page of this document.)
10 min	School vision	You are all at schools that include some students with significant special education needs in general education classrooms. How is your overall vision for your school affected by this reality? Just in general, what are some of the things you think about as a school leader when you think about how to help these students succeed?
10 min	Expectations	When you first heard that your school would have/would be receiving transfers from a self-contained program, what were your expectations? What did you think your *challenges* would be? (Probes: professional development? Curriculum and instruction? Concerns of specific groups, such as parents?)
30 min	Design Teams	You have been asked to join a team to mentor a middle school that will be accepting students from a learning center starting next school year. Work with your team to design a mentoring plan. Please be sure to include the following areas: • Best ways to work with teachers to enable students with disabilities to access the English 6/language arts curriculum in an inclusive setting • Involving families of students with disabilities, and the community, around including them • Professional development ideas/needs • The role of school administrators in successful inclusion of students with disabilities in general classes
15 min	Share	Share the results of the design exercise. Discuss.
10 min	Best practices Wrap up	React; draw from team activity; agree on most critical best practices. Discuss.
Up to 90 min		

Card Sort
Please read the statements on each of these cards and sort them into three piles:

MOST IMPORTANT

IMPORTANT

LESS IMPORTANT

Rubber band "less important" choices; set aside

Put Most Important and Important cards back together, sort them again into two piles.

Rubber band these two sets.

Facilitator collects each of the three sets and places in the three relevant envelopes.

(These will be analyzed later.)

Proposed card content:
The principal celebrates successes
The principal elicits teach input regarding academic decisions
The principal encourages and provides opportunities for staff development
The principal encourages teacher participation in the decision-making process

The principal ensures minimal classroom interruptions

The principal ensures special programs and resources are in place to meet the needs of all learners
The principal ensures teacher participation in the hiring process of new teachers
The principal ensures the delivery of inclusive services for students with disabilities

The principal hires staff to reflect school's diversity
The principal implements an effective discipline plan
The principal involves staff in analyzing school data
The principal is highly visible throughout the school
The principal keeps parents informed about students expectations
The principal knows and calls students by name
The principal makes academic decisions on his/her own at times

The principal makes all feel welcome and comfortable
The principal makes student achievement a high priority/mission of the school
The principal makes student learning a high priority
The principal provides a nurturing environment for students and teachers

The principal remains focused on instruction (i.e., delegates behavioral issues)

The principal removes barriers to communication (i.e., newsletters in multiple languages)
The principal teaches lessons in classrooms

The principal treats all stakeholders with respect
The principal visits classrooms regularly

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